

PORTFOLIO COMMITTEE NO. 5 - JUSTICE AND COMMUNITIES

Friday 23 February 2024

Examination of proposed expenditure for the portfolio areas

POLICE AND COUNTER-TERRORISM, THE HUNTER

CORRECTED

The Committee met at 9:15.

MEMBERS

The Hon. Robert Borsak (Chair)

Ms Abigail Boyd

Dr Amanda Cohn

The Hon. Susan Carter

The Hon. Anthony D'Adam

The Hon. Greg Donnelly

Ms Sue Higginson (Deputy Chair)

The Hon. Mark Latham

The Hon. Rachel Merton

The Hon. Sarah Mitchell

The Hon. Bob Nanva

PRESENT

The Hon. Yasmin Catley, *Minister for Police and Counter-terrorism, and Minister for the Hunter*

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**

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The CHAIR: Welcome to the first hearing of Portfolio Committee No. 5 - Justice and Communities for the additional round of the inquiry into budget estimates 2023-24. I acknowledge the Gadigal people of the Eora nation, the traditional custodians of the lands on which we are meeting today. I pay my respects to Elders past 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 Robert Borsak and I am the Chair of the Committee. I welcome Minister Catley and the accompanying officials to this hearing.

Today the Committee will examine the proposed expenditure for the portfolios of Police and Counter-terrorism and the Hunter. 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 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.

To the witnesses, I welcome and thank you all for making yourselves available today to give evidence. Minister, I remind you that you do not need to be sworn as you have already sworn an oath to your office as a member of Parliament. Witnesses who appeared at the initial hearing before this Committee also do not need to be sworn.

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Ms KAREN WEBB, Commissioner, NSW Police Force, on former oath

Mr DAVID HUDSON, Deputy Commissioner, NSW Police Force, on former oath

Mr MALCOLM LANYON, Deputy Commissioner, NSW Police Force, on former oath

Mr PAUL PISANOS, Deputy Commissioner, NSW Police Force, on former affirmation

Mr PETER THURTELL, Deputy Commissioner, NSW Police Force, on former oath

Mr DEAN SMITH, Acting Deputy Commissioner, NSW Police Force, sworn and examined

Mr JONATHAN WHEATON, Acting Deputy Secretary, Regional NSW, on former affirmation

Mr MICHAEL BARNES, Commissioner, NSW Crime Commission, 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 the 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 the 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. SUSAN CARTER: Good morning, Minister. Your Government has made it clear that they respect teachers. In fact, on nearly every occasion on which the Deputy Premier rises in the Legislative Assembly, she states this, and this respect is reflected in the wage deal that they arrived at. Do you respect your police in the same way?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: The New South Wales police do a great job and they have my full support.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: Do you respect your police in the same way that the Deputy Premier indicates her respect for teachers?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: As I've said, the New South Wales police do an amazing job. I can't speak more highly of the work that they do, and they have my respect.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: Taking into account the size difference in Education and Police, pro rata aren't more police leaving the force than teachers?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: I haven't got those figures precisely, but there's no secret that retention is a problem. It's something that I've talked about from the very get-go, as well as the gap that we have of 1,500 police officers, which we inherited. So there's no secret about that. I can say that I'm working very hard with the Commissioner and others to ensure that we try to retain police. It's a very tough job. I think it's important that we note this. Policing is such a tough job. They go out 24 hours a day. The things that they see are things that most of us never see, and it's so critically important that we look after their wellbeing.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: Agreed, Minister. Thank you.

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: On that front, the Commissioner, especially, and her team have certainly put in place mechanisms to address that. It's a bit early to get any assessment on that, but we hope to have that sometime soon and I'd be happy to share that with you.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: Taking into account the size difference in Education and Police, pro rata aren't there more vacancies in Police than teachers when you compare numbers across the workforces?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: Again, I haven't had those figures presented to me so I'm unsure.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: Perhaps you could take that on notice, could you, Minister?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: No. As I've just described to you, though, we know that there are more than 1,500 vacancies in the Police Force. It's no secret. That's another thing that I have been saying since I have become—

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: So vacancies in the police are as important an issue as they are in teaching?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: They are very, very important and that is why we put in place paying the recruits. It's certainly not a silver bullet—

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: Thank you very much for that, Minister.

CORRECTED

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: —but it certainly—

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: Thank you very much. If I could redirect, Minister, and go on to the next question. Are you backing our police in the party room in the same manner as the education Minister is backing in the teachers?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: What happens in our party room I won't be discussing here, but what I can say to you—

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: So you can't talk about how you support police?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: —is I support the police publicly on a daily basis and I'm happy to do that again here today.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: Your public support is appreciated, Minister.

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: I publicly support the police.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: If I could redirect, Minister. Your public support is appreciated, but what about your support behind the scenes, where it counts?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: I think I've demonstrated that in a policy that has been very successful in paying the recruits, for instance.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: Thank you for that policy. We're not discussing that at the moment; we may later.

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: We knew that that would have an impact on recruitment numbers.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: Can I redirect, Minister.

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: Would you like to know the numbers?

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: Minister, could I redirect, please, on this next question. The Health Minister backed in a wage outcome for the ambos, which provided them with, on average, according to the HSU, a 29 per cent pay rise over the next four years. Can the police expect the same support for their pay rise from you, Minister?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: The police are entering into award negotiations and those negotiations—

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: What support can they expect from you in those negotiations?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: I know you don't understand how negotiations happen, but what happens is, you go in and you sit at the table opposite one another and you negotiate.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: Minister, thank you very much. I am aware how negotiations occur.

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: Right. Well then I'm surprised you'd be asking me the outcome.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: I'm not asking you the outcome. I'm asking you the support that the police can expect from their Minister in their wage negotiations.

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: They'll be supported.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: Thank you. New South Wales police are the most highly trained and they have the most qualifications across Australia, but pay rises in Victoria in the last six months, and in Queensland also in the last six months, have seen our police in New South Wales fall behind them in wages. Will you be backing the frontline to again show that the Premier State has the best paid officers in the country?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: Again, the police will be in award negotiations, and we'll see how that—

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: The question, Minister, is not about the negotiations in globo. The question is: How much support are you going to give your police, who you've indicated do a very difficult job very well? Do you stand behind your police in these negotiations?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: Again, I won't—and I can't—speculate on the outcome of those negotiations.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: I'm not asking you to do that.

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: Yes, you are.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: No, I am not, Minister. I am asking you about how hard you will fight for your police.

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Ms YASMIN CATLEY: I will go through that negotiation process in good faith and we will definitely deliver a good outcome for police at the end of the day.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: With respect, Minister, that's not an answer. How hard will you fight for your police?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: I will negotiate in good faith, because that's what negotiations are about, and we will deliver a good outcome at the end of the day.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: Have you begun negotiations with the Police Association, and where are they up to?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: We have had initial conversations, yes.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: Where are they up to?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: Initial conversations.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: Initial conversations.

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: They're doing some training, actually, so they're doing that and then we'll start next month.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: Can you negotiate and get the pay deal done with the Police Association before the award ends in June this year?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: That's certainly the intention.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: Intention, but can it be done?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: Negotiations are negotiations. Again, I can't predict what the outcome's going to be.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: But good faith negotiations would proceed expeditiously, wouldn't they?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: In good faith, that is where we hope to land, of course.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: If that's going to be done before the end of June, can I assume that the minimum pay that this Government will provide them is the same minimum as the teachers' first year? More particularly, if you look at the teachers' pay rises over the previous term were never less than 2.5 per cent, where one year police settled at 1.75 per cent after running their work value case in the commission. If you consider that the ambos' deal secured 29 per cent, will you, as Minister, show your respect for the police and assure them that this will be your starting point in the wage negotiations?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: Again, negotiations will take place and they will be fruitful. They will be in good faith. I cannot predict what the outcome will be.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: I'm not asking you to predict the outcome. What I'm asking you to do is to tell us how you will go into that negotiation, supporting your police, what you want to get for your police and what you will fight for for your police.

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: We'll go in there in good faith. We will work cooperatively, and we will have a good outcome.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: Thank you for those buzz words, Minister. But, with respect, it's not answering the question.

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: It's about other things, other than just a dollar figure. In negotiations, you have the opportunity to look at the work environment, work-life balance, and all of those things will be considered.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: You came to power, promising wage increases. How can we attract and retain officers when you won't pay them to be the highest paid in Australia, as they were under our Government? Other Labor States had wage caps, but ours was the highest around the country. Other Labor States have now moved to reward their officers to combat the crisis of retention. Do you have the respect within this Government to get the same job done in New South Wales?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: We did inherit 1,500 short, so clearly the old system wasn't working.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: I'm asking you about what you're doing now to improve wages for police.

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: Paying our new recruits has certainly had a significant impact. We've had a large number—

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The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: Thank you for taking about that. What are you doing about people, once they have joined the Police Force, and ensuring that their wage rises show proper respect for the job that they do?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: You asked about recruitment, actually, and what I'm saying to you is that—

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: No, with respect, Minister—

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: Yes, you did. The question was about recruitment.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: —the question was, "How do you address the crisis of retention?", which is at a different stage of the cycle than recruitment.

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: The wage negotiations will go a long way to look at that.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: That you will push very hard for on the part of your police?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: I'll be there negotiating in good faith, as I've said.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: Police insurance, I believe it's called PBRI. I think it's the death and disability insurance. I understand from my local police, in the many emails and conversations I have had and received, this is a very important issue to them. I'm informed by my local police that the Police Association circulated a letter prior to the last election and that they received an undertaking that, for the term of this Government, the Premier would honour that insurance scheme. There are now, however, rumours circulating that this product will be heavily cut. A lot of police are talking about this. Do you and the Premier stand by the letter and the promise that was made by our police to get their vote or are you and the Premier going to break this promise of keeping their insurance?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: We are looking at it because it's up for negotiation, and we have to make sure that taxpayer dollars are spent accordingly. In addition—

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: Minister, just to check, when you say "looking at it"—

The Hon. BOB NANVA: Point of order: I've refrained from calling a point of order. Paragraph 19 in the procedural fairness resolution requires courtesy to be extended to the witness. There are a lot of interjections. Arguably, the questions are longer than what the Minister is being given the latitude in terms of time to answer.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: To that point of order: I don't believe that asking the Minister to address the actual question is an interjection. It's trying to be respectful of the time of this Committee and making sure that questions asked are answered, rather than prepared statements being provided.

The Hon. BOB NANVA: Further to the point of order: The Minister is trying to answer the question. She's just not being given the opportunity.

The CHAIR: Interjections are disorderly at all times, but please give the Minister a chance to get the answer out before you then proceed with the next part of the question.

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: You might not be aware of this, Ms Carter, but the insurance scheme is up for renewal, so of course we're looking at it. I'm sure you get the emails, as well, as you've just identified. The biggest issue that the Police Association raised with me are the concessional caps, and I have been speaking to the Federal Minister in relation to that. I am absolutely committed to trying to fix that. We know that it is completely unfair, and I have been having some very, very good conversations in relation to that.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: Can I just go back because I did want to come to the issue of concessional caps; I agree that's a major issue. What I understand from the answer that you gave me is that you went into the election promising police that the insurance scheme will not change, but you are now saying that this is part of the overall negotiations and that police insurance scheme could change?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: No. I'm saying to you it's up for renewal. The scheme is up for renewal with the insurance company, so of course we have to look at it.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: Before the election, did you understand the timing that the insurance scheme would be up for renewal?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: It's up for renewal annually, as I understand it.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: Therefore, when the promise was made by the Premier and, presumably, by yourself, that for the—

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: I wasn't the shadow Minister, actually.

CORRECTED

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: When the promise was made by the now Premier that the insurance scheme would be supported for the whole of this Government, that promise was made knowing that there was an annual renewal of the insurance scheme.

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: I understand that, but we still have to go the renewal process.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: So what we're seeing is that a promise was made—

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: We don't have a choice.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: —and now you're saying it's up for negotiation.

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: We don't have a choice but to go through the renewal process. It will expire and we will have nothing. Would you prefer us to do that?

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: The choice you have, Minister, with respect, is that you can support the maintenance of the existing scheme at the time of renewal or you can walk away from the promise you made. That was what my question was asking you to address. With respect to the caps, you've clearly indicated that—like all of us—we were aware of the problem that this had about the way the scheme is structured. There are real problems because of the way the concessional tax grosses up police income. Some officers, for example, with disabled children are then ineligible to receive medical benefits cards, prescription medication, and childcare benefits are impacted. Are you going to be able to get this fixed before the end of this financial year?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: It is a very serious issue and it's one that I'm working on. I'm acutely aware, as I've just said to you, how it is disadvantaging police officers negatively and I'm working very hard to try to fix that.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: Could you describe some of the work that you're doing? Who are you talking to in the Federal Government, for example?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: The Minister for Finance, who is responsible.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: Are they responsive to this?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: Yes.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: Is there a time line on when this very critical issue is going to be fixed?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: I can't provide you with a time line today, no.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: Another example in relation to this is the impact on child care. The Federal Government has recently changed childcare rebates to a sliding means-tested scale. The rebate grossed up artificially inflates police income. Are you aware of the impact this has on discouraging parents, particularly mothers, back into the workforce? Are you aware that it's impacting on their willingness to increase hours at a time that clearly you need all the staff you can get?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: Sorry, are you saying in relation to the cap or just generally about childcare fees?

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: As I understand, because police officers have their D&D premiums and the rebate grossed up, that artificially inflates income. Combined with the recent changes that the Federal Government has made to childcare rebates to a sliding means-tested scale, this has negatively impacted especially a lot of female police officers with children.

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: I did know that it's certainly affected them in terms of their childcare tax B rebate. I think that's what we're talking about.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: What have you been doing to address that?

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: Talking to the Minister. It's the same problem. I've been speaking to the Minister in relation to—we have to fix the whole problem.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: Yes.

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: It's not just women. It's everybody that it's affecting and it's starting to affect more.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: Yes. The Federal Government recently changed the way stage three tax cuts would be rolled out, keeping the 37 per cent tax rate. Are you aware how many police will be grossed up because of the D&D premium being pushed into this bracket, even though they physically earn far less than the 135 per cent bracket?

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Ms YASMIN CATLEY: What I am aware of is most of them are going to get a tax break and I'm very excited about it. However, the problem will still occur and that's exactly why we have to resolve the problem of concessional caps.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: Are you confident you can get that done before the end of the financial year?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: My same answer: I can't give you a time line on that.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: How many meetings have you had with your Federal Labor colleagues to get them on board to fix this problem?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: Three, and a couple of phone conversations.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: What assurances have they given you and on what conditions?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: They're committed to working together collaboratively.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: Committed to working to achieve by the 30 June deadline?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: I cannot give you a time line on that.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: We understand that over 8,000 police will be impacted this financial year, maybe even more. What do you say to those 8,000 police if this problem can't be sorted this financial year? Will they have to put up with this unfair assessment for yet another year?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: It was a terrible system that was designed in the first place and I've inherited this problem.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: And what are you doing to fix it?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: I've already described what I'm going to do to fix it.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: So no confidence for those 8,000 police that it's going to be done by 30 June?

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: It could be more. As I say, I am trying hard and working hard with the Federal colleagues to fix it.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: Can I take you to the Ryde Police Area Command where police continue to raise serious concerns about the police station building being unsuitable. The commitment to refurbish their police station was removed by your Government. What can police officers in Ryde expect regarding their unsuitable premises?

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: New South Wales police property provide us with a list of their priorities and it's those priorities that I have supported in terms of taking them to the budget. I understand there are almost 900 or just a little over 900 police buildings that police maintain across New South Wales. It is a big job and many of them do need work; there's no doubt about that.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: And with respect to Ryde?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: Ryde is one of them, yes, I agree.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: When can they expect their premises to be refurbished and made suitable?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: I don't have that on a time line but, as I say, there are a lot, and there are a lot of people in the queue.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: So no commitment to the officers of Ryde. Thank you, Minister.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Good morning, Minister, Commissioner and other officials. Nice to see you all. Minister, why didn't you go to Moree with the Premier yesterday?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: I was actually at the road safety forum yesterday, but I've been to Moree twice.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Did you get invited to go yesterday?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: We spoke.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Did the Premier tell you?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: No. Obviously I asked Paul. We had Paul go along.

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The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: So when you said, "We spoke," the Premier spoke to you about going?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: I spoke to the Premier's office—chief of staff, yes.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Not directly to the Premier about it, though?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: Not before he left, no.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: When did you become aware that he was going to be up there yesterday?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: I can't remember if it was yesterday or the day before, now.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Could you take that on notice and let us know?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: The answer is going to be the same.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Can't you check when you spoke to his chief of staff and come back to us? You could probably do that in the morning tea break.

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: Okay, I'll come back to you then.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: At any point did the Premier talk to you about moving you on from the Police portfolio?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: Never.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Given that he saw that it was important to go to Moree without you yesterday—and, indeed, after questioning in his budget estimates hearing by a number of members, including me, about the terrible issues with regional crime, he literally got on a plane the next day, but without you and without speaking to you directly—doesn't that show that he hasn't got a lot of confidence in the role that you're performing?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: We've spoken about youth crime in the past and the Premier knows that I have travelled extensively around the State. We sent one of our senior police.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: That's fine. I'm not in any way disrespecting the police. You are the police Minister. The Premier went after questioning in budget estimates—and serious issues in those regions, which we have been talking about for a long time, as you're well aware—he got on a plane, went up to Moree and told the local community that your Government needs to do better. Surely that shows that he has no faith in you in the role.

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: I don't accept that premise. The Premier is very aware of the work that I have been doing around the State in remote and rural areas in relation to finding out on the ground what is going on in the space of youth crime. There is no secret and I have not tried to hide the fact that we do have a problem. But I'll say this to you, Mrs Mitchell: Police are doing a great job out there, right across regional New South Wales, and the Premier saw that yesterday.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: No-one is disputing that, Minister. My issue is with what you're not doing as the Minister.

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: You can't say that I'm not doing my job because I have—

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: You're going to visit places, Minister, but, with respect, there has been nothing new brought in under your leadership as Minister. The crimes in these communities are getting worse; they're escalating and they're getting more violent. The buck stops with you. Yet the Premier was the one who got on a plane and went up and said, "We need to do more." He clearly has no faith in you in the role.

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: We need to do more as a community; that is right. The police are doing everything they can. The police are doing everything they can. For instance, in Moree, about 10 days ago, there were three very significant incidents. The police had those people arrested immediately—all of them. They are doing everything they can.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: No-one is disputing the work of the police, Minister.

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: There is a whole-of-community response that's required here.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: It's your behaviour and your performance that we're concerned about.

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: The whole-of-community response is critically important. We need to have the services there. Why are these children not going to school? It wasn't that long ago, Sarah, that you had the

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opportunity to also address this. This has been going on for a very long time, and you know that. We all have to take a bit of ownership of this and make sure that we are looking after these kids in our remote and rural areas. But the New South Wales police are doing a great job. They are the ones who are heavy lifting. They're the ones that are there between 5.00 p.m. and 9.00 a.m.—no-one else.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: No-one is saying that they're not.

The Hon. MARK LATHAM: Just to continue on that question of Moree, Minister, how many times have you visited as police Minister?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: I have visited extensively for the whole day once. I've been there another time going through to Walgett, but I called in there as well.

The Hon. MARK LATHAM: Have you heard the concerns of the local member, Adam Marshall?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: Yes. I met him there, actually.

The Hon. MARK LATHAM: Did he brief you on the inadequacy of the bail laws, whereby young offenders are bailed out, reoffend, bailed out, reoffend? It's a horrible cycle.

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: He did express those concerns to me.

The Hon. MARK LATHAM: What have you done about it?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: I have spoken to the Attorney General about them.

The Hon. MARK LATHAM: To say what?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: I expressed his concerns.

The Hon. MARK LATHAM: But are they also your concerns, urging the Attorney General to tighten up these bail laws so they're more effective in a place like Moree, which has this youth crime wave?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: Mr Latham, one of the big issues is recidivism, and we really need to look at that. I know you would know about that; you have spoken about that. We have to somehow work on a way, a strategy, to stop kids reoffending. They're staying in the system for too long, as you have said—again and again and again—and then they're ending up, obviously, in jail. The last thing that the police want is young people in jail. I don't think as a community that's what we want to see, either. We need to look at diversionary mechanisms. There are a few spattered around the State which are doing quite well, but we need to look at that more deeply and more broadly.

The Hon. MARK LATHAM: And that is what you've said to the Attorney General?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: We've had those discussions.

The Hon. MARK LATHAM: Not to strengthen bail laws, but to run more diversion programs?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: To be fair, that is the Attorney General's area—to strengthen the bail laws—but the police will administer the law of the day.

The Hon. MARK LATHAM: Further, in Western New South Wales, have you visited Bourke?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: Yes, I have.

The Hon. MARK LATHAM: What conclusions did you reach there, particularly regarding the epidemic of child sexual abuse? When I was there with the former President of the Legislative Council, the police told us that 100 per cent of Indigenous kids over the age of five had been interfered with and the child protection officer said it was 50 per cent. Either way, it is horrific, and it causes the problem of these kids getting out on the street or, we're told, burrowing under the home to sleep or sleeping on the roof to get away from these predators, and they don't go to school the next day. When we visited Bourke High there weren't enough students present to turn on the lights in vast numbers of classrooms. Did the police brief you about this horrific problem?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: I met with community leaders as well—I met with a lot of people while I was up there. Yes, I didn't get exactly those statistics that you have been privy to, but I was certainly advised of the dire situation in a whole matter of domestic violence, drugs and alcohol. You know what I'm talking about. It is just absolutely shocking. Again, the police are really trying up there. They are picking children up in the morning, taking them to the PCYC to give them breakfast, assisting in taking them to school, running loads of programs up there. Matt from the PCYC was a terrific fellow. He is doing a really good job. People are definitely trying very, very hard. There's no doubt about that.

CORRECTED

The Hon. MARK LATHAM: Did you agree with the general conclusion that unless this problem of child sexual abuse is resolved, there's no way of Closing the Gap and there's no way of giving these young people a chance in life, particularly getting them to school?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: I do agree with you, and I agree with those who say it. I do. That's why we need holistic wraparound services. The police are doing all that they can was my take-away from that. We need more services in the communities across remote and regional New South Wales to address these shocking circumstances.

The Hon. MARK LATHAM: When I was there, the police said that one of their frustrations is taking these matters to court. It doesn't result in convictions because of intimidation of the witnesses and a reluctance to appear in court. Some of the police spoke about tougher consorting-type laws that we have, for example, with bikies, to give them a chance to arrest and charge the known predators. Was that mentioned to you, or are you interested in that strengthening of the laws that would give the police a more direct way of dealing with these predators?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: They weren't mentioned to me directly. I'm happy to work with everybody to try to resolve these terrible social issues that these communities are facing.

The Hon. MARK LATHAM: But you agree, and the child protection officers reinforced this, there's a terrible frustration in the paucity of charges and convictions that are laid in child sexual abuse in a place like Bourke? The predators are known but they are not being convicted.

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: As I say, I will work with anybody to try to resolve all of these shocking, terrible social situations that we're seeing.

The Hon. MARK LATHAM: What are you actually doing in detail?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: I'm working with the police, obviously, making sure that they have the resources to do their job. When I'm out there, they are really doing the heavy lifting when it comes to youth, particularly, and domestic violence, for that matter—everything in these communities. They are almost the epicentre of these communities. By and large, everyone I spoke to couldn't praise the police enough. So they are very happy with the police. But it's broader than that, Mr Latham. We need services that are all encompassing to try to resolve these social issues that we have.

The Hon. MARK LATHAM: Would you agree that it's more important to have these predators in jail, to give these children a chance in life, than giving them breakfast after a night on the streets or sleeping on the roof?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: In an ideal world, yes, that would obviously be where we'd want them, if they're proven to have done those awful things.

The Hon. MARK LATHAM: Commissioner, can you add anything? The Minister says she's working with you and other senior police. What is that involving?

KAREN WEBB: To the point that has been raised, it's an intractable problem and it's abhorrent that children are being sexually abused, and abused and exposed to all sorts of things in the home, not just sexual abuse. It doesn't get much worse, really. Certainly police are integral in the community. We've got Aboriginal liaison officers. We've got officers that are Aboriginal engagement officers. We try and engage kids to encourage reporting et cetera. Once it's in the justice system, then we're a part of that justice system, as you know. We're certainly doing as much as we can within the laws, powers and policies that we've got, but we're very present in rural and regional communities, as has been said.

The Hon. MARK LATHAM: Sure, but existing liaison, engagement and laws aren't working, are they? This is a horrific problem. I regard it as the worst social tragedy by far in our State. Don't we need to consider new laws?

KAREN WEBB: That's a matter for Government, Mr Latham. Certainly, I would work with Government in whatever proposal came forward.

The Hon. MARK LATHAM: Have you spoken to the frontline police in Bourke—

KAREN WEBB: I have.

The Hon. MARK LATHAM: —about some of their ideas for changing the law? They are great officers and great people. They want to solve this problem, but they are terribly frustrated. We heard the story from the child protection officers of an 11-year-old girl who was brave enough to take it to court, and then her mother faced

CORRECTED

death threats from those associated with the person who had been charged, and that was the end of the matter. That seems to be typical of the frustration—

KAREN WEBB: It's not just Bourke, sir, unfortunately.

The Hon. MARK LATHAM: No, I know. I'm giving you my experience in Bourke. Are you in liaison with these officers about some of their ideas for improving the laws?

KAREN WEBB: My own background is working in that area, so I'm well aware of the issues and how difficult they are. It is very difficult to prosecute no matter what the circumstances, but there is added complexity, of course. Officers who investigate these matters try to engage Victims Support and all those other services that are available to get victims to stay in the process, because we do want an outcome for them.

The Hon. MARK LATHAM: On a different question, Minister, is there a morale problem in the NSW Police Force?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: That hasn't been explicitly said to me. Again, I go back to the fact that we've got short numbers. We know that. There is no secret there. Retention is a problem. We need to make sure we fill those gaps so that we can have the correct amount of police. I think that they're exhausted, after COVID and then coming into now. They're just exhausted. We really need to acknowledge that. I certainly do. That's why we are looking at innovative ways to get more police through the door, but also to keep them. That's critically important. With train them. It costs a lot of money. They're the best-trained police in this country. The last thing we want to be doing is losing them. We want to keep them. As I say, it hasn't been said to me explicitly but, if you're saying it has, then I would accept that.

The Hon. MARK LATHAM: Minister, have you looked at the data that came out of the November release of the People Matter Employee Survey, and what was your main take-out from that survey result?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: I've had conversations with the Police Association in relation to that. They keep me up to date on that. They've told me that police are exhausted. A lot of the conversations I have with them, in fact, inform me, which is terrific. I thank them very much. They're doing a great job. But, yes, it is exactly that. They are exhausted and obviously the low numbers and people not having enough staff there. But in all of that, they're still doing a fantastic job, which is amazing.

The Hon. MARK LATHAM: What's the solution, given the problem you've identified?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: Yes. It is a problem that all departments are experiencing across this country. It's not a silver bullet, but the first initiative we put in place was paying the recruits. That has had a significant impact. We've had a large uptake of people coming in, so that's terrific. Going through the wage negotiation process—obviously, we had the wage cap in place, and it has been identified that, as a result of the wage cap, we had low payment for our police. That was what Ms Carter just advised us of. Going into negotiations and having better wages and better conditions, I hope will be something that will make the Police Force look really attractive. We need to be contemporary. We need to attract the next generation into the Police Force and we need to be offering a diverse range of measures to encourage them to come and become part of the best police force.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: Good morning, Minister. Are you personally aware of a bomb incident and bomb threat that was made against a resident of Botany on 5 January?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: Yes, I am.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: Are you aware that, upon reporting the threat and the finding of a sort of bomb type of device, that the matter was handed to a junior constable who then went on leave for two weeks, just after that placement?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: I'm not aware of who it was handed to but I certainly asked for a briefing on it when I read in the paper. That's the extent of my knowledge. I wasn't aware that it was handed to a junior constable, no.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: Are you aware that the victim had been the subject of doxing prior to that incident?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: No, I was not.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: Are you aware whether the matter has been referred to the counter-terrorism department of the police?

CORRECTED

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: No, I'm not aware of that. The last I had heard was that it wasn't a bomb but it was a hoax, a look-alike bomb. That was the last briefing that I have received, so I'm not aware of that. But, Mr Hudson, has it been referred to counter-terrorism?

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: Sorry, Mr Hudson, just a sec. Minister, our understanding is that it's described as an improvised explosive device that did contain flammable material and that the victim—it was placed on the victim's family car, and that the victim has had further threats made against them, and that they haven't yet had the secure response from police. Is that your understanding of that?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: No. I'd have to ask Mr Hudson about those types of details.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: I can come back to Mr Hudson. You're not certain whether it's been referred to the counter-terrorism section of the police?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: No, I'm not.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: I'll come back to that, Deputy Commissioner Hudson. How did things go when you sent officers over to London to explore the right person, right response, the PACER? How has that all gone? Let's just recall that the context of this is that we've experienced something like 15—I think it is 15, still, unless that number has risen—deaths in the hands of police of people who are experiencing psychosis or mental health difficulties.

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: I know this is an area that you have deep, genuine concern about, as do I. Like, the last thing we want to see is people with mental health in these experiences. Yes, those two officers have come back and they have written up a review of their findings. I have been presented with that as well as the relevant Ministers and their department heads, in January, and seen the results of what they have come back with. It's important that we remember that this is an internal mental health response from police, not whole-of-government, just a police response. We will make that public soon.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: Can you give any indication of what we might see in terms of changes and, in particular, the time that you're looking at?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: The review looked at past reviews into mental health, coronial inquiries where police were involved and it also included a data review of the NSW Police Force's data. The review recommends that we scope the adoption, or similar to their findings from what they saw with the Metropolitan Police, and we'll look at training. That'll be a significant part of the ongoing mental health response and there will be other recommendations, as I say, when we release the document. I can't give you a date immediately, but it will be in coming weeks. It's imminent, yes.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: Is it fair to say that it's likely in the near term that we will see other first responder, not police, where weapons are not involved in a mental health welfare check?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: One of the recommendations is to set up a working group. That will be the key part of going forward as a government. To your point about other responders, Health are obviously a member of that. The Commissioner and the director of Health are on that as well. It will be that working group that will report back up to both the Commissioner and to Susan Pearce, the director of Health and then to the Government about their recommendations as to what they see as a way going forward. This Government certainly agrees that it's often the case that seeing the blue uniform escalates instead of de-escalates and we want, like you, to ensure that if there is a mental health incident, that they the right person attending that incident.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: Thank you, I might come back to that after but I'm handing to Dr Cohn.

Dr AMANDA COHN: Good morning, Minister.

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: Good morning.

Dr AMANDA COHN: My questions relate to the Special Commission of Inquiry into LGBTIQ hate crimes, which shone a light on large-scale and systemic failures preventing justice for victims and their families as well as the "adversarial or unnecessarily defensive" engagement of the NSW Police Force with the inquiry. What systemic changes are you and the internal working group pursuing to address the failures identified by the inquiry to ensure that this isn't recurring?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: Firstly, can I say thank you to the inquiry. A lot of good work has happened there. The Commissioner has also responded to this on behalf of the New South Wales police but what we have seen is some terrible, shocking instances of police behaviour in the past. That has been acknowledged. Police are doing a lot internally and also with their forward face, if you like, in terms of how they are working with the community, particularly the LGBTIQ community, here in this State. I think it's important to say that I believe

CORRECTED

today, since in my time in the 10 months that I've been the Minister, that the NSW Police Force is diverse and it polices for a diverse community in this State. I certainly see that on a daily basis. There's a lot of goodwill. Under Commissioner Webb we will see and continue to see the New South Wales police policing for everybody, regardless of your faith or your sexuality or, indeed, where you're from. That's exactly the sort of police force we want: contemporary, diverse and ensuring that they are policing for everybody.

Dr AMANDA COHN: In your answer you used the phrase "in the past". There's clearly really open wounds, given the level of distrust and fear. That level of distrust and fear is actually limiting the willingness of LGBTIQ+ people to report crimes and there's a lack of community appetite to welcome police at events like Mardi Gras. What is the Government doing to rebuild that trust with communities?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: Within the Police Force they have GLLOs, which are gay and lesbian liaison officers. They certainly do a lot of work in building that trust with that community, which is very important. The police commissioner obviously meets with various members of the community. I know I certainly have with the gay community. I get a sense that there is a trust definitely building up and a view from the community that things are different. I am not, though, dispelling the fact that there are still wounds; I absolutely accept that and acknowledge that. It will take quite some time to mend those, to be quite honest. That's fair enough, too.

Dr AMANDA COHN: Minister, if I could just ask you to be a bit more specific. I really appreciate your comments about the way that you'd like the Police Force to work and be perceived in the community but could you be more specific? The GLLOs are excellent; I've worked with some in my own community. But what else is being done to address those systemic failures that were highlighted by the inquiry?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: I have been advised that an internal working group has been set up as well to look at those issues. Putting those mechanisms in place and the police acknowledging and taking those internal steps is very important as well.

Dr AMANDA COHN: Do you support the recommendation that the NSW Police Force commission an independent review of the institutional approach to the LGBTIQ community, similar to that completed in Victoria?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: Sorry, can you just say that question again? I just didn't catch what you're—

Dr AMANDA COHN: I'm asking if you support the recommendation for an independent review of the institutional approach, like what was done in Victoria? I appreciate you've got an internal working group. I think that's important, but there are also calls for something independent.

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: At the moment we'll be having the independent working group and we'll work towards what the result of that will be, and the recommendations, from that internal working group.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Minister, you've admitted or you've given evidence that there are— 1,500 vacancies at the moment, did you say, in the Police Force?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: Yes, at least.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: I guess, that's an admission that the police are currently under-resourced in that you don't have officers everywhere that you need them, if you've got that many vacancies, correct?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: Yes, we inherited that.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: I'm asking if that's the current situation, and it is: there's at least 1,500 vacancies.

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: Yes, that's what we inherited and it is still the same.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: We know that we don't have enough police that we need on the ground across the State, and that would include also in regional communities, presumably—in fact, definitely. You said you have spent a lot of time in different regional communities. What are the main areas where we are seeing an increase in terms of crime in regional communities?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: I'd have to have a look at the data to say that. I wouldn't want to mislead. But I think—

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: So you don't know?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: You want me to specifically say which region.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: No, just a couple of examples. What are we seeing on the increase in regional communities? What kind of areas of crime are police telling you that there's more concern?

CORRECTED

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: Areas of crime, okay. Car theft, break and enter, but the biggest across the board is domestic violence. It is the highest and it's increasing, and child sexual abuse. They are the two that are the highest across the State, including in metropolitan Sydney, and then we're seeing elevations of car theft and break and enter.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: When you see more car theft and more break and enter, what do you say to those people who are the victims, who are frightened in their homes every night, who have had their car stolen, who value the excellent work of local police but recognise there are just not enough of them and particularly in regional communities? As Minister, what do you say to them?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: Obviously we want everybody to feel safe in their community.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: But they don't, Minister. People are scared.

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: I know that they are, Sarah, and I'm acknowledging that, and we don't want people to feel scared or unsafe in their community. But the police are doing everything they can. They are out there—as I say, they are the ones who are there between 5.00 p.m.—

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Minister, can I just redirect you. I don't in any way dispute that, and no-one is questioning the hardworking policemen and policewomen who do an amazing job. We all agree; you've got a consensus view on that. Our concern is that there are not enough of them, that they are stretched, they don't have the resources that they need. In many communities you don't have them available for the hours that you're talking about, despite their best efforts, and we all agree on that. What are you doing as Minister to help address some of these issues? You know there are increased crime rates. You know that there are particular communities that are being hit quite hard. What are you doing in terms of supporting the police? What government resources are you bringing to the table so that we can start to address some of these challenges, which are escalating and have gotten worse in the last 10 months?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: I am not quite sure that I accept the premise of that last part of your question.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: But it's happening. The data is there.

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: No, it isn't. That is not true.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Well, it is.

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: No, it's not. That's not true. You're reading the data incorrectly if that's your assessment.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: I'm not. I go on and see what's available.

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: What I will say to you, though—

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: I hear people who tell me what's happening.

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: —is that we, as the Government, take this very, very seriously because we don't want people to feel unsafe in their communities. I am working with the police day in, day out to look at these issues. The police are working in these communities, particularly with youth.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: We know that.

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: Just back to the crime, it is mostly youth in those two areas of break and enter and cars, so I will talk about youth, if that's okay, for the purpose of the Committee. They are working, hand in glove with the schools and with youth groups in these communities, and directly with the youths themselves to try and keep them out of the justice system, to try and mentor them, to try and give them an alternative to what is actually going on. The reality is, Ms Mitchell, that there needs to be a whole-of-government response to this in terms of resources and support.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Absolutely.

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: The police can't be everything to everyone. You're saying, though, that it is the police—

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: No. I'm asking what you're doing.

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: You are suggesting that it is the police's responsibility.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: No. That is not what I said. I'm saying it is your responsibility as police Minister.

CORRECTED

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: It's not the police's responsibility to be there, to be everything to everyone, 24 hours a day.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Minister, I have not said that. What I have said is that you are the police Minister. Our police are under-resourced, particularly in regional communities, and we are seeing an increase in crime. We are seeing and hearing stories daily of elderly people being bashed in their own homes, stabbed in their front yards, teenagers waking up to their parents being held at knifepoint. This is what is happening. I know that you know, because you and I have spoken about it. My concern is things are not getting better, and we need to be doing more. The Premier has recognised that by going up to Moree. You've just given evidence that I agree with: that this is a holistic issue, that you need to look at recidivism, you need to look at education. Why will you not back an inquiry, then, into regional crime, where a parliamentary committee can go to multiple communities, speak to all of the service providers, look at this as a whole-of-government issue and provide recommendations? Why do you not support an inquiry into these issues and into regional crime?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: Because of all those reasons you just said before you asked that question, because we know the problem. We know what the problems are.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Why don't you listen to the community to hear the solutions? They're dying to tell you. They want to know that you're listening. The Premier flying in and out of Moree for one day, you doing a day in a certain community—that doesn't give people the chance to tell their story and for community organisations to come together and give solutions to government. What are you so afraid of in terms of a regional crime inquiry? Why can't you just support it?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: Because I don't want a talkfest, quite frankly. I want action. And that is—

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: You haven't done anything.

The Hon. BOB NANVA: Point of order, Chair—

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: What have you done? What have you put in place, new, since you've been Minister, in the last 10 months, in any of these issues?

The Hon. BOB NANVA: Chair, a significant degree of latitude has been provided to Ms Mitchell to ask the question, but the same courtesy is not being extended to the Minister to answer the question. I just ask that the procedural fairness resolution be upheld.

The CHAIR: I think that's the same as last time. Please allow the Minister a chance to answer before you hector further.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Thank you, Chair. I'll just repeat, then. Minister, since you've been Minister, what have you done? What's new under your watch? What new initiatives have you done specifically to address issues in rural crime? Seeing as you don't need a committee, you've got the answers—what are they?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: Sarah, I am not going to subscribe to a talkfest. That's all it will be. It will hold up—

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Can I just redirect you, Minister?

The Hon. BOB NANVA: Point of order—

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: I don't want outcomes in 18 months, Sarah, to address this. I want outcomes to happen on a regular basis.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: You haven't done anything for a year. We're still waiting.

The Hon. BOB NANVA: We had the same question, and then we fell into the same problem. The Minister wasn't given the opportunity to answer the question before being redirected from a legitimate answer that she was trying to provide.

The CHAIR: I uphold the point of order.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Minister, could you give me one example of a new initiative, under your watch as Minister, that's come into a regional community to address issues of rural crime.

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: We've had a number out of the youth command. I was with the HOGS ride. I visited five of the different—

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: That's new under you?

CORRECTED

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: What I'm saying is that I went out there and I worked with them at the PCYC. What they have done is partner with the NRL and the PCYC, which they hadn't—

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: I'm aware of that. But, Minister, that's not your initiative, with respect.

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: No, you're not aware of it, because they haven't done it in the past. It was new, that they partnered—

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: But that's not yours. You're talking about an external group coming and doing something with police.

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: With the PCYC and with the youth command. The—

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: That's fantastic, but that's not you as Minister delivering that.

The Hon. BOB NANVA: Point of order, Chair—

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Can't even give me one example.

The CHAIR: Order!

The Hon. BOB NANVA: It would assist the conduct of this hearing if—

The Hon. GREG DONNELLY: And for Hansard as well.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Sure. I apologise, Chair. I'll just move on. One last question, though, on this issue, Minister. Do you agree with your colleague Minister Moriarty that the calls from country mayors, NSW Farmers, the Police Association and the CWA for an inquiry into regional crime is a scare campaign?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: I think that it's going to be a talkfest. I think it's going to waste time. I think that we'll be wasting the time of our police in here. We don't need politicians in Macquarie Street telling us there's a problem. I'm telling you what I think about it. I think that it's something that is unnecessary. We know the problems. No-one's hiding from the problems. But I want results. I don't want to come in here, have a talkfest, wait for 18 months to get some recommendations. By then it'll be all too late. We need to be acting now and responsive now, and that's exactly what the New South Wales police are doing.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: But I'm asking what you're doing, Minister, and you haven't been able to give me a single example of anything new. For you to say to those communities that the opportunity to appear before a parliamentary committee in their towns—we travel as a parliament to hear their stories—and give that evidence, which is very emotional and is impacting people daily, is a talkfest is completely disrespectful to anyone who's been a victim of crime in those regional communities and to those who are perpetrating, who need a lot more support than they're getting from your Government. I think you should really seriously think about supporting an inquiry so that we can actually get some action across the Parliament to fix some of these issues.

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: I think 18 months down the track—

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: It's up to you.

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: —reading recommendations—

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: It doesn't take that long.

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: Well, 12 months will even be too long. Any time is too long.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: We're here a year into your Ministry, with respect, Minister—

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: I'm about action now, Sarah—

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: —and there's nothing new and it's getting worse.

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: —and making sure that we actually address these issues now.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: It's on your watch, and you need to be the one who can be okay with that.

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: That's exactly what I'm doing. It's what the New South Wales police are doing. We're committed to action now in these areas. They're out there in the communities. We've got nine new YAMs starting from 1 July—the Youth Action Meetings—

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: You've got your note now, Minister. I want to redirect you with just one more question.

CORRECTED

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: —which we know will be excellent.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Will you attend the country mayors meeting on 22 March where they want to speak about rural crime? You're invited. Will you be going?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: I have a police awards ceremony on that day, which I had already agreed to do. I'm seeing if I can negotiate—because it's here, as I understand it?

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: It is, yes.

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: I have to go up north to that. I'll see if I can somehow jiggle my diary around. I do have a police awards service that I am expected at, and I will say that I found my photo on the invitation, which was rather sneaky, I thought, given that I had not accepted.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: You've just said that you've been—sorry, a group of mayors inviting you and putting on a flyer to say that you've been invited is sneaky?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: No. I'm on the list as a speaker.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: I've seen the flyer. It says that you've been invited, along with a lot of other parliamentary colleagues from across the board.

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: It says I'm on first. It says I'm on at nine o'clock.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Well you could be, if you would like to make that a priority.

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: I did go to Gunnedah to the mayors' law and order forum that they had up there, but unfortunately the mayor didn't turn up.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: Minister, how many notifications of intent to protest do we see being applied for officially each year?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: I will have to get you that figure. I can get it for you.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: I'm happy for you to take it on notice.

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: It's around 1,500, just in metropolitan Sydney.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: Does policing these protests come at a cost to the New South Wales taxpayer?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: No, police attend these protests in their normal course of duty.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: You don't know how much each protest would cost?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: As I say, it's in their normal course of duty so they're rostered on and they attend protests, yes.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: Do you agree with the Police Association of NSW president that events like these are placing enormous strain on officers?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: We have definitely seen that, yes.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: Minister, is it correct that the pro-Palestinian protests cost around \$220,000 or close to a quarter of a million of taxpayers' dollars each time they are conducted?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: I don't think you would be able to use that figure because it depends on how many police are attending, I suspect. I don't think that that would be a correct figure.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: Perhaps you could get me a closer figure; if you could take that on notice?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: Can we do that?

The Hon. MARK LATHAM: I think that's the overtime bill.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: Is that the overtime bill, is it? It would be interesting—Minister, I'm happy for you to take that on notice.

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: I won't take it on notice. We'll get the figure to you.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: That would be great. Thank you.

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: It depends, though, on how many are there. For instance—

CORRECTED

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: Minister, I understand you don't have it in front of you.

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: I just want to explain to you—

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: I'm very happy for you to get the figure to us later today or on notice, just as long as we get the information.

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: I'll get it to you later, but I just want you be clear, though, it depends on, obviously—it is a risk assessment that is used, and the number.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: Where do additional police come from to police those protests when we already have a shortage?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: As has just been described by Mr Latham, it's overtime, so they make a choice to come and work on those particular days.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: Hence the cost because of the overtime bill. Minister, how many police are on sick leave? Would it be over a thousand?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: I want to give you the right figure. Just leave that with me and I'll give you the right figure.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: Perhaps you could also get me the figures of the numbers of police on long service leave. You've already told us the figure by which we're under strength of about 1,500. Given under strength, sick leave, long service leave, needing to use overtime, have you considered any other policies to deal with these very regular protests. If so, what are they?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: We do, as I've said to you, just in the city alone, have 1,500 a year and the police have been, and are used to, dealing with protests in this city on a regular basis.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: On a weekly basis, Minister?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: It can be seven a week, in actual fact. They deploy their resources as required and, as I say, always with a risk-based approach.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: Have you had any discussions with the organisers of these protests that perhaps they could look at moving it to monthly to reduce the strain on the Police Force?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: I haven't personally but the police do.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: Do you intend to do that?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: The police do that. Obviously it's an operational matter and it is only right that they do that.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: You don't personally think that you could show some leadership in this respect?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: I speak to the police about it and show my leadership to them, and we discuss it, yes.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: Have you spoken to NSW Business Chamber, the Sydney Business Chamber, business owners or residents who are being impacted by these continual protests?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: No, I haven't. Well, I've spoken to people, obviously, from the general public when I'm out speaking with them but, no, not specifically that list of people.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: You would be aware, for example, that there are people who live on the routes of these protests who cannot get their car out to visit family members or attend medical appointments on the day that these protests regularly go past their residences?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: No-one has raised that with me.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: I'm raising it with you now. This is why I'm asking, who have you spoken to. Who are the stakeholders directly affected—as well as the police, but the members of the public directly affected—by these regular protests? What are you doing to engage with them?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: I haven't had anyone reach out to me about this, actually, which is news to me.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: Have you reached out to anybody? That is the question.

CORRECTED

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: The police. We make sure that the streets are safe; that is the police role. Let's remember what the police role in all of this is, and that is to keep the peace and safety of the community when these protests are underway.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: What would you say if people were deliberately inciting these protests? Do you think that's appropriate?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: Obviously the police are there to keep it calm and peaceful, and to make sure that people are safe on the streets. We don't accept incitement or hateful things being said, or racism at all.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: So the role is always reactive rather than your role in leadership, proactively reaching out to try to ameliorate some of these protests?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: My role and the police role is, as I say, to keep the streets safe and to make sure that they are done in a peaceful way.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: Do you support the views of the Hon. Stephen Lawrence and the Hon. Anthony D'Adam in their statements on the Israeli-Gaza war, or do you back the Premier, Chris Minns?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: People's personal views on these things are their personal views.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: What is your view? Do you support the Hon. Stephen Lawrence and the Hon. Anthony D'Adam or the Premier, Chris Minns?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: I think that what happened in Israel was absolutely shocking. I think that it's been expressed by many, their views on these things.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: Do you support the Premier, Minister?

The Hon. MARK LATHAM: Point of order: It's not within the ministerial responsibilities of this Minister to be an expert in foreign policy, which under the Australian Constitution is a responsibility of the Federal Government in Canberra. People might want to run for Canberra one day, if they're so fascinated by this Middle Eastern foreign policy, but it's certainly not the Minister's responsibility.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: To the point of order: The Minister is clearly being asked about matters that pertain to her jurisdiction in relation to protest. Whilst the question is addressing the broader issue, it's still directly relevant. Broad latitude is given to members to ask questions.

The Hon. MARK LATHAM: She's responsible for policing the protests, not for Gaza.

The CHAIR: I think we'll continue the questioning. It's a valid point of order, but the Minister can decide to answer how she pleases.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: Minister, the Premier accused the Hon. Anthony D'Adam of being deliberately inflammatory when the Labor MP said Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu was responsible for killing thousands of innocent children. Do you agree with the Premier?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: I think that people can have their views. We're a very broad church in this place, there's no doubt about that. I do support the Premier, yes.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: Do you agree with the criticism by the Premier of the Hon. Stephen Lawrence about his statement where he accused Israel of ethnic cleansing?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: Yes, I do.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: Minister, have you incited climate activists to block the world's largest coal port?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: No.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: Did you not say:

I applaud people for getting involved, I think that it's important that people are having these discussions – we all know where things are headed.

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: What I will say is that we—and I, certainly—accept that people have a right to protest in this State, so long as they do it peacefully and within framework of the law.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: Do you think that it's extraordinary as the police Minister to be encouraging people to be involved in a blockade of the Port of Newcastle? On the one hand you're upholding the law, and on the other hand you seem to be inciting blockades in breach of the law.

CORRECTED

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: The blockade in Newcastle is an annual event which has been happening for more than a decade, and it's interesting that it has only become an issue last year. The Port Authority has authority over what takes place there and what decisions are made around the comings and goings of the port.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: So you're supporting the blockade, then? Is that what I'm hearing?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: What I'm saying is that that decision is made outside of the responsibility of the police Minister.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: Yet on the Rising Tide social media site, it says, "We appreciate the police Minister's comments on our blockade."

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: I can't speak on behalf of Rising Tide. I'm not a member.

The CHAIR: I might ask you some questions about shooting range management in the State. In this State, frankly, shooting range management is a mess. It seems that it is run very unprofessionally, and there seems to be a culture of victimisation of clubs by the Firearms Registry. Would you agree with this?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: This is news to me. I'm unaware of that but I'd be happy to speak to you about it further.

The CHAIR: I've got some more questions. By what compliance standards does the New South Wales Firearms Registry judge various rifle, pistol and shotgun ranges across the State? Are they based on a military standard?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: I'm not sure of the technicality of the response to that, so I will have to ask Mr Hudson if that's okay.

The CHAIR: I might direct that to Mr Hudson. He's the expert on all these things.

DAVID HUDSON: I do not profess to be an expert, Mr Borsak, on firearms but, in relation to ranges, there is a criteria by which they are assessed. It doesn't totally replicate the military requirements. Obviously, they are different. Some military ranges authorise the use of quite high-powered weapons, which are not available to the general public. There is a difference in the standards. But this is the first I've heard of such criticism of the way that the ranges are managed by the Firearms Registry. I'll certainly have a look at that.

The CHAIR: Mr Hudson, you are aware, of course—it has been going on for decades—that the military templates are what apply to ranges, regardless of how relevant they are or not.

DAVID HUDSON: They're certainly a guide, yes.

The CHAIR: We've certainly talked about that in the past. Military templates are what are being applied. The range conditions employed by civilian ranges are fixed firing points, strenuously supervised by range officers at all times. Why are the compliance standards used those for military ranges, which feature fully automatic—and they don't appear on ordinary civilian ranges—grenades and mortar fire as well as moving fire and active fire? Surely, these are entirely inappropriate and excessive for civilian ranges. Would you agree with that statement?

DAVID HUDSON: I'd agree that some of those ordinances are totally inappropriate for a civilian range. Civilian ranges are normally—

The CHAIR: But, Mr Hudson, they're the sorts of standards that get applied to all ranges all over the State all the time.

DAVID HUDSON: As I said, military standards are used as a guide, sir. They are not totally replicated. Obviously, there are some differences. Civilian ranges can be housed in residential areas or areas which are not isolated, like military ranges are. They are very isolated from the general community. For the assessments that the Firearms Registry conducts, the interests are for public safety, which is the intent of the Act and the intent of their assessments.

The CHAIR: You raised the issue of the Firearms Registry conducting reviews. Having said that, can you detail the qualifications of the staff members—for example, Max Doogood—who ratify and control ranges across the State? What was the criteria for their employment in the past? What sort of professional learning do these employees regularly complete to ensure that they are at the forefront of civilian range design and compliance standards? Are they subject to the same code of conduct as police and governmental jobs when interacting with clubs and stakeholders in the course of their employment?

DAVID HUDSON: I'll take that question on notice, sir. The individual—I'm not totally sure. I didn't recruit the individual or individuals. The registry goes through that process. I'm not privy to their CVs. I can do that.

CORRECTED

The CHAIR: Thank you. When a range is restricted for one reason or another—and, believe me, it happens every day of the week—what sort of technical report is provided to the club management committee? Does this include the ballistic and technical mapping measures necessary to overcome the reasons for the restrictions? And in what time frame does the committee receive the report after restrictions are handed down?

DAVID HUDSON: Again, you're speaking, I assume, in relation to individual reports that you have access to, which I don't. I would take that on notice and get back to you, as a general principle.

The CHAIR: Mr Hudson, the reality is no such reports are ever issued. It's just the whim of Mr Doogood, or whoever happens to be the inspector at the time. One day he comes along and does an assessment and says, "This is what you've got to do." He says, "I'll come back in a certain amount of time." He comes back and suddenly "Oh no, that's not what I said. You have to do this, this and this." No written reports are ever issued, Mr Hudson. It's totally unprofessional and, frankly, it's unacceptable. It's been going on for decades and decades and decades. Prior to him it was Mr Oakley and others. It always goes on. This is a process of oppression of clubs and committees. It's extremely expensive and extremely costly and it's, frankly, unnecessary. Would you agree with that?

DAVID HUDSON: I don't agree, sir, without—it's not an issue that's been raised with me through the firearms consultative committee. You say it's gone on for decades and I'm surprised I haven't heard of that. I'll certainly have a look at it, and we'll take it on notice.

The CHAIR: I don't know what goes on in the firearms consultative committee but I would be surprised if these discussions around range management haven't occurred in the past. I would be very surprised by that. If the Firearms Registry does not hire range compliance officers with technical qualifications—and that's my assertion—that allow them to give data-informed design decisions suited to civilian shooting ranges to the Commissioner, is the Commissioner aware of the significant liability threat that these unqualified positions leave the taxpayer in? Commissioner, would you be aware of that? It's your delegated authority that this is being done under.

KAREN WEBB: As Mr Hudson said, I'll take that on notice. It's the first time I've become aware of that being a concern. We'll get the information for you.

The CHAIR: Why does the New South Wales Firearms Registry—again, perhaps this is through to you, Mr Hudson—continue to strenuously resist accepting industry-based, professional risk assessment-derived range decisions from companies who specialise in this area of expertise internationally and instead hand this huge responsibility to unqualified employees?

DAVID HUDSON: I think I said earlier, sir, I'll take the question of the qualifications of the employees on notice. I didn't recruit them, but I'll certainly get back to you.

The CHAIR: I can go back to the earliest days of the Government when Mike Gallacher was the police Minister. We went through exactly the same discussions with him. We went through the same discussions in relation to budget estimates about range management, the qualification of people on ranges, the risk assessment process, the unprofessional nature and approach of the interaction of the Firearms Registry assessors with the club committees, and it's all strenuously been ignored over the decades. It's all strenuously been allowed to continue as a process, in my view, of oppression. It's unnecessary and it's unprofessional of the police. You should be doing better—much, much better. At the end of the day, if it requires the Minister do something—Ms Catley, you really should have a very serious look at the appropriateness of how military range templates are being applied, and standards, to the New South Wales range arrangements.

Frankly, the clubs of this State, and the shooters, don't have enough money to continually chase the New South Wales Firearms Registry around the block every year—year in, year out—trying to deal with the whims and compliance whispers that come from the Firearms Registry in accordance with what something like Mr Doogood would say. One day it's fine and then he turns up a month later and says, "I'm sorry, but what I told you before is not appropriate." For example, the Goulburn range is still closed to centrefire shooting because, purportedly, a council facility—you shake your head. Have you heard this example before?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: I don't know if it was Goulburn but there was one that the council had approved a property close to—that's the one, is it?

The CHAIR: The Goulburn one actually has—or I think it may have changed now. If you looked at the template on the military template on the map, the Goulburn Council was going to be building a facility right up in the far corner of it. That has since been removed. But the funny thing about it is that there's a mountain in between that. There's a mountain! It begs any credulity. It begs any relief that this range is still closed to normal centrefire. That range has been operating since the days when the Anzacs were shooting there, yet we can get no

CORRECTED

compliance help from the Government and we cannot get the Firearms Registry to actually lift those restrictions on that range and let's get on with it. What has changed? It's just, in my view, straight up and down bastardisation, Minister. That's what it is. It's unnecessary and it should not be done in that fashion.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: Minister, can I just go back to the matter that you were briefed on about the bomb threat on the resident in Botany. What was your response to that? I know a follow-up about whether it has been referred to the counter-terrorism section of the police.

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: I had just asked for a briefing on it and asked to be kept informed; that's all.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: And have you been kept informed?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: Well, as far as I know. As I said, I refer to my previous comments, which was I'm just finding out about it, and then I was told that it wasn't a bomb.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: Were you told that there was a device of sorts there?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: I don't know if the word "device" was the correct word but there was certainly a—

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: So you were briefed and the assumption then is that your brief was, "This is not a serious matter."

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: Well, I don't know if it was so cut and dry to say it wasn't a serious matter. The fact that anybody in a residential street would have something put on their car that's still threatening—let's be honest. It was still a threat of sorts; that's for sure. So I don't think it was not serious. The police take everything serious like that, as you very well know.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: Do you think, Minister, it is serious if somebody makes a report like this and then the junior constable goes on leave for two weeks and the victim hears nothing and is still not hearing anything—

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: As I said—

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: —and has been subject to further threats?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: As I've said, I'm unaware of that and it would be best if we asked Commissioner Hudson.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: Deputy Commissioner, has the matter been referred to the counterterrorism part of the police?

DAVID HUDSON: Not to my knowledge, Ma'am. I know that the Rescue and Bomb Disposal Unit attended the incident at the time. They are attached to the counterterrorism command and work under their control. My understanding was that, whilst there may have been accelerant, it was a non-operable device, so it couldn't have detonated. I think it was rendered safe by the Rescue and Bomb Disposal Unit and the matter was to be investigated by South Sydney Police Area Command, within that structure. For a counterterrorism investigation, there needs to be a political, religious or ideological cause identified within the investigation. I don't think that reached that threshold and therefore it was left with the command. Unsure within the command whether it was allocated to detectives or left with constables. I couldn't comment. That's the last involvement that my command's had, from my understanding.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: Are you aware, though, that the victim had been the subject of doxing and that the victim does hold political views, and that those political views of the person have been known?

DAVID HUDSON: The full extent of the details, I have not been briefed on. I was briefed on the fact that the Rescue and Bomb Disposal Unit had attended, rendered the device safe. The investigation, with agreement, was left—

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: Sorry, Deputy Commissioner, but are you aware that the demand in the threat was that the individual, the victim, take down a Palestinian flag? Does that not suggest some form of significant political motivation in the threat, both material and existential, that was posed to this victim?

DAVID HUDSON: Potentially. As I said, I was briefed by my assistant commissioner. Between the attending police, there are levels of senior officers that make those decisions, by agreement, including the superintendents in charge of the terrorism investigation squad.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: Deputy Commissioner, would you take it on notice—that this is a matter that you really should look some more at?

CORRECTED

DAVID HUDSON: I will ensure that the commander of counterterrorism reviews it and I'll take advice from him.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: The words, Deputy Commissioner, were, "Enough! Take down flag! One chance!!!!"

DAVID HUDSON: I'm not too sure if there was a history prior to that which may have contributed to the response; I would have to dig deeper into that matter.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: So history would determine that it's okay for somebody to be threatened like that, and the police would walk away and say, "It should be fine"?

DAVID HUDSON: No, I'm not saying that at all.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: Minister, does it concern you?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: I think that the—well, I don't "think". The deputy commissioner has just advised you that he's going to review it back through Counterterrorism, and I think that that's a good result.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: Suffice to say there is a victim and a family out there right now that are in grave fear for their own safety, and that it's a matter that's been reported to police. That victim is not getting the support or the investigation that the public would think is warranted for this kind of circumstance. Is it correct to understand that the Youth Strategy is in place to replace the Suspect Target Management Plan, Minister, or is this a separate thing?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: Separate.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: In what ways will this Youth Strategy differ from the Suspect Target Management Plan?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: The Youth Strategy is the Youth Command, and it's important in delivering the key priorities of the NSW Police Force's Next Generation (Youth and Aboriginal), which is one of the commissioner's focuses.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: Will it still require the administrative sign-off from the Commissioner?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: Is that the case?

KAREN WEBB: Can I answer, ma'am?

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: Please.

KAREN WEBB: As you rightly point out, the STMP process was stopped.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: After the report that found maladministration and other things.

KAREN WEBB: It didn't, actually, but we've had that discussion before. Voluntarily, I suspended it for adults as well as youth, and there's a working party. Consultation is actually occurring at the moment in relation to a program that we're piloting to replace STMP. But the Youth Strategy you refer to, like other strategies for particular crime types, will be the source of options that will be available to us for how we manage crime in commands.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: How will young people be selected for targeting under the new system?

KAREN WEBB: In each command, both metropolitan and regional, commanders hold, minute and manage crime in the command and identify suspected offenders et cetera. PDR is short for prevention, disruption and response. There will be different options depending on the situation that has been identified, so there's not one size fits all. It is envisaged that the use of the PDR in each command for a problem that they're dealing with will rely on the strategies in the Youth Strategy, for example—the DV strategy if it's a DV offender—so that, say, for a DV one, the DV registry will be the point of contact to say, "What's the type of strategy that might work in reducing or targeting—

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: Thank you, Commissioner, and I might come back to you later to get some more detail around this. Minister, are you satisfied that this new system differs enough from the old system, or has the right tools and the right fit compared with the last system?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: As I understand it, it's more targeted, as the Commissioner was just describing. A further part of the Youth Strategy is working in areas of prevention, intervention and partnership with community, bringing all of the community stakeholders in as well.

CORRECTED

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: But is it fair to say, Minister, I think that the STMP had a similar intent and had similar things. How does this actually differ from the whole program? Are we suggesting it's more holistic or it's more personalised? What are those key identifiers that are different from the old system to ensure that young people won't be unfairly targeted, and vulnerable people and First Nations children won't be wrongly targeted?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: Well, that's certainly not—I think it's probably important to say—

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: Sorry, I was about to say it's not me that found those things, remember.

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: No.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: It was the LECC that found those things?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: It was, yes, and I think it's fair to begin by saying the police acknowledge that, and that is why they are moving to this new strategy. It's the intention to have a more holistic, as you referred, approach—and more targeted—and bringing in those stakeholders and working in a collaborative way around youth to try and get better outcomes, as I said, in prevention and intervention.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: Minister, as the Minister responsible, what safeguards are you demanding? What do they look like in terms of how this is rolling out, to make sure it's not like the last one?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: As I say, we've taken on board—the police have taken on board and I have taken on board—the recommendations from LECC and acknowledged what they have concluded, and that is why we're moving to this new strategy. I don't think "safeguards" is the right terminology to use. I think that the holistic Youth Strategy is a sound one, and I think that it gives an opportunity for the police to do further good work that they do in the community, with youth, bringing in stakeholders, as I say, looking at prevention and also looking at intervention. We want to keep kids out of the justice system, and I know you feel the same, Sue. I'm hopeful that this is a strategy that will exactly direct its attention to that.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: Minister, Premier Minns has reiterated his intention to change anti-vilification laws to outlaw the Nazi salute and other associated symbols. Do you agree with this?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: Yes.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: What aspects of the law are you looking at changing?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: Obviously, I'm the police Minister. I don't have carriage of that legislation.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: What discussions have you had with the Premier about this matter?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: You do know that there's a review underway, by Tom Bathurst. We will be guided by Tom and his other colleagues in what they see in that review.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: You haven't had specific discussions with the Premier or the Attorney General about this particular issue?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: We talk about this as a party.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: You're just waiting for the results of the general review; you're not specifically looking at outlawing Nazi salutes and Nazi symbols?

The Hon. BOB NANVA: Point of order, Chair—

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: They already are.

The Hon. BOB NANVA: This is a hearing for Police and Counter-terrorism, not the Attorney General. So I just ask you rule it out of order. It's not relevant to the terms of reference.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: To the point of order: The operational implementation of any legislative change would fall to the police. Therefore, the Minister should also be across the issue, and I would make the point that it is in order to be asking what discussions are happening across Government on this issue.

The CHAIR: I'll uphold the response. We've only got one minute to go.

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: I think they already are. If you look at the legislation, 93ZA—

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: If they already are, why then did you say that you agreed with the Premier about intention to change laws to outlaw the salute and other symbols?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: I was referring to the review that's underway. I apologise. I misheard your question.

CORRECTED

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: So there's no intention to do anything specific in relation to further laws with respect to Nazi symbols, other than as part of the general ongoing review of anti-vilification laws.

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: It is being reviewed, as you well know, and it has been well said publicly that there is a review underway to ensure that the legislation is fit for purpose.

The Hon. MARK LATHAM: Minister, in November the Premier said that policing the Palestinian protests costs a million dollars per time. Is that an accurate figure?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: I would have to check. I wouldn't want to mislead you. I'd have to check if that's correct.

The Hon. MARK LATHAM: Okay. In answer to a question on notice earlier this month, you said that an accurate total cost is not available. So where did the Premier get that very precise million-dollar figure from? Perhaps you could take that on notice as well.

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: You might need to ask the Premier that.

The Hon. MARK LATHAM: If your office or any of the police notified him of that, that would be useful, to take that on notice.

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: I'm unaware of that.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: Minister, given the comments you've made about the knowledge that sometimes the uniform is an escalating feature and given the fact that you have given evidence that you know that we have or it appears that there is an escalation in youth crime, particularly across the regions—I'm still not convinced of that data and how that's broken down, but it's apparent—

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: I don't want to interrupt you, but it's not just the regions, by the way. It's also metropolitan.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: That's right—across the State. Given you've given evidence that what we really need is a much more holistic approach, are you directly having conversations with the Attorney General, on behalf of police, that raising the age of criminal responsibility could be an important factor to actually looking at preventing youth crime and providing young people with the assistance they need, which is not necessarily policing?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: I'm having conversations with all of my colleagues in the justice space, Sue, because if we don't, and if we don't act, then we will not be resolving this problem. The Attorney General, of course, is part of that and everything is on the table. We've got our out-of-home care kids. I was down in Wagga last week, speaking about some kids who were in out-of-home care, and they're not being cared for. There are so many problems out there. I am talking to all of them. I want to give you confidence. We all get on really well, and we all want to make a change. So we will do our best to make sure that we do that.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: Finally, though, can I put on that—

The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM: It's time.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: You're aware of that—

The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM: Point of order—

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: I want to clear a few things up, if that's okay.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: You've got a 15 minutes, haven't you?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: I want to clear a few things up, if that's okay?

The CHAIR: Government questions? No.

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: Is it okay if I—

The CHAIR: If they're not asking questions, you can respond.

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: Thank you very much. I want to say to you, Sarah, that the trip was Wednesday and I knew on Wednesday that the trip was planned to go to Moree.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: What time on Wednesday?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: I don't have the time.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Could you check that for me?

CORRECTED

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: It was Wednesday. I think that that's fine, isn't it, that it was on Wednesday?

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: I'd like to know if it was the morning or the afternoon.

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: Okay, the minutiae. I have the police figures for you. The long-term sick leave, approximately 1,400.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: Thank you.

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: I'll definitely have the long service leave for you. Can I clarify this, too: I said before when you were asking me about crimes in regional areas that domestic violence is the most prevalent and I think I said child sexual assault. I'm sorry, that was not quite correct. It's sexual assault. For the Committee's accuracy, sexual assault is the second most increasing crime happening across the State.

The CHAIR: No Government questions. We'll now take a break. Sorry, there is another one.

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: I've got the figure. There are 205 police on long service leave.

The CHAIR: Thank you. We'll now take a break and return at 11.15 a.m.

(Short adjournment)

The CHAIR: We will recommence questioning.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Thank you, Chair. Minister, did you have a chance to check in the morning tea break whether it was the morning or afternoon that you became aware of the Premier's visit to Moree?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: I checked on a few things actually, which I want to go through. It's Wednesday.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Yes, I knew it was Wednesday. I wanted to know if it was Wednesday morning or afternoon.

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: I can't clarify that. But I do also want to—just to Ms Higginson—

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: No, with respect, can you do that in someone else's time, if that's okay? There is Government time at the end.

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: I just wanted to clear up a few things, that was all. Mr Chair, can I?

The CHAIR: It's really up to the Opposition to allow that or not.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: I'm happy to hear it but if you could do it in Government time, because we've got limited time with you, Minister, if that's okay?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: Okay.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Thank you. Do you have regular meetings with the Premier?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: What's your definition of "regular"?

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Do you go in and have a one-on-one meeting with him? You and the Premier?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: Yes, sure, I've had a number of them.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: How many?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: I don't know.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Could you take that on notice?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: No, I won't take it on notice. They're meetings that I had with my colleagues—

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Well, I'd like an answer.

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: They're meetings that I had with my colleagues. Of course I meet with the Premier.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: When was the last time that you had a one-on-one meeting with the Premier?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: I couldn't tell you but I speak to him regularly as well.

CORRECTED

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Okay, but you can't remember when you last went in and sat down to talk about issues?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: No. As you very well know, it's very busy when you're a Minister but usually it's when Parliament is sitting.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Right, okay. Thanks, Minister. What will you do about the Parramatta PCYC being forced to close its doors due to issues with private rent hikes and then being in an untenable financial position?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: I have spoken to Ben Hobby from the PCYC last week, as a matter of fact. Ben is looking at options as, as you know, the PCYC is not a not-for-profit organisation and they are funded through philanthropic and other measures and the State Government, the Federal Government and local government, in actual fact, do provide some funding for them. Ben is looking at options. He's certainly meeting with the member for Parramatta, Donna Davis, in relation to that. They're looking for a new location. He has described to me the crippling rates of rent that he is paying there and he's looking at other options to relocate.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: But Minister, you've given evidence this morning that you want to keep young people out of the criminal justice system. Surely the PCYC is an important part of that? They have told their members that they're closing the doors. What are you doing, as police Minister, to keep them operational?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: Ben and I discussed this directly and, as he said to me, "The Auburn PCYC is only a few kilometres away" and it's very—

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Right, so they can just go somewhere else and that's the solution?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: Ben advised me when I asked the question about this exact matter that the Auburn PCYC is quite close by. They are more than happy to implement some bus transfers. He said to me that they know the exact location where young people gather and they are looking at measures to put in place to accommodate that.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Minister, the Coalition committed funding through WestInvest to build an entire new PCYC in Parramatta. A location was chosen. Where's that money gone? Why can't you use that to build a new centre for them?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: The Government had different priorities and obviously that was not one of them in terms of what the WestInvest—

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: So Parramatta youth and having a PCYC built fit for purpose in an already identified site is not a priority of your Government? Is that your evidence?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: I think it's important that we also put the amount of money that the Government had allocated. It was \$111 million.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: So they're not worth that?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: Well, the PCYC themselves have told me that that was quite a large amount of money to be spending on a PCYC. In fact, I was at Wagga last week and it cost \$25 million and it's an extraordinary—

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: If I can just redirect you back to—

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: You probably haven't been there but it is an extraordinary building.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: I want to redirect you back to Parramatta. Will you commit to putting any funding on the table from the State Government to support them to either build or move to a new location?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: I won't be making any funding commitments in budget estimates.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: So what do they do in the interim, the kids? Maybe they just go to one down the road and you think that sufficient as police Minister? You're happy with that as a response?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: In my discussions with the CEO, he certainly told me that that was something that they were considering, which is a positive thing, and speaking to the local schools as well. They are looking at options. As we well know, they sold the pre-existing site and they hadn't purchased another site to put a new PCYC in Parramatta, in the CBD, and now they're looking at those options—and, as I said, the local member is certainly assisting them.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: But with no financial assistance from the Government?

CORRECTED

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: Well, I won't be making any budget announcements in—

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: But you've announced that you think spending \$100 million on that was excessive—you don't agree with that?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: I think that \$111 million was excessive, yes.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: But you won't commit to even putting a dollar on the table to support that community here today?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: I will not be making any budget announcements in estimates today.

The Hon. RACHEL MERTON: Minister, do you know how many metropolitan police stations are not manned 24/7?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: I'll get that for you—because I don't want to mislead you—to give you the accurate figure. I'll get that to you.

The Hon. RACHEL MERTON: If I could just be reminded, how many police stations have we got in New South Wales?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: I will have to ask the Commissioner, if she wouldn't mind.

The Hon. RACHEL MERTON: You're the Minister and you don't know?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: Commissioner, could you give me the exact numbers?

KAREN WEBB: I will get the exact numbers, but we talk about separate police stations versus other places that we may rent. It is certainly a significant number, and we can provide you the exact number.

The Hon. RACHEL MERTON: Is it reasonable for citizens, for taxpayers, to expect police stations to open the doors 24 hours?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: I'm guided by the police when it comes to resourcing of police and the utilisation of the workforce for police, and they police where it is required.

The Hon. RACHEL MERTON: Is it reasonable for taxpayers to expect there to be possibly fixed operating hours—that if I get there at nine o'clock, I will be able to speak with an officer? They might close the doors at 5.00 p.m. Just to know the operating hours?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: I think it's important to remember the work of police. It has been said to me—since I became a member of Parliament, actually, not the Minister—that every car is actually a police station and they operate like that right across the State. It might be the case that a person might go to a police station and there isn't a police officer there. That's because they are actually out doing their job.

The Hon. RACHEL MERTON: Minister, is it true that there are a number of metropolitan police stations in south-western Sydney that are in a permanent state of temporary closure?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: I will have to get back to you on that. My apologies—I'll come back to you on that. You are asking me the number?

The Hon. RACHEL MERTON: Are you aware that there are a number of police stations, particularly metropolitan police stations in south-western Sydney, that are in a permanent state of temporary closure? The doors are closed. The public can't access. They are knocking. There are no advertised opening hours.

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: Can you tell me exactly where you are referring to?

The Hon. RACHEL MERTON: I can, but can I just preface by saying that given some of the concerns I have for community safety I'm not sure whether I would really want to be identifying these stations.

The Hon. MARK LATHAM: Why not? Ingleburn is one. But that has been the case for 15 years.

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: There are a couple in Camden as well, and I'm happy—but I just want to know exactly where you are taking about.

The Hon. RACHEL MERTON: I am happy to table a sign that is currently on display at Wetherill Park police station.

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: We have had a lot of discussion around that, and the police have advised that those surrounding police stations are certainly—

CORRECTED

The Hon. RACHEL MERTON: As the document reaches you, Minister, you will see this. This sign has been on display at the Wetherill Park police station since November.

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: Correct.

The Hon. RACHEL MERTON: It still remains today?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: Yes, I am aware of that, and I have answered questions to this. It has been described to me that the best use of police resources are having them at those surrounding police stations, not at Wetherill Park. That is based on data, which police do—all of their manning and all of their assessments of their location of their police are based on that scientific data that they use.

The Hon. RACHEL MERTON: Minister, is it true—you see the temporary unattended police station here—that taxpayers that may want to access the policing services, report something, contact the local police station—that the station is only opened according to the rostered hours of a police officer? In many cases, one single police officer, so that the rostered hours of that individual police officer will determine when that police station is open?

Minister, it might be 10.00 a.m.. Knock, knock—no answer. It might be 2.00 p.m. Knock, knock—no answer. Taxpayers don't even know when these services are open.

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: I'm not too sure if that's the case. This instance was a little bit different to what you're just describing. A one-man police station obviously can't be manned 24/7. Watch-keepers can't be there all the time. That being said, they are available by phone, exactly like this one here, which is saying, to contact your Fairfield police station if you require assistance. Police always make sure that there is a contact, or try to always make sure there is a contact. I don't know the actual distance, but if anyone at the table knows the distance of these two, I think they're pretty close by.

The Hon. RACHEL MERTON: I appreciate that there are other stations in south-western metropolitan that are also following the same arrangements—temporarily unattended. We've been in this case since November. What are we now, three or four months. It's still happening. The opening hours of the police station are unknown, unfixed, unadvertised. Is this good enough?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: As I say, a decision has been made internally that resources are best used at the other stations, so that's the decision that has been made. I take that advice from the police. They're the experts, after all. They're the people—I've got more than 150 years' experience sitting here next to me today—and I have to say—

The Hon. RACHEL MERTON: I recognise the experience.

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: —I listen to them and take their advice.

The Hon. RACHEL MERTON: But what I'm looking at here is just in terms of community safety, the obligation the Government has to the taxpayer for police stations to be open.

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: I don't accept the premise that a building offers safety, necessarily. There is a phone number on here, which is what I would expect. There is the address on here of the Fairfield police station and the police have advised me that the resources are better used in those neighbouring police stations.

The Hon. RACHEL MERTON: Minister, if I could just touch on youth crime and community concern around this, and if I could just go back to Wetherill Park. We've got the poster in the window there, "Temporarily unattended"—permanently, temporarily, whatever. It remains as infrequent intermittent hours. The public never know when they can access the service. In the same neighbourhood, we have reports of youth crime and that local shopping centres have got managers of some of the biggest supermarkets that are recording a very concerning rate of stolen goods. We've got local fruit shops out there that are employing three full staff to provide security. Can we not be doing better than this in terms of community safety, the role of police?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: I think the police—I've said this many times today—are doing a very good job. I'll say it again and again. Our police in New South Wales are the operation that is there 24/7. They are the ones who are out there seeing the things that none of us would want to see or never see, and they are—I don't believe that there is a risk of safety as a result of the police not doing their job because I believe they're doing a great job.

The Hon. RACHEL MERTON: Minister, we're saying today: No risk to community safety with police stations being closed and no officers on the ground or available?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: I said—

CORRECTED

The Hon. RACHEL MERTON: There's no risk to community safety.

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: I'm not going to accept those words that you're trying to put into my mouth.

The Hon. RACHEL MERTON: Well, you tell me.

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: I said, in terms of the police doing their job, I believe that the police are doing a great job, but we need other services. I've said this over and over again. You come in here and you blame the police for crime that is going on by individuals. The job of police is to enforce the law and they do that impeccably. I gave the example in Moree where there were three significant incidents with a large number of youths involved and they were all arrested imminently. They're doing their job, but you constantly—

The Hon. RACHEL MERTON: Minister, it's the absence of policing and police stations in the community, increasing levels of stock theft—of crime—and the community is feeling let down. Minister, could I ask you about Revesby Police Station. In 2022, \$7 million was committed for the upgrade to the station. What is the status of that station and the committed funds?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: There is a significant road upgrade proposed at that roundabout at Revesby. I have had some communication with the local member in relation to the Federal Government announcement in relation to that roundabout and the local government's decision. There's still some ambiguity around whether or not the size—because it's going to be quite substantial—

The Hon. RACHEL MERTON: Minister, if I could just redirect, it was to do with the police station.

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: Yes, but this is related because the police station is right—

The Hon. RACHEL MERTON: On the intersection. I know it.

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: You may not have been there; I have. The building is right at the intersection, and it has to be relocated to accommodate the roundabout that's proposed there. I'm working with the local member—who is a great local member, Kylie Wilkinson—and she is working closely with council.

The Hon. RACHEL MERTON: Minister, have we got a time frame on this? Some good discussions, but when will the money be spent? When will we see commencement of this?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: Part of the puzzle here is we have to wait to get confirmation of what is happening with the roundabout, if they're going to begin the roundabout and then we will have those conversations. So we're having a tri-party conversation in relation to that. It is rather complex. I hope they do fix the road, though, because it is certainly a terrible bottleneck.

The Hon. RACHEL MERTON: So we can reassure the community that the committed funding, the committed \$7 million, will be spent for the upgrade of the Revesby Police Station.

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: You say "upgrade", but it actually may need to be relocated. This is the problem. These are the decisions that have to be made. It may need to be relocated.

The Hon. RACHEL MERTON: Minister, if I could just take you to a question on notice—pre-election, there were commitments given about the Government providing an additional 50 police officers for the south-west of Sydney. I have written to you on this seeking an update, and it still remains unanswered. Is this another broken promise?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: Absolutely not. Do you mean I haven't answered your question?

The Hon. RACHEL MERTON: Correct.

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: What date did you send it?

The Hon. RACHEL MERTON: It was 27 July.

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: And I didn't answer it?

The Hon. RACHEL MERTON: You made reference that it would be considered in the State budget papers.

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: Oh, okay. I've got good news for you: We did. Yes, we have started that. That was a commitment over four years, and 20 of those police officers have begun.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Minister, I want to take you briefly to some of your responsibilities as Minister for the Hunter. How often do you receive briefings or correspondence that you need to consider as Minister for the Hunter? What percentage of the workload would that be for you?

CORRECTED

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: I haven't sat down and worked out the percentage of the workload.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: How many briefings for the Hunter in the last three months, say, would you have received in your office?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: I go into Bull Street. We have a Regional NSW office in Bull Street in Newcastle, so I actually go in there and have my briefings, generally.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: How often do you do that?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: At least monthly. It depends, though, what the need is. I do it on, obviously, a needs basis, but it's probably at least easily monthly. I always try to make sure I'm in there meeting with the staff, having a conversation, checking that they're okay, if they need me for anything, at least once a month. But I obviously am a member in the Hunter, as well, so I deal with a lot of matters. I go and meet stakeholders all around the region.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Would you be able to take on notice—or Mr Wheaton might be able to provide some advice—the number of briefs that you received for sign-off or approval as Minister for the Hunter, say, in the last three months? Is there any data you could provide about that?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: No, I don't think so. I'm doing my job as the Minister for the Hunter, and I—

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: With respect, Minister, I'm trying to understand. Do you actually receive briefs? Do you make decisions as Minister for the Hunter? Are there numbers that you could provide in terms of how often you need to do that? Mr Wheaton is very able to give some advice if you'd like.

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: I do receive briefs; that is absolutely 100 per cent correct. I do sign off on those briefs to advise that I have received that information. Certainly, in relation to the sand nourishment at Stockton Beach, I have a large number of briefs about that—or have had. We're making such excellent progress in that space that the briefs are becoming less and less so. But, yes, absolutely I do. But I don't know why I have to provide you with the number of briefs.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: With respect, the whole purpose of budget estimates is that we can ask questions. Obviously, there's regional Ministers, and I'm just trying to understand what the main issues are, how much of the workload that is for you as Minister—

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: Ask that question. I'm happy to answer it.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: You tell me, then. What are the main issues? What are some of the specific initiatives that you, as the Minister for the Hunter, have been championing, that you've put in place?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: The sand nourishment at Stockton Beach, the taskforce there, which I chair. That has been very successful. And, by all accounts, I'm getting excellent feedback from the community. They're just delighted with the results, and we'll continue to work towards a longer term sand nourishment program there. In fact, I was with Regional NSW just last week and also with Public Works, because Public Works do an arm of that as well, and we went through what the next stages are and what that will look like. Are we out of time? That's a shame.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Thank you. Could I just add, Chair, we do have more Hunter questions, but we might put those on notice, given that you'll probably have to liaise with other agencies because it goes across portfolios. So we would be happy, after the lunchbreak, if Mr Wheaton was excused, just from the Opposition's perspective. I'll just put that on the record.

The Hon. MARK LATHAM: Minister, given the alarming rise in the road toll and the higher tragic impact of drug driving than alcohol driving, why is it we've got such a bad imbalance in New South Wales at the moment? On the last available figures, financial year 2022-23, for every random drug test, there were 32 random breath tests. Yet the data shows that 0.6 per cent of the RBTs are positive, but a very alarming 15 per cent of the random drug tests are positive. One in seven out there are driving drugged—an obvious concern and possible cause of this rising road toll. When are we going to fix that imbalance and get serious about random drug testing?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: Thank you very much, Mr Latham. That is an excellent question. This is a very serious situation, and I couldn't agree with you more. The random breath testing—we're actually leading in that, in terms of the technology and the equipment that we have here in New South Wales. I heard that yesterday, actually, from an international expert in road safety, at a forum that I was at, that the Government was hosting—

The Hon. MARK LATHAM: Why aren't we leading in drug testing?

CORRECTED

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: I'm going to get to that. In drug testing, though, it's a different scenario. It is rather timely, and it's not scientific expertise when we do roadside drug testing. It actually will tell us that there is a drug present, and then we have to go and have Health to do the actual testing. That takes time because, if we're at, for instance, Gwandalan in the electorate of Swansea, to get to Belmont or to Wyong would take 45 minutes, so there are lapses of time. We're looking at and working towards getting technology which, I understand, isn't quite available at this stage, but I had the discussion yesterday with Brett McFadden, who's—you would know, Brett—excellent in his role. We're looking at getting the technology that is required, as it emerges, so that we can do the roadside testing and have an accurate reading at the roadside itself. So—

The Hon. MARK LATHAM: When's that technology available?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: It's not in this country. It's not available. That's what I am saying.

The Hon. MARK LATHAM: Unknown.

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: It is unknown, but we are—

The Hon. MARK LATHAM: If the process is to take it to Health, don't we just have to go through that? Every motorist in the State would be horrified—horrified—that one in every seven cars driving around you is drug affected.

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: I agree with you entirely. But, at this point in time, to check for the actual content of the drug, the presence of the drug, we can test that somebody has it in their system but not to the extent or how much they're affected by it. That's another thing as well.

The Hon. MARK LATHAM: You've got to take it to Health, but is that really an alibi for not doing sufficient drug testing—that it's a little bit complicated?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: It's not, absolutely not. Please don't think that that's—

The Hon. MARK LATHAM: Fatalities are a lot more complicated.

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: I agree with you entirely, and every life lost on our roads is an absolute tragedy, and often it can be prevented. I couldn't agree with you more. We are taking this very, very seriously, and I will be working with the police to try to identify a better system that we can access. But, as I say, that technology isn't available. But, as it becomes available, we will definitely be looking at getting that. Did you want to add anything at all, Commissioner?

KAREN WEBB: I will. To add to what the Minister has said, that's correct. The roadside testing has to be followed up with a more thorough test and sent off to Health. However, we are funded for only 200,000 drug tests a year. We're funded to do more RBT, which, as you pointed out, has a lower yield. When the technology is available, I think there is certainly the potential to do many more tests, because we see that as a shifting trend, not a one-year blip.

The Hon. MARK LATHAM: Commissioner, if you're funded for 200,000 random drug tests per annum, why, in the last completed financial year, did you only do 114,000? You're still 86,000 short.

KAREN WEBB: I'll have to take that on notice, but I can assure you that for the year to date this year, our testing is on track to complete 200,000.

The Hon. MARK LATHAM: In the last full financial year—2022-23—the data I've got is that you're 86,000 short, so hopefully that won't be repeated. In regard to all those figures I've quoted, can I get an update on them for the last eight months, since 1 July 2023?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: Of course.

The Hon. MARK LATHAM: Minister, when you were last here at estimates you described the remote and special remote location police staffing incentive scheme—a mouthful—as quite popular. Do you still believe that to be the case?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: It has been going for six months and we have had 57 successful people apply, who are now working in our remote policing areas. So it's early days, but I think it is. I'd see that as a pretty good uptake. People are changing their whole lives. You've been to Bourke—we've already established that—and so have I. I met young officers out there who had come from Redfern or a very different life. So they're big decisions to make. But what I will say is that those who are out there are really enjoying it, which is great. Part of the scheme, too, is keeping them there for five years. That's a significant part of the scheme as well—keeping those officers there. They become part of the communities out there and they become entrenched in the community.

CORRECTED

The Hon. MARK LATHAM: Those officers appreciate the salary and housing support, but 57 is not a big number, is it, given the shortfall in placing numbers in country New South Wales? Is the initiative going to be funded into the future? Will it be increased? And what else is being done to overcome the shortfalls that we have in remote areas?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: It has still got a while to go and it will be fully funded. Obviously, recruitment is part of that. We are attending another attestation next week and some of those officers will be going to every part of the State. In addition to that, I go back to this again: Paying those students has really had a significant impact and it has also diversified the people who are applying to join the NSW Police Force because, if you have economic responsibilities, it's enabling people to go down to Goulburn for those four months and have the funds to be able to pay or meet their responsibilities. So it really is working. But it's not a silver bullet, and I'm not suggesting that it is. We will continue to work on recruiting people and filling that gap of 1,500 so that all of our police stations are full.

The Hon. MARK LATHAM: This morning you focused a fair bit on recruitment and that's appreciated. But what about retention? In that People Matter Employee Survey I mentioned earlier on, the result was that 34 per cent of police officers are applying for roles in the private sector, and that's 15 per cent higher than the wider public sector. So there's a real retention problem, too, isn't there? How is that being addressed?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: There is. Again, that's something that I identified very, very early. We've removed the wage cap. The wage cap has definitely stymied growth in police—and right across the public sector, for that matter. Our other emergency services are in the same boat. I think that lifting the wage cap and having real wage increases will certainly be something that people will find attractive to come into the workforce. I've spoken to you about wellbeing. Wellbeing is really important. They become so burnt out. You know as well as I do, Mr Latham, what a tough job it is, every day. The police, of course, have the PULSE Program in place. That has been in place now for almost 12 months, so we haven't got good, solid data back on that. But, anecdotally, police officers are saying that that is also a really good program that has been put in place. So it's checking the mental wellbeing and what have you of police.

The Hon. MARK LATHAM: Overall, are we losing more officers than we're recruiting?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: Yes, we are.

The Hon. MARK LATHAM: Can I get the latest figures on that?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: Well, maybe no. I say, "Yes, we were." But we do have a very large number—

The Hon. MARK LATHAM: If I could get the latest data on that, that would be appreciated. Mention was made earlier of the pay increase negotiations with the NSW Police Force. The Government's attitude, I think supported by community attitudes, is that paramedics and teachers had to do special things in the COVID period and those extra pay increases are warranted. But police were very much in the front line, and the work required by government of the police in the COVID period—in some cases it was ridiculous and they received blowback about it. It was a very, very difficult period of policing. When you were here last, you said that in negotiations you hadn't given any parameters to the Police Association about an ample pay increase. You have said that you've had some initial conversations with them. Has that included those parameters that weren't available last time?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: If they raise those with me, then we will negotiate whether that is part of it. We have agreed to mutual bargaining, which is fantastic. We will look at everything. But I agree with you that police were absolutely intrinsic, and they did a hard job—a really hard job. They still do. The award—

The Hon. MARK LATHAM: So you say no less deserving of ample pay increases than teachers and paramedics because of the COVID period?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: Not just COVID, quite frankly.

The Hon. MARK LATHAM: And beyond?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: Absolutely. We will sit down and we will work through it, as I say, in good faith. They have my absolute guarantee of that. We will work through the wage negotiation period.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: Minister, I want to take you back to when you were discussing the prospect of an inquiry. You don't really think that parliamentary upper House inquiries are a worthless talkfest, do you?

The Hon. MARK LATHAM: Did she say that?

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: She wouldn't want to in this company.

CORRECTED

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: I'm not being facetious here. I am in earnest. You don't honestly believe they are a talkfest or that they are not meaningful and purpose-driven?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: I strongly believe that we need to action—

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: No, I'm talking about the upper House inquiries. You don't honestly believe the upper House inquiries of the New South Wales Parliament are talkfests?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: No, not all of them.

The CHAIR: Just to clarify, which are?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: That will have to be for another day, Mr Chairman.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: Minister, I absolutely agree that when we understand a problem, it is important not to over-caucus and over-discuss a problem when we know the source. But given the evidence that we keep hearing around crime increase and specific problems, and where you've got members of the community in public office around the State saying that they are looking for solutions that are different, perhaps, than what we are doing, then surely you would see some benefit in supporting some form of inquiry looking into that? Whether or not it is the specifics that may be in front of you now, but surely you would agree, as the Minister dealing with such an important portfolio of the State, which is really about keeping people safe—we know that—and providing confidence, surely you would support further inquiries looking at how we can do better as a State to serve all of our communities?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: Ms Higginson, I think I'm the only person that has been written to by members of the National Party, the mayors—not all of them; some of them—and the CWA to have this inquiry into police—

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: Yes—

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: This is important. Please let me finish, because this is important. Please, Mr Chair.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: Minister, can I just redirect you. I am not talking about that—

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: No, but I—

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: —and I am not talking about that specific appeal to you that I am aware of. I am genuinely here to try, in public, right now, on the record, to do something a little bit different and that is understand your position as the police Minister of New South Wales, where we are all privy to the evidence that the problems that police are facing right now are much bigger and more entrenched and intractable than problems that police alone can fix. Surely you would support, as Minister, an inquiry that was to look into how we can do better as a State looking at those issues—causes of crime, consent of policing—how we can address some of the issues that our region and our State is facing?

Surely, as police Minister, you would champion that kind of inquiry, using these resources of this Parliament on behalf of the people of New South Wales.

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: Back to where I was: I have received—this is important. I see that you're smiling but this is very important. I am the only Minister, as far as I know, that has received correspondence in relation to having an inquiry in this place into rural and regional crime. I have said here today over and over and over again that what is happening in regional and rural New South Wales is not a policing matter. It is a matter for the broader community to look at what is going on: education, health, out-of-home care, Indigenous.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: Thanks, Minister. I hear you.

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: No, but—

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: I think everyone can hear.

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: I would say that if someone came forward, if that group came forward, and asked for an inquiry to look at all of these problems to solve the issue, then as a government, I can't say we would or we wouldn't, but what I do want to say—

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: You can only speak on behalf of yourself here, Minister.

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: No. But what I do want to say is, that is not what is being proposed presently. What is being proposed is an inquiry into the New South Wales police. They're the only ones invited at this stage.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: Thank you. Minister, in November—

CORRECTED

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: I want to make it very clear, that if people genuinely want to fix the problem, if they agree that there's a holistic problem in our community and they want to resolve it, then they should be genuine and they should ask for that.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: I take it that you are indicating some level of support for the thing I'm suggesting here, but we'll move on. Minister, in November last year I placed some questions on notice regarding how many individuals have been surveyed or monitored by the NSW Police Force in relation to past or planned protests, and there was a bunch of questions—really, really reasonable questions just asking for data. The response I got back was, "The data is unable to be provided. There is no central record held by NSW Police Force to enable a statistical inquiry to be conducted across all police operations." I find that really alarming. What sort of problems have we got right now in terms of data collection and being able to ascertain what policing is happening in relation to data?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: It may have been in relation to, from my memory, the surveillance of individuals. But can we ask Mr Lanyon. It was in metropolitan. Would you be able to give some more information on that, please, Mr Lanyon?

MALCOLM LANYON: Certainly, Minister. Ms Higginson, can I ask you to define that question a little bit for me? Obviously there are a number of parts of the policing organisation that have to, as part of their duties, keep the community safe. We're obviously conducting surveillance. We're obviously looking at targets to prevent crime, so if you could narrow that down for me, I'm more than happy to answer it.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: We might take it up later because it was a specific question. What concerns me, though, was the response literally is, "There is no central record held by the Police Force to be able to conduct that inquiry across all police operations." Perhaps we can explore later on how we are storing data. In relation to another question, Minister, that was provided on notice about restraints, it was just seeking information about how often these restraints are used and some other detail. It was in relation to leg cuffs, belly chain and restraint belts, combination cuffs that restrain both hands and feet, thumb cuffs et cetera. Basically, the response given, other than for handcuffs, was that this material is subject to a public interest immunity. Why is that? Why is it that this information can't be provided to the public when the same information for handcuffs could?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: I might ask Mr Hudson if he might be able to answer that question.

DAVID HUDSON: Thank you, Minister. You can ask me, but I don't know the answer, Ms Higginson. Some of those forms of restraint I've never heard of.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: Okay, so it would be—

The CHAIR: Help us.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: Yes, these are questions on notice, Minister. You sign off on these. It would be really good, I think, if you could check. If I can ask you to go back and check these specific questions—

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: Sure, I'd be happy to do that for you.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: —because we have had issues before.

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: Yes, I agree.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: I am very concerned that when you're signing off on questions on notice that we're not being provided with the sufficient answer. What concerns me is that you're not looking at this and checking and saying, "Hey, that's perhaps not satisfactory. I need to go back and find out why the public is not entitled and not being able to access this very important public interest material."

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: I assure you that I have gone back on a number of occasions—

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: When we have asked you to.

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: —but I had not heard any of those types of restraints either side. I rely on the expert advice.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: Thank you. Can I just ask in the short period, about the consorting laws. You're aware that the Law Enforcement Conduct Commission's review of the consorting laws specifically found that, while intended to be used to combat serious and organised crime, it is often used by New South Wales police for comparatively less crime and overwhelmingly targets vulnerable people, most significantly those under the age of 18 and who are First Nations. Why has the police rejected the 12 recommendations that say police should switch on their body cams when issuing a consorting notice?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: I will refer to Mr Hudson for a more detailed response to this, if that's okay.

CORRECTED

DAVID HUDSON: Thank you, Minister. All the recommendations—we worked quite collaboratively with Law Enforcement Conduct Commission in that review. They were quite satisfied with our input into that review. I understand they actually did some media around that, which indicated that's the pathway forward for collaboration between them and us in relation to modification and improvement in our strategies. In relation to body-worn video specifically, our body-worn vehicle stops are hindered to a certain degree by the capability we currently have. It is being replaced.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: Can I just ask you on that—and I know my time's up—there was \$100 million allocated to that. When will we have a system that's fit for purpose and will switch on as soon as the devices et cetera are activated?

DAVID HUDSON: My understanding is that the \$100 million capital allocation was in relation to the entire interconnected officer program, which encompasses more than just body-worn. I'm not part of that procurement process; Mr Smith is and might have some pathway. I know we're currently in procurement for a device that's a replacement and more suitable to our needs. Once that's obtained then obviously the standing operating procedures in relation to the use of that capability will be reviewed because everyone will be able to have access to it. We'll be able to be more directive about when it's used. At the moment we have failing equipment, which is constantly being repaired. We don't have sufficient equipment to provide everyone who requires it a body-worn video capability, so by being directive in relation to its use we would be directing police to fail because they would not be able to achieve that.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: I might come back to that after, if that's okay, to get some more detail.

The CHAIR: Time is up, Sue. We'll go to the Opposition

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Thank you, Chair. Minister, you just said in response to questions to my colleague Ms Higginson that you're the only Minister that, for instance, members of the National Party, which we proudly raise on behalf of regional communities—that's our job and that's who we fight for—have come to on these issues, but if that's the case why was the Premier in Moree yesterday speaking about regional crime?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: I was referring to the member's question in relation to an inquiry.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: But the concept of an inquiry has been discussed with the Premier too. You'd be certainly be aware of that, I would hope.

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: If you tell me that, that's—

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Well, he's been at Country Mayor and he was up in Moree yesterday. This is what the community is asking for, you're just not listening to it. These are messages going across Government.

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: I don't accept that at all. I am absolutely listening but I don't share that view.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Okay, listening but not acting. Minister, can I ask you in relation to the payments for recruits into the police academy? Would you look to make changes to that to make that financial support conditional on those officers going to a regional community once they graduate?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: That hasn't been discussed with me at this stage.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Would you consider it as an action to help address regional crime issues?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: What we're trying to do is make sure that we fill the gap that we were left from your Government of 1,500. That is what that initiative is doing, so we need to—

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Sure, but would some of them be conditional on going to the regions? Would you commit to at least looking at that?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: They are at every attestation. They go right across the State. You're making the premise that they don't go there now. Nothing could be further from the truth. In fact, I'll give you the breakdown, if you like, of the next attestation.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: That'd be great.

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: Police resourcing goes where the police determine it's needed. Why do you keep doubting our police?

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: I don't doubt our police, Minister, and I completely reject that assertion.

CORRECTED

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: Well, they make the decision.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: I've made it very clear that our police do an amazing job. But we need more of them, and we particularly need more of them in regional communities, where we are dealing with very serious issues.

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: We're on a unity ticket there.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Minister, can I take you now to the issue of the impact of the NZYQ case. Did you receive a briefing in terms of—Minister?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: Yes, I'm listening. I can do two things at once.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Just checking what that case was, I think. Did you receive a briefing in terms of the potential risk to the community upon the release of some of those detainees, particularly those who had serious criminal convictions?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: I have already stated this in the Parliament, so you can read the *Hansard*.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: I'm asking you.

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: For the benefit of the rest of the Committee, yes, the Commissioner did brief me, and I was made aware at the time.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Can you advise what monitoring systems are in place to track the activities of those who've been released into the community?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: Border Force and the Commonwealth are actually the responsible authority for those detainees who have been released from detention.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: But there are a number in New South Wales. We heard evidence from DPC and the Premier's Office—and the Premier himself, I should say—on Wednesday in relation to these issues that this was also a matter for the New South Wales police in terms of community safety. Do you know where some of these detainees who do have those serious criminal convictions are? How are they being monitored in the community? What guarantee can you give that people who may have been charged—and, indeed, convicted—of very serious offences aren't, for instance, living near a school or a childcare centre? Can you provide any certainty to the community about that?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: Your first question—the New South Wales police know the location of every one of them. Second question—the Border Force and the Commonwealth actually monitor them. It's their responsibility, and they monitor their whereabouts. There are, however, 10 who are on the child sexual assault register. The New South Wales police have monitoring obligations and they do come to their local PAC, wherever they are geographically located, so the police do know. That's the interaction that the New South Wales police have.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Have any of the detainees been arrested in New South Wales since their release?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: I understand that there have been.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: How many?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: Three—is that correct?

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: I'm happy if you need an official to answer; I'm just keen for the information.

DAVID HUDSON: Ma'am, three have been arrested by New South Wales police for specific offences. I think there were two goods in custody charges and one larceny offence. Three have been arrested for breaches of the Child Protection Register, basically for not fulfilling the obligations of their requirement. They accessed social media accounts without approval. We've visited all those on the Child Protection Register, either with home visits or 16C inspections. We were aware of them because five of those individuals, whilst they were still in detention, we'd registered and then suspended the case, so when they were released we could reactivate that case very quickly. Through those home visits, we have prosecuted three for breaching their conditions, as well, for the Child Protection Register.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Is it correct that one of the detainees didn't turn up to Parramatta court to answer to serious drug charges? I've just been given that advice and I'm wondering if there's any information on that. I'm happy for you take it on notice if you don't have it.

CORRECTED

DAVID HUDSON: I'll take that on notice, thank you.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Other than the examples that you've just given, Deputy Commissioner Hudson, particularly in relation to those having child protection elements, are there any other restrictions or conditions imposed on those detainees to minimise any other potential risks?

DAVID HUDSON: There are. It's coordinated through Border Force through their Community Protection Board. They changed the legislation late last year to establish this board, which assesses all of them across the country. It is a fluid number that moves because of movement interstate. We've currently got 61 individuals because one had a visa reissued. So he's now off that list, and he's lawful again. Through that process, there are restrictions that that board can impose, including continual electronic monitoring—we have 40 individuals on that—which is monitored through Border Force. Other conditions for the others include curfews and reporting requirements.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: You say 40 with electronic monitoring. Is that like anklet—

DAVID HUDSON: Yes, it is.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: Thank you, Minister. I'm curious about 93Z of the Crimes Act and the briefs of evidence prepared by the police for authorisation by the DPP or the AG. Can you tell me how many prior to 7 October had been prepared for authorisation?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: I would have to ask the police to answer that question.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: I'm happy for you to take that on notice unless you have a—

DAVID HUDSON: The exact number, I could probably find out, but it was 10 or 12 from my recollections.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: If you could find the exact number. Thank you. Can you tell me if a brief of evidence has ever been prepared by the police for prosecution under 93Z, relating to the protest on the Opera House steps on 7 October?

DAVID HUDSON: No, there hasn't.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: No brief of evidence prepared for prosecution under 93Z?

DAVID HUDSON: Correct.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: Thank you. Given that there doesn't seem to have been a huge number of briefs prepared under this, Minister, what led you and the Government to seek to alter section 93Z to remove the approval of the Attorney General and the DPP? Or was this really just window-dressing, to be seen to be doing something because there had been no briefs of evidence for prosecution prepared?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: I definitely spoke to the police in relation to this, and there were and have been significant delays—and Mr Hudson can speak further to this—with those that were with the DPP, and this removed the concern that the police had. It was definitely the case that this could, in fact, speed up a prosecution. But Mr Hudson—

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: Perhaps, Mr Hudson, I can come to you this afternoon. So the suggestion is could speed up but no evidence that there had been any problems before.

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: No, it definitely will speed up.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: An analysis of a video of the protest from 7 October is an analysis of one single piece of evidence. Given other videos and other witnesses who continue to maintain that they heard phrases which I don't intend to repeat here but, I think, with which we're all very aware, are the police also reviewing all of this evidence, obtaining witness statements from all of those witnesses and continuing to investigate those events under section 93Z?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: My understanding is that there were hundreds of hours of video footage that were examined, and the police have continually called on anybody with further evidence to bring it forward.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: Those investigations are continuing?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: Mr Lanyon, you might want to elaborate, but Mr Lanyon said this when he stood up just several weeks ago, "If anybody has any further evidence, then please bring it forward or call Crime Stoppers or both".

CORRECTED

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: How many have been prosecuted by the police following the protest, 7 October last year?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: I do have those figures, but I want to give you the right figures—three.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: How many for a breach of section 93Z?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: None.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: What offences were they prosecuted for, Minister?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: Common assault. They're all common assault.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: So three for common assault.

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: One had two counts of common assault, but common assault is the answer, yes.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: Thank you very much. Minister, 93Z creates an offence for those who, by a public act, intentionally or recklessly threatens or incites violence towards others, based on grounds including race or religion. If it took an expert investigation and four months to determine that the words used on 7 October were not what they were widely perceived to be by a number of bystanders on the night but instead "Where's the Jews?" and "F the Jews", would this not meet the test of recklessly inciting violence because those words were chanted so recklessly that they were heard differently by a number present on that occasion?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: I think it's fair to say none of us want to hear those terrible things that were said, which you have just said, and I couldn't agree more. There were horrid things said, terrible things, and it's the last thing that we—

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: Yet no prosecutions for that.

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: It's the last thing that anybody wants to hear on our streets.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: So, Minister, why no prosecutions for that? You've said it's terrible. You've said it's horrible. It's in breach of section 93Z. Why no prosecutions?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: The New South Wales police, police within the law of the day—and that is what they did.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: The law of the day is section 93Z. Why no prosecutions for breach of section 93Z?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: You would have to speak to the magistrate in relation to that.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: Was it ever put before a magistrate?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: You have to have a brief of evidence to be able to do that.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: Yes. So how many briefs of evidence were prepared for prosecutions under section 93Z?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: There's a threshold that has to be met and the police—

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: Why was that threshold not met?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: The police work within the law that is before them, and you can't ask them to do more than that.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: Can you explain why the threshold wasn't met?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: If it's the case, as I said earlier, that that legislation is not fit for purpose, that is exactly why the Government—

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: On what advice are you suggesting that it's not fit for purpose?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: You're suggesting that it is. You just did.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: No, I am—

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: Yes, you did.

CORRECTED

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: I am suggesting to you, Minister, that the threshold was met. So I am querying why there have been no briefs of evidence and no prosecutions under section 93Z for the offences on 7 October.

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: We are having that reviewed by an eminent group of lawyers.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: What are the grounds for that review? What advice have you received that caused you to believe that section 93Z is not fit for purpose?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: What I will say to you is that you can't have it both ways. It is going to be looked at and reviewed to ensure that our laws are fit for purpose and meet the objectives of how the State wants to look. I think that is fair and reasonable. You obviously have concerns that there wasn't a prosecution. You just said that. I trust the police's assessment on these things, because they're the experts. As I've said, there are 150 years of experience either side of me, and I absolutely trust what they have provided.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: Minister, if I can redirect, if you believe it's not fit for purpose, when did you form the view it's not fit for purpose?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: I don't have carriage of that legislation, so you would need to ask the Attorney General.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: So you have no input. You offered no advice to the Attorney General about section 93Z, which directly affects preparations of briefs of evidence by your police?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: I have already explained to you, leading up to this, exactly what my involvement was. I'm not going to repeat it, because I don't think that's necessary. I'm sure you heard what I said. It is being reviewed, and we will see if there are any recommendations that come out of that review.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: Why did your Government not support a review when it was called for at the time that you proposed changes to section 93Z but then later change your mind and call for the review? What different advice did you receive?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: Again, you would have to ask the appropriate Minister who has carriage of that legislation.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: And the appropriate Minister is the Attorney General?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: You know it is.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: No, I'm asking you, Minister.

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: Yes.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: Thank you very much. At the protests on 7 October, protesters were wearing keffiyehs and sunglasses to hide their faces and chanting. Could that be construed as inciting violence?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: That's up to experts to determine, not me.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: At those protests individuals obscured their faces with scarves and sunglasses at times, did they, Minister?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: You're telling me that. If that's what you're saying, then I would take you at your word.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: On Australia Day this year neo-Nazi protesters were stopped at a train station at North Sydney wearing balaclavas to hide their faces, were they?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: That's what I saw, yes. By the way, I saw it in *The Daily Telegraph*.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: On Australia Day six people were arrested as neo-Nazi protestors for hiding their faces, were they not, Minister?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: If that's what you say, correct.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: So you're not aware that there were any arrests of people on Australia Day?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: Yes, there were, but I'd have to check exactly what they were arrested for.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: What is the difference between antisemitic protestors on 7 October obscuring their faces with scarves and keffiyehs, and neo-Nazi protestors on Australia Day?

CORRECTED

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: I strongly believe that on Australia Day, and the days following and before, those groups of 60-plus men who travelled on public transport, in all black and covered up, had a particular intention. I don't think that anybody in this State would think that that's okay. The police acted swiftly, and they did a great job.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: Minister, thank you, and I agree with you, but that wasn't the question. What was the difference in the fact that neo-Nazi protesters who obscured their faces and created a public disturbance on Australia Day were arrested and charged, yet what happened on 7 October was that—under your direction, I believe, Minister—the police were essentially asked to escort protesters down to the Opera House? What is the difference?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: You will remove that. That is untrue. I did not ask or direct anybody to do any such thing.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: Then I withdraw that. Minister, could you please explain what was the difference in the policing response to those two events?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: The police were at a protest—this is how I can tell you. However, the events on Australia Day were vastly different. I'm sorry, but those people came to this city—

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: Minister, can we go through it? On both occasions—

The Hon. BOB NANVA: Point of order—

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: Can I please finish?

The CHAIR: There is a point of order.

The Hon. BOB NANVA: Chair, that is a reasonable question. I think the Minister ought to be able to answer it with a degree more time than what has been afforded.

The CHAIR: The member acknowledges your point of order, so please allow the Minister to answer.

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: What we saw was a direct intention to come in and to disrupt the city. I'm sorry, but that's not what we want to see on our streets, ever. I don't ever want them to come back here. It was shocking to see that.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: Minister, we're in furious agreement on that point. But what was the intention on 7 October? To disrupt the streets. It's the same intention, Minister—or can you explain the difference?

The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM: That's an assertion that you're making. It was on 9 October, by the way.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: I apologise.

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: We can correct the date. There were family members there. There were children there. I don't think they intentionally went to that place to disrupt in the same way—

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: Minister—

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: You made the correlation—in the same way that those 60-plus men did on Australia Day and subsequent days and previous days, for four days in a row. I think that some people may have, but I can assure you, as a group, there were, as I saw on the television, people from a cross-section of our community—at every protest that I've seen, in actual fact.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: If the neo-Nazis were upsetting family gatherings and Australians who had gathered to celebrate Australia Day, who were the protesters disrupting on the steps of the Opera House? Who had been asked to go there? Who had been drawn there by the lighting of the Opera House sails in solidarity with the terrible destruction wrought by Hamas? Who were those protesters disrupting?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: Look, I think it has been said over and over again, and rightly so, that it would have been nice or it would have been more appropriate if our Jewish community were able to have a vigil. That has been absolutely accepted by the Government. Unfortunately, that didn't happen. But to say that neo-Nazis were just coming in to disrupt families is not true. We don't want that sort of vigilante, racist, horrible approach on our streets. We just don't. I fail, I'm sorry, to compare the two as the same. I just don't. And I'm going to stand by that because those Nazis who came in there—those 60-plus men—were absolutely here to divide and to disrupt our community, and that is something we shouldn't accept.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: And the pro-Hamas protesters were not there to divide and disrupt?

CORRECTED

The CHAIR: Order! Minister, we heard evidence from you earlier in relation to police numbers and how next year or later this year you're confident that the recruitment program and so on will catch up. The evidence shows us there are at least 1,500-plus vacancies. Maybe this is more for Commissioner Webb. With 1,400 off sick and then another 205 on long service leave, that's over 3,000 short on a day-to-day basis. But then you've still got the ODS scheme to come in as well, which was announced in March last year. How do you reconcile if the ODS is going to be taken up by a significant number of members of the Police Force that you'll end up having to pick up over 3,000 and still cover the ODS as well? Commissioner, is the ODS still going to be pursued?

KAREN WEBB: Yes. Certainly it was a program funded over three years for '21-'22, '22-'23 and '23-'24 and our commitment is to spend that money. This will be the end of the funding for that program. The EOIs will go out shortly to recommence round three and those officers that are successful will exit the organisation before 30 June this year, when the funding will cease.

The CHAIR: Can you tell us what the target number of overall recruitments is going to be then, that's going get us to where the Minister was saying we would be?

KAREN WEBB: I can hand to my deputy commissioner corporate who is overseeing that part of the work, but we certainly have ambitious plans and hopefully we can bring them to fruition.

DEAN SMITH: Thank you, Minister, and thank you, Chair. In relation to the targets for the recruitments for next year in terms of '25, our target is to work at a minimum of 1,200 and up to 1,500 recruits. Since the announcement, what we have seen is in the three months prior to the announcement to pay our students we had around 320 applications on the books. In the three months since that announcement, we have now 620 applications on the books. Our target for the last class of this year, which will attest in December, is 300-plus and then into next year our targets will be between 1,200 and 1,500 recruits.

The CHAIR: Do you think over the three years you will be able—the Minister is saying no, you won't achieve it.

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: Well, it would be good if we could—we are ambitious. But you've obviously got workforce leaving as you've got workforce coming in—attrition as you've got renewal—and we also have to retain. Retention, obviously, is critically important, which we've discussed here today at some length, as well as getting as many people through the door—new recruits through the door. We have to be realistic. You've also got people who are leaving through retirement or through going to another occupation—all of those things. We're certainly working hard and we are ambitious to try to achieve that but I'm not suggesting it's going to be three years. I can't put a time line on that. I wish I could, Mr Borsak.

The CHAIR: That's why I was interested to know why the interest ODS scheme was so—that wasn't a scheme brought about by your Government.

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: No.

The CHAIR: It was by the previous Government and the money was allocated. That scheme and the way it's targeted will be obviously looking to officers aged 60, probably, and over, who would be, I think, your most experienced cohort in the force. Is that right?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: As I understand it—and Mr Smith would be best to give you accurate advice—it can be across the force, not just people who are over 60. That's right that we've inherited a shortfall and a scheme to get rid of police. Now I've got to try and pick up on all of that, which we're working very hard on and will continue. I couldn't agree with you more; it is concerning. When I came in and realised that there were two ODS tranches of it ahead, I was, "There's a couple of hundred cops that we're going to lose already."

The CHAIR: Yes, that's right. And it's obviously had its effect.

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: Yes. Did you want to elaborate on that a little, Mr Smith? On ages?

DEAN SMITH: Thank you, Minister. Due to the tax class rulings which are attached to the ODS scheme, it is based on first in, best dressed in terms of the way that that is allocated. We don't allocate who goes out; it is based on those that enter the program in a sequence number. Realistically, we have officers who have left over the last couple of rounds that have had 10 years plus and we've had officers who have had 40 years plus, but we know the breakdown of those officers and their years of service.

The CHAIR: Yes, and I know you're coming to the last round of it so it probably doesn't make sense to abandon it. But it just seems to me that that program was going on and then you're finding yourself in a situation where you're short.

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: That's right. Something else I inherited.

CORRECTED

The CHAIR: I don't really know what was happening with the previous Government, but it doesn't seem to make any sense to me. Just on another matter, Minister, just talking about visually impaired target shooters, can you tell me what threat to the public visually impaired target shooters actually pose?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: I'm unsure of the threat level. But we have spoken in relation to a shooter who is visually impaired, about their involvement in the sport of shooting and how we can best accommodate them in terms of the storage of their weapons, and also the transport of them and their use of them.

The CHAIR: I was going to ask what risk analysis process has come to the conclusion. Maybe Mr Hudson can deal with that one. There have been some issues recently around visually impaired shooters and the way they're being treated by the Firearms Registry. Do you want to contribute to that question, Mr Hudson?

DAVID HUDSON: Yes, I will, sir.

The CHAIR: You seem to get all these, because it's part of your command.

DAVID HUDSON: Just lucky.

The CHAIR: You're just lucky, yes.

DAVID HUDSON: I am aware of the closure next week of Exsight, the range that specifically caters for vision impaired shooters. I understand there are nine visually impaired shooters that will be displaced out of that. I know there have been complaints made by a couple of those individuals at different points of their engagement with the Firearms Registry. However, I am told, as I sit here, that we're working very hard to accommodate each and every one of them with conditions that are appropriate to their particular circumstances.

The CHAIR: Can I tell you—that's a great sentiment, Commissioner, and I know the Minister has been doing some work on it as well, but at the end of the day where we ended up is exactly where we started.

DAVID HUDSON: I'm told the work's not finished at this stage, sir. So there's ongoing liaison between the Firearms Registry and those individuals, trying to cater for their needs, because we are supportive of their continued ability to target shoot.

The CHAIR: Would you believe that New South Wales has the biggest number of conditions to be placed on visually impaired shooters in the country by far?

DAVID HUDSON: I'll take you at your word there, sir, but I also think we have a fairly rigorous Firearms Act where other jurisdictions might not.

The CHAIR: I know the Firearms Act is very rigorous. I also know it's very rigorous in other States and probably more rigorous in Western Australia. Maybe you would like the Western Australian model, but the reality is that this is not Western Australia; this is New South Wales. There's larger discretion to deal with, especially visually impaired shooters who only compete with air rifles at .177 calibre and shoot at 10 metres range. A lot of them are trying to get themselves set up for the Olympics. Yet when representations are made for these people to make it a little easier for them to be able to conform when their club is shut down, basically, Commissioner, they're getting the run-around.

DAVID HUDSON: That's not the information I get, sir. I've been told we are doing everything within the Act and our capabilities to try and accommodate them, as you would expect.

The CHAIR: Well, my office was told that the registry doesn't care what other conditions are done in other States—New South Wales is going to be tougher.

DAVID HUDSON: That's not my briefing, sir. I think we'll agree to disagree on that. I'll take it on notice and I'll have a look at it, but that's not the information—

The CHAIR: Well, that's exactly what my office was told: New South Wales would be much tougher on visually impaired shooters who want to compete at the Olympics and make it much tougher and much harder for them to comply with the law. That is just completely unnecessary, especially if you take into account the actual possibility of them being a risk to the public. It's unacceptable.

DAVID HUDSON: That's not the information I have, sir, but I'll certainly pursue it. As I said, my information is we are doing everything within our ability to accommodate those individuals.

The CHAIR: Thank you.

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: Can I just start by asking you, Minister, if you're aware of how many serving officers in the New South Wales Police Force have been at some point charged with a domestic and family violence offence?

CORRECTED

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: Can I get that accurate figure just so as—

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: Yes. I asked this question last year and, as of August 2023, I was told that there were 60 serving officers who had been charged with domestic and family violence offences.

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: Sorry, what period do you want—from August to now?

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: No, sorry, I'm letting you know that as of August there were that many within the Police Force sitting there. Sixty had been charged with DFV offences.

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: And you want to know how many there are now. Yes, okay.

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: Four of those were still employed and had been convicted of a domestic and family violence offence. Do you have the current figures? That would be great.

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: Fifty-seven.

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: Fifty-seven who have been charged are still serving, and how many convicted? Still four?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: Three.

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: And then we come to sexual violence offences, which I also asked about in August. I was told that, of the currently serving officers, 19 had been charged and one convicted—a senior constable—for sexually touching without consent. Are those figures still correct?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: We might have to get that, sorry.

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: Do you think it's acceptable for the Police Force, given the 40 per cent of work that the Police Force does around domestic and family violence, for there to be that many officers who have themselves been charged with domestic and family violence offences?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: I think that the police take it very seriously. I guess the Police Force—they're the same people as everybody else in the community.

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: Yes, but not everyone else in the community is handling domestic and family violence.

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: I accept that; I absolutely accept that, Ms Boyd. But the reality, I guess, is what I'm talking about. The reality is they're people in our community and, unfortunately, we have a lot of people in our community that are perpetrators of this particular crime especially. I guess it's a bit reflective of that. Does that make it right? No, of course not.

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: No.

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: But I do believe that the Commissioner takes this very seriously. Did you want to add anything, Commissioner?

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: In the interest of time—and I will come back this afternoon as well—the Law Enforcement Conduct Commission looked into incidents and complaints that they'd had between 2017 and 2021. They released a report in June last year that has some really shocking findings. It said that, in relation to complaints about domestic and family violence incidents, 32 per cent of them involved police officers themselves as an alleged perpetrator. Of the 60 officers who were involved in domestic and family violence incidents who were the subject of complaints, 62 per cent of them were subject to an ADVO. The report is quite shocking reading, but one of the recommendations that it came out with was that, if nothing else, we shouldn't be having people within the same command going and investigating complaints against their mates when they come in.

If, say, a partner of a serving police officer wants to make a complaint about domestic and family violence—and already there are massive obstacles to do that—they go to their local command and there is nothing at the moment that says that that local command needs to pass that on. It's at the discretion of the sergeant. I forget the exact words, so you can correct me. But the point is that both the LECC and also the Auditor-General, in her report into police responses to domestic and family violence, made the very strong recommendation that we should automatically have those cases that come in being dealt with by a different command. Instead, we had a response from the Police Force saying, "Not supported"—not going to do that. What is your view of that?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: I can say that already it is possible for commanders to request that another command do that.

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: It is possible, yes, but not mandatory.

CORRECTED

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: No, that's right. I didn't say that.

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: To be clear, the recommendation was that it should be mandatory.

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: Yes, I hear you. I'm just saying, though—and I will ask Mr Lanyon if he can provide further information on that. I am told by the police that having the local command there—knowing the circumstances, the officers and also the outcomes that we're seeing—doesn't suggest that it's an impediment.

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: Have you read the LECC report?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: Yes. I know—

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: Have you seen the numbers of complaints that have come to the LECC in relation to police who have been charged themselves with domestic and family violence? Not just this but, as I've just read out to you and you've confirmed, we have 59 serving officers who have been charged themselves. There is nothing to restrict those people from being the ones at the front desk when somebody walks in, in an incredibly vulnerable situation. Why on earth would you get this report from the LECC and also the Auditor-General's report saying, "For God's sake, if nothing else, at least get a different area from the one that the alleged perpetrator's sitting in, to investigate"—why would we be saying no to that?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: You obviously know that police have responded to LECC, and that's available on the website.

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: And they've said "not supported" for that.

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: That's right.

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: I'm asking you for your response. Are you going to legislate to require that they move that to a different command, given all of the concerns?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: That's not my intention. Mr Lanyon, would you like to elaborate on that in terms of the local area commands?

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: Please don't tell me that there is a discretion to move it to another—because I know that. I can come back to you this afternoon, but I've read at length the response from the police.

MALCOLM LANYON: Would you like me to address it now?

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: Let's come back to it. Minister, are you aware—no doubt, you are—of the over 10-year delay now in updating the COPS system to IPOS?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: Yes.

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: Have we finally got somebody in who's going to be updating that system?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: There is some movement at the station, you'll be pleased to hear. Mr Smith can take you through where we're up to on that, if that's okay.

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: Okay. If you could do it super-quick, and then I'll come back to you.

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: It's a number of—as you know, there's different systems.

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: I will be back this afternoon, but maybe I can shortcut this by just asking when will the bit of work around domestic and family violence that's required to update COPS so it actually has an ability to link incidents and all the other things that the Auditor-General was talking about in her report—when will that functionality be available in New South Wales?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: The DVSAT is imminent, and that talks to COPS—

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: Not the DVSAT, no. One of the problems with the COPS system is that it's very clunky and it's very incident focused. If you read the Auditor-General's report on that, she makes that very clear that, when it comes to modern policing, the COPS system is outdated and antiquated and needs to be updated.

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: We agree.

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: Back before the contract was pulled, we did have IPOS being on track to deliver that functionality for domestic and family violence cases by 2027. That was before everything was pulled. When will we now get that in New South Wales?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: I know forensics is imminent. When is that? Have you got a date for domestic violence as well?

CORRECTED

DEAN SMITH: Minister, I'll have to take that on notice. If I can answer that this afternoon, I'm sure we'll be able to have that at that point in time.

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: Thank you. The DV policy for the New South Wales police—there was an article on this recently. It was supposed to be reviewed in 2021. It hasn't been, despite all the recommendations in the LECC report as well. Why is that?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: We've done the DV reform project, and part of that is the DV registry. Obviously, you are—

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: Which is great. I'm not criticising that. But what about the policy update?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: We will continue to work on that. I'll have to check with Mr Lanyon on a date on that. But the New South Wales police are doing an extraordinary amount of work in relation to domestic violence.

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: They're doing some work; this is true.

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: No, I would—

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: Three years ago, that was supposed to be updated—very basic policy guidelines which are lacking and were identified as lacking by the LECC and by the Auditor-General. Why have those guidelines not been updated?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: I would say that they are doing not just the bare minimum. They are actually going above and beyond. The DV registry has—

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: Do you know how many women have died in New South Wales from domestic and family violence since Labor came to office? Do you know how many?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: I'd have to check that.

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: Eighteen. In Victoria, where they have taken this much more seriously and they had a significant \$3.86 billion commitment from 2015 to turn things around, they only had 10, which is, given the population sizes—perhaps we're doing something a bit wrong here in New South Wales. I don't think we can rest on our laurels and say, "The police are doing a great job." They're being held back by an antiquated system, by outdated guidelines. Enough is enough. What will you do, Minister—

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: Abigail, domestic violence is a whole-of-community problem. It is not just a policing problem. The police are the ones who have to go there at the crisis point. That is what is happening.

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: And they're being set up to fail.

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: I don't agree with you. I don't agree with that premise at all, because I do believe that the DV registry is targeting high-risk offenders and profiling them.

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: Yes, that's one tiny element of what's required.

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: Then Amarok backs that up, and we've seen some terrific results from Amarok. You'd have to agree with that. The police are doing a lot. I don't accept your premise that the New South Wales police are just doing a bit. I believe that they are being—

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: No. Again, I'm not criticising individual officers.

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: Nor am I.

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: I'm talking about the systemic problems that you've inherited that are setting the police system up to fail.

The Hon. MARK LATHAM: Minister, you've spoken several times today about the new payment of recruits while they train at Goulburn police academy. Is that to be a permanent feature now, permanently funded, or is it still under evaluation?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: We're using internal funds presently. When they're full, that will be a great day—when we've filled all 1,500 positions. Then it will be looked at, at that point in time.

The Hon. MARK LATHAM: The MOU between the New South Wales Government and the Police Association for the Police Blue Ribbon Insurance Superannuation Concessional Contributions Cap expires on 30 June this year. Is it the intention to renew that and continue the arrangements that are in place of benefit to the police?

CORRECTED

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: We're going through that process now. That's what I was alluding to earlier. As you know, it has to be renewed because it's expiring. Those negotiations are what we're going through now with the insurance company.

The Hon. MARK LATHAM: You intention is to renew?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: That is the case, yes.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: Minister, I want to go back to this equipment failure that we're experiencing and the importance of body-worn cameras as being one of the most positive measures to prevent excessive force, assaults et cetera and to protect police. Are you certain that you have enough money in the budget and that there is a plan to deal with this major problem?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: In relation to the new body-worn cameras that work interactively with the tasers—is that what you're referring to?

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: Yes.

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: I'll need a full briefing on that, but it's certainly the intention that we will have that technology as soon as it's available to us.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: At this point, though, you recognise that we've got a serious problem. We need to improve, but we don't quite have the solution at the moment.

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: That is my understanding. Would you like to speak more to that?

DEAN SMITH: In regard to the body-worn video, we are at best and final in regard to contract arrangements. We are expecting the delivery of the new body-worn videos in June of this year. In terms of what we are experiencing now in regard to the current body-worn video, we have purchased an additional thousand current body-worn videos to make sure that they are sufficient in the field. Then we will move towards the holster activation devices for body-worn video beyond June 2024 and roll that out as part of the Integrated Connected Officer program, including the new GLOCK pistols, holster activation, light sources, body-worn videos and the T7 taser.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: I might come back this afternoon and try to get those a bit more specific. Thank you.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Minister, when did you receive the final review that was conducted by Geoff McKechnie into the Firearms Registry?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: That was not—

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: It was commissioned by the former Government—

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: Yes, and it wasn't accepted.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: —and we understand that it's with you.

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: The then police Minister didn't accept it.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Do you have that report? Do you know what was in it and the recommendations.

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: I haven't read that report.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: But do you have it? Is it on your desk, in your office? Will you make it public?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: It wasn't accepted by the then Government. It was your Government's report that then wasn't accepted.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: But it was commissioned—

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: By your Government and then wasn't accepted.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: My understanding is that it's with you and it hasn't been made public since the change of government. Will you commit today to making that review and its recommendations public?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: I will not commit to that. Your Government commissioned a report—

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Why not?

CORRECTED

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: —received the report and the then police Minister did not accept the report and commissioned the report.

The Hon. BOB NANVA: Point of order—

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: So you won't make it public? That's fine. If you won't make it public, that's up to you.

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: You can ask the former police Minister.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: No, I'm asking you.

The CHAIR: There is a point of order.

The Hon. BOB NANVA: We're traversing subject that predates the Minister's time in office. It's not relevant under the standing orders.

The CHAIR: That's not a point of order. She can not answer it.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: We've established that you won't be releasing it, Minister. What additional police resources will be provided over the next four days to support the thousands of fans who are heading out to Taylor Swift? We'll finish on a good one.

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: The police deal with large crowds in this city on a regular basis. The city is open for business, and we want it to remain open for business, so that's fantastic. The police resourcing will be adequate to what is before them. They have a formula that they work on in terms of numbers and how many police they'll need for those numbers, but I suspect there'll be a few police out there that'll get a great taste of Tay Tay themselves.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: And you, Minister, as well?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: Yes.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Likewise. Maybe you and I can exchange friendship bracelets, and that will be lovely. Commissioner, you're very welcome too. I'm not wearing mine today; I'm saving mine for Monday, when we're going.

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: We've got police ones.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Maybe I might be able to talk to you about that. Taylor unites everybody, Minister, even at the end of budget estimates.

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: I'm more of a punk rocker, I think. I don't have any.

The Hon. MARK LATHAM: I'm sticking to Meatloaf—may he rest in peace.

The CHAIR: Government questions?

The Hon. BOB NANVA: Minister, at the beginning of this session, you said you had some information for the Committee.

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: Yes, I do, in relation to remote and special remote. The retention of the officers is also a key part of the strategy for us to keep people in the bush—to attract them to come there and then to keep them there—so I just wanted to clear that up. Also, Mr Latham, I am advised that we have completed, this year, 118,093 drug tests already, and that is putting us on the correct—

The Hon. MARK LATHAM: That's as many as the entire prior financial year, so that's an improvement. Thank you.

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: Yes, of the 200,000, so I just wanted to let you know that. In relation to Weatherill Park, there are ordinarily two officers overnight at the station, I'm advised. When they're not there, they're actually in a truck. As I've described to you, every police car is a police station, and they're actually out patrolling, which is what we want. That visibility is excellent as well. Did somebody ask me about the number of police separations? I'm advised, year to date, there are 740 of those.

The CHAIR: No other Government questions? I'm advised that there's nothing further for you this afternoon, Mr Wheaton, so you're released, if the Opposition and The Greens are happy with that.

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: Thanks, Jonno.

The CHAIR: You're let off; you're lucky. Unfortunately, apart from you, Minister, everyone else to stay.

CORRECTED

(The Minister withdrew.)

(Jonathan Wheaton withdrew.)

(Luncheon adjournment)

The CHAIR: We will start the afternoon session, having been suitably refreshed after lunch.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: I will begin with questions relating to the Firearms Registry, which I think will go to Deputy Commissioner Hudson. Possibly this will go to the Commissioner to begin with. The review conducted by Geoff McKechnie, which was obviously prior to this Minister—my understanding is that was handed down days before caretaker mode. Is that something that you can confirm?

KAREN WEBB: I can't actually confirm that. I am not even sure that—

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: I'm happy for someone to take it on notice.

DAVID HUDSON: To my recollection, it was sometime before caretaker—a little bit before.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: In terms of the issue of time frames for people to have their applications processed—it might be something that my colleague touched on earlier. Certainly there are a number of local MPs who get contacted by people who say that the period of time for the registry is taking months and months—until, potentially, the MP makes a representation and suddenly these issues are looked at quite quickly, which is appreciated. Is there any information you could give us in terms of those processing times and how long it is taking? We are getting some feedback from the community that it is quite lengthy, in terms of the time periods.

DAVID HUDSON: Ma'am, that's a surprise to me. Since we moved to the Gun Safe platform, new licence applications are taking an average of 33 days to complete. That is incorporating the 28-day cooling off period, which is incorporated in the Act. That is taken into account there as well. Permits to acquire are taking 10 to 12 days to complete. It is a high-volume area. They do 50,000 transactions a month through Gun Safe. Paper-based applications, which we haven't precluded at this stage, to accommodate those people who are not digitally able—only 2.5 per cent of all applications are paper based—sometimes they are a little tardy at times in being placed on the system to manage the time frames. We publish all the time frames and data on the website every month: the waiting times, the times it takes to process each application in groups in the general mode. I personally haven't seen—and I used to see lots—any timeliness complaints for a long time.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Thank you. I will pass that back on to my colleagues who have asked me to raise it. In terms of the process for those who may have identified having mental health issues, in terms of their application—I have two examples, but I might give you those personal details outside of the Committee hearing because I want to respect the individuals in terms of their particular circumstances. One is a former, might actually be a current, ambulance officer who has PTSD as part of that role. He identified that in terms of his application when it was up for renewal and subsequently had his firearms removed almost immediately, even though he is receiving treatment and not at any risk to himself. I also know of another example of an individual who has cerebral palsy and has had PTSD associated with that. She wants to shoot at her local gun club and is having challenges getting that. Again, I will provide the specifics to you, perhaps in the afternoon tea break.

In terms of how the applications are assessed, either for a new licence or for a renewal, when individuals do identify a mental health issue, can you outline the process that that goes through?

My concern is that, obviously if there is someone who has a mental illness who is at risk to themselves or others, you need very stringent requirements around access to firearms, but on the flip side if we want people to be honest and talk about their mental health issues and encourage them to do that in terms of that process, how does the registry sort of determine that and what is the balance that we can get in terms of those issues and that process?

DAVID HUDSON: Ma'am, as soon as an individual flags on the renewal application that they have experienced some form of mental illness, the process is that we tell them that they're required to obtain a medical risk assessment from a doctor, from a trained psychologist or psychiatrist, to actually assess them as to their capacity and capability to be able to have access to firearms. If that is in the positive, then that licence is issued. If not, then it's declined. But it's all based on medical evidence.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: From just one treating professional, or is there a process? How does that—I appreciate these are hypotheticals but—

DAVID HUDSON: From their treating doctor—someone who knows them. We are looking at extending that based on discussions with Dr Murray Wright, the New South Wales chief psychologist or

CORRECTED

psychiatrist, as to whether we expand that to a GP who's known the individual for five years as well to do that assessment. Sometimes it's difficult to get into someone to do that assessment. It takes some time.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Especially in regional areas, too, that's hard.

DAVID HUDSON: We're looking at extending that, based on that recommendation. But once that assessment's made, that's the decision-maker in relation to whether the licence is issued or not.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: In terms of the Firearms Registry but for serving police officers more generally, those who also identify, whether it's PTSD or sort of mental health challenges—and again, happy for whoever is best placed to answer this—but what is the process in terms of their access to firearms? Is it similar? I'm just curious about that too.

DAVID HUDSON: Yes, it is similar. If they're currently in the workplace and they claim an issue, then their service firearm is most normally, in the absence of medical evidence to the contrary, secured within the workplace so they don't have access to it, and any private firearms follow the same process.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Okay. Thank you for that. I want to go now back to the issues around rural and regional crime—probably not surprising to you. I know that we spoke about this at the last hearing as well. Again, to firmly put on the record, I know what an amazing job our police are doing in the regions and I'm very supportive of the hard work in the very challenging circumstances that they'd be finding themselves in. Are there any updates, through you, Commissioner, or one of your colleagues, in terms of some of any new initiatives or things that you're working on in regional areas to support, particularly in those areas where we know that there have been increased issues around crime?

KAREN WEBB: I'll hand to Deputy Commissioner Pisanos in a moment, but certainly we've been experiencing this wave for some time. I think I've talked about it for the last few estimates meetings that we anticipated this coming, which is why I made it one of the priorities when I became commissioner. In regional New South Wales, we certainly see escalation in places like Tamworth, Orange, Armidale, Dubbo, Bourke, and the list goes on. But equally, some of the young people are not staying put in the town. They're moving from basically the border down to Newcastle and back again, so some of them are marauding wider than their hometown. We've put a number of operations in place, but I just want to again credit to all the police doing work in those areas, with the support of specialist areas out of the regions and also out of Sydney. In the past 12 months, there've been 2, 212 individual youths issued with court attendance notices for 5,737 issues. What that says in not so many words is that there are repeat offenders in there or they've got multiple charges.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Yes.

KAREN WEBB: So there's a lot of work being done to show the community, not just in the prevention, diversion and intervention space, that we're responding and investigating these matters. I'll hand to Mr Pisanos to say we stood up in Operation Mongoose. We've got an equivalent operation in the metropolitan area called Sweetenham—dedicated resources, offline targeting, and repeat offenders who we know are prolific and causing the most harm in the communities—and having very successful results. But I'll hand to Mr Pisanos.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: I would like to hear from Mr Pisanos. But, just in terms of that data, Commissioner, I'm happy for you to take it on notice. How does that compare to, say, the previous 12-month period? If you—

KAREN WEBB: I'll take that on notice.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: That would be great.

KAREN WEBB: Certainly, from my experience in reading the reports as they come through, there's been an uptick in the productivity and the work outputs in terms of arrests et cetera. Equally, there's a system that we've implemented in the last few months, called Engage, which is basically a platform where we record our interactions in both the prevention and engagement space to just measure the number of times that we're engaging with members of the community in programs, in meetings or whatever it is, so we've got that data that's growing to say that we're trying to divert, we're trying to engage with various stakeholders to divert these kids, predominantly—quite young, many of them—away from this risky behaviour. But, where that's not working, then we have to arrest.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Mr Pisanos, did you have—

PAUL PISANOS: Minister, I'm not sure. Certainly, in terms of the prevention and diversion space, the police and PCYC programs and some of the other collaborations just continue to be modified and expanded to just adapt to the type of crime that we are seeing and—to use the Commissioner's words—the uptick in the last 12 months, particularly around a cohort of younger and younger POIs and more serious offences. A lot of the

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diversionary and prevention stuff that we traditionally do with that cohort, unfortunately, it's not successful, because they just won't engage with the police or other agencies and partners in that space. So, for that reason, we had to really weigh in to Operation Mongoose. The Commissioner's alluded to that. That's been well publicised.

Mongoose, I guess, is a name that we've given to a type of police operation that's part of that response modelling. And it augments and enhances the work we're doing at a local level. Basically, it encapsulates a type of taskforce, strike force type of response, that you'd see to other serious crime problems within the scope of, I guess, our prevention and disruption space, diversionary space, under our Youth Strategy. We call that a tier 1 approach, which is basically your diversionary work, and that's just with a cohort to try to keep them away from the criminal justice system. As you know, the Young Offenders Act is a diversionary type of Act at its heart, and we're using that legislation to its extreme.

For those matters where it does not work, we're relying on, particularly, our partners in Youth Justice and other agencies to really weigh in on that space, when it becomes really a recidivism and custodial, breach-of-bail issue. The Mongoose is an enhancement, and it is an augmentation of what we have been doing. It is a significant development. It mirrors what my colleague Deputy Lanyon's doing in the metro, and that was purposefully done so we have a consistent approach to this style of offending.

Ours, obviously, as you know, is customised to some of the challenges in regional communities, where our assets and resources have got to be spread out across sometimes significant geographical areas, which means we're often weighing in more on aviation support, which has been brilliant. We're using aerial support for surveillance really as a safety step to protect the police, protect other road users, protect the individuals in the cars, the young people, often, from the type of driving behaviour we're seeing. Mongoose, in terms of response, is probably one of the most significant developments in my time, which has been some time in this youth and Indigenous space at different ranks and different levels. In my service I've certainly never seen us respond in this way, both with the weight we're putting into our diversion and prevention but also the way we're approaching our response.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Again, obviously, particularly interested in the regional aspect, response times and how that's going. And I appreciate exactly what you're saying in terms of there can often be large distances, and you've only got as many officers as you have in a particular sort of area command. Is there any advice or information you could provide in terms of how the response time to emergency issues in those communities is tracking?

PAUL PISANOS: Certainly, if I can take that away. I'm not sure if it's here, but I can tell you that I've heard nothing. Certainly nothing has been raised, in terms of us, that there's been an impact on our P1 or P2 jobs. I might be corrected on that, but the police are working—Mongoose is not monopolising all the police time. Police are working hard in terms of their normal calls for service and first response work. I have not been informed of any issues around response times or difficulties. They're just working extra hard to keep it all going. That is probably the way I'd respond to it.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Commissioner, did you have any data?

KAREN WEBB: Yes, I do. I've got the statistics for the last three financial years in terms of the six regions, so three regional areas and the three metropolitan areas, in terms of the average response times. As you'd expect, the further out you go, the larger the response time. I'm happy to talk to that or provide that. For example, in the 2022-23 year in Central Metropolitan Region, it was 6.56 minutes. In Western Region it was 14.27, which is pretty good considering the distances and the geography out there, and the others vary in between.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Could you provide that, either on notice or if there's a version you could—

KAREN WEBB: Yes, we'll take that on notice. I can give you the history there.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: That would be great. I want to pick up on something that you just said, Mr Pisanos, about the cultural element in some of the western communities with members of the Aboriginal community, and ensuring that you've got that trust and that it's a culturally sensitive approach to policing. Are there any new initiatives or work that the police are doing in that space, particularly in the north-western and western parts of the State?

PAUL PISANOS: I think probably if I could go as soon as yesterday, we were briefed up on a program that's running in Moree where we're actually engaging through our Aboriginal community liaison officers. Forgive me, I can't give you the name of the program at the moment, but I can provide it. It basically is driven through the ACLos at Moree and through the Aboriginal engagement officer and the OIC, Inspector McWilliam. Basically, it's capitalising on some of the female Elders—which are parents, aunties and grandparents of some of the cohort

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of Mongoose offenders that are committing the offences—and basically involves trying to support the families in reintegrating these young people when they are given bail, just to stop the repeat bail breaches and the ongoing cycle.

I haven't seen us engage at that level in this way. Again, it's a police initiative. I know that it's in some areas, and I think the Commissioner alluded to Orange; Wagga; Tamworth; upper Northern Region, around Mid North Coast and Kempsey; down south around Wagga, in the Southern Region—all similar issues. Lots of local initiatives, many of them driven in partnership with police and other providers. Police have generally got fairly strong relationships through their consultative committees and the like. We're sort of focusing in on the Indigenous cohort.

The partnerships in those Aboriginal strategic direction type commands, where the ASD is fairly relevant—those ongoing relationships with the police and community consultative committees are still very strong. As the Commissioner said, the engage database was designed to record those interactions and really monitor the outputs and the outcomes from some of those meetings, and a lot of innovations in terms of partnerships. DCJ, just some of the localised initiatives like short-term remand projects, bail programs and that at Wagga—the police are at the table with those through the YAMs, the Youth Action Meeting coordination procedures. They're all in place. They're all things that have evolved over the last 12 months.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: I appreciate different communities will respond differently and you need that local input, whether it's with the Aboriginal community or any young people, particularly focusing on youth crime. But if there's a really good initiative that's working in a particular community, is it through the YAMs that someone in Wagga might hear about something really successful in Kempsey and think, "Well, is this something that we could also look to bring into our community?" How do the local police network on those initiatives and potential solutions?

PAUL PISANOS: We've got a full-time youth command and a crime prevention command. We've got a full-time senior officer that oversees—centrally sits over the top through our Aboriginal coordination team and also our multicultural liaison teams where there's other members of communities that are non-Aboriginal. We've got MCLOs—liaison officers that engage for us in those communities, both regionally across metropolitan commands and communities as well. They're recorded on this Engage database. In that way the programs are centrally reviewed and coordinated. Good initiatives are actually recognised through that crime prevention command, through that liaison officer network and through the chain of command, and they're communicated out and shared. The database, the Engage system, was designed by the police with a provider for the police to actually address the very point you made so that we can actually share. It used to be paper-based initiatives. So Engage has been a bit of a game changer for us. At this point of time it is showing itself to be quite significant and a real game changer.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: I might come back to some of this but my time is up.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: Thank you. Deputy Commissioner Hudson, or possibly Mr Lanyon, could we please go back to the bomb threat on the Botany matter and what you are doing in relation to that matter? The Minister seemed unaware of what was happening, or whether anything was happening, and I know that there was some conversation afterwards. So could you put on the record what you understand is happening?

DAVID HUDSON: I'll just reiterate that the matter is being investigated by South Sydney Police Area Command. I think Mr Lanyon can go through the current status of that, but certainly we are liaising with the counterterrorism command in relation to that.

MALCOLM LANYON: That's correct, Mr Hudson. It's an ongoing investigation. South Sydney Police Area Command are leading it and are taking it seriously. They're certainly aware of what you've referred to as the bomb threat but then a subsequent threat that was made to the victim, or a subsequent correspondence that was had with that victim there. As part of the ongoing investigation, there has been significant and ongoing contact with the victim to provide updates. It is a matter that continues to be investigated. So investigators are still trying to identify the persons responsible for the offence. Obviously, as we get further evidence, that investigation continues. But, should you have information the victim has not been properly kept in informed, I'm more than happy to take that information from you and I'll have it acted on.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: Thank you very much. Could we just go back to the equipment issue? Actually, sorry, just before we do, for you, Commissioner: At the last estimates I think the numbers were that we had 16,923 sworn officers. Has that number increased or decreased since then?

KAREN WEBB: I can pull those numbers out.

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Ms SUE HIGGINSON: Okay, thank you. I'll come back to that. Deputy Commissioner Smith, or it might be you, Mr Hudson, when we were referring to the equipment, the body-worn cam—I just think it would be great to understand a bit clearer what precisely it is we're looking at having. Are we going to be in a position this year, or in the next few months, where all of those devices or weapon devices are accompanied with activated body-worn cameras?

DAVID HUDSON: I'll defer to Mr Smith.

DEAN SMITH: In regards to the conversation about the Integrated Connected Officer program, our ultimate aim is exactly as you've stated. It is the fact that, whether it is the use of any arms or appointments in terms of your firearm or the taser, it is automatically activated once it is deployed through body-worn video. We are in a maintenance program in terms of the current body-worn camera program. We are currently in final vendor selection for the new rollout of the body-worn video cameras and also the holster activation devices. We are already in deployment of the first tranche of the new Glock pistols, with a further round of around about 17,000 new Glock pistols in total to be delivered over the next three years. In relation to the body-worn video, the time frame is to work towards final vendor selection and then ordering and commenced rollout of that program from the end of June 2024.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: No disrespect here, but it's sounding like it's going to be a long time until all officers with all of those weapons are actually armed with the automatically activated body-worn camera. Is that right? Is that what I'm hearing?

DEAN SMITH: We are working on a planned schedule of delivery.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: Are we still working out the vendor selection for that?

DEAN SMITH: No. In terms of the body-worn, that and the holster has been resolved.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: Okay.

DEAN SMITH: The acquisition of the holsters and the ordering of the holsters has been resolved.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: So there is technology and it is available and we will be able to get that?

DEAN SMITH: Correct. The Glock rollout is finalised. We have ordered the Glock pistols as part of the full program, and the full rollout of those Glock pistols will be resolved over the next three training years. The last couple of classes at the academy are already leaving the academy with the new Glock pistol. Some of our specialist commands, such as traffic and highway patrol and dog unit, already have the new Glock pistol, and we will work through making sure that that program of works is done through the next three training years. It is a requirement that all officers are trained appropriately in relation to the use of the new pistol.

In relation to the body-worn video, our full program of work there is an order of over 6,000 cameras. That will commence, in terms of final selection and delivery, from the end of June 2024. In terms of the full delivery of that program, that will be done in a much quicker time frame than the full delivery of Glocks. And then we will just sequence all of the holster activations, because we already have all the tasers in terms of the rollout of the T7 taser delivery. That number is the 2,600 tasers that were delivered in August of last year.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: How is the new Glock different to the existing Glock, other than the—

KAREN WEBB: Calibre?

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: Yes.

DEAN SMITH: I'm not a specific weapons expert, but in terms of the operation there is not much functional difference. It is a better weapon to use in the sense of its ease of operation, but it is very similar to the 40 cal. However, the calibre of this is a nine mil Glock, and it is just a new generation Glock weapon that is part of the procurement process that we've undertaken in the New South Wales police.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: Commissioner, did you have the numbers on the—

KAREN WEBB: I'm just getting the most up to date. I had some at the end of January, but I'll get the most up to date.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: Thank you. It looked like the numbers that you were suggesting of police on leave may have reduced since we were last speaking in estimates. I'm just wondering, is the problem that we have at the moment still focused on the northern region? Is that still an area of concern to you?

KAREN WEBB: It's still an area of concern, ma'am. It has always been over-represented. It continues to be over-represented, but there are some early signs that the numbers are slowing. But it's very early days. It

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would be nice to credit that to PULSE programs and the other programs we have put in place, but we'll have to wait till it's fully embedded and evaluate it.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: Can I ask a bit more about what my colleague was talking about with the youth program? I wasn't quite clear from what was happening in the conversation earlier about the difference between the redundant suspect target management plan and the juvenile component or the young persons component of that—that's now no longer in operation. What has replaced it? I understand there is this youth justice strategy. I can hear parts about that with the early interventions. I'm just wondering, in terms of particular targeting, how are you doing that early identification?

KAREN WEBB: We're actually only in pilot and the undertaking we made to LECC and other stakeholders is that we would consult. I think the consultation and the pilot is due to conclude on 1 March, and the feedback will be incorporated and will be returned to the Executive for consideration. We'll consider it then. Really, it's still early days but we need to try something and move away from the STMP process.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: Just on that point, what were the risk assessment tools? Is there a category or some top points of what those risk assessment tools—

KAREN WEBB: In the old system or the new one?

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: The new one—the one you're trialling.

KAREN WEBB: I might ask Mr Hudson to talk to that, but it's really about for each command and area to focus on its crime environment and our PDR, as we call it, about tackling that problem in a full lens rather than just concentrating on an offender cohort, but it may pick up an offender cohort in that process. Have you got anything additional?

DAVID HUDSON: Thanks, Commissioner. It's a more holistic approach to crime, being crime focused rather than individual offender focused. Even though the previous policy did have many prevention strategies in it, they weren't widely adopted by the frontline commands because of the absence of support from other agencies, so historically they went back to the normal strategies of targeting the individual by compliance checks—things that they could do within their remit—which obviously attracted some criticism from the Law Enforcement Conduct Commission. There were a suite of options in the old policy in relation to what was possible which, as I said, weren't adopted.

The new policy will be crime focused based on the daily crime reviews, the weekly—or, sorry the monthly—PDR meetings and input from dashboards that are established in particular crime categories. If individuals are suspected of being responsible for a high volume of crimes within those cohorts, if they're youth, they'll be referred to the Youth Command to develop appropriate strategies to manage that individual rather than relying upon what was in the former STMP 3 target management plan.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: That sounds like an improvement. I'll come back to it. I'm just going to hand to my colleague, Ms Abigail Boyd.

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: Thank you. A bit more calmly now, can we go back to looking at the status of the IPOS system. Can we start with the details of who has been tendered to do that work and what the time frame is?

KAREN WEBB: I will hand to my deputy on this in more specific detail, but the original scope of IPOS was one provider. As you've pointed out at previous estimates, that contractor was terminated and we've moved to individual providers that can best deliver what we need. That has broken some of that work down and, as had been indicated earlier, with the forensic and evidence system, for example, the vendor has been sourced and the system will go live shortly. Similarly for the CAD system, which is the call and dispatch system, that's also in advanced procurement and then onwards from there, you know, it's active procurement in terms of what comes next and it's really a commercial thing. I can't go into too much detail, but it's certainly segmented so that we can deliver things, get on with the job, and get moving.

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: For the layperson, the forensic and evidence bit, how does that relate to the types of things that I've been interested in from a domestic and family violence perspective, and also a sexual assault perspective? We've spoken in the past at estimates about, you know, can we record and actually derive the data in terms of why sexual assault claims are discontinued, for instance?

KAREN WEBB: There's two things. Forensic and evidence is really about dealing with the evidence, about recording the evidence and any forensic analysis et cetera, all the movement in and out, and checks, forensic testing et cetera is managed on that system and the results produced on that system. It's a system that's used by other national police forces, and that will give us good collaboration if we needed to work with our colleagues

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interstate. The issue that you have difficulty with, and I think we all have difficulty with, is actually recording reasons why a victim may discontinue or withdraw from a sexual assault investigation. And that's not always clear in any system. There's not enough drop-down menus to paint a picture for every victim's circumstance. So I'm not quite sure that we're actually ever going to get to where you want to get to.

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: My understanding is every other State and Territory in Australia can provide the data for—

KAREN WEBB: We can provide some data, but it won't be unique to the circumstance. It might be that a victim withdraws for—they just don't want to continue.

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: Sure. But that's not what we're interested in capturing. At the moment, my understanding is that every other State and Territory can tell us whether police have decided not to continue with it because of feelings of lack of evidence or whatever or if the—I don't care what the reason is, but it's basically a police action versus a withdrawal by the victim. That is information that is available everywhere else and hasn't been available in New South Wales and I've been banging on about it for the last five years. When will we have that capability in New South Wales?

KAREN WEBB: The COPS replacement project, which is part of the bigger IPOS, is a piece of work, and I'll get Mr Smith to talk about that. But that's made it clearer for me—and thank you—around what the distinction is, but we won't be able to detail every individual case, but there will be simply two categories.

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: It's just those two categories. Do we have a time line for that? Previously I've been told a time line, and now it's gone back to the drawing board. What's the—

DEAN SMITH: Minister, just in relation to that, in regards to the COPS replacement, we have a multi-vendor approach. And, at this present time, our project team for IPOS is actually speaking with other jurisdictions in relation to the vendors that they use, which may be able to assist in answering the question that you have asked. But also we are currently in the planning, the testing and the pilot phases of looking at those vendors and that multi-vendor approach, outside of the single-source selection under the previous arrangements. We are looking to have that completed towards the end of 2024. In terms of what happens next, we will then move into procurement, the procurement phase. I can't necessarily give you an exact time frame around what that procurement activity might take and what that might look like. However, we are working towards the COPS replacement program, certainly to be working towards delivery towards mid 2027.

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: Mid 2027?

DEAN SMITH: Correct.

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: That will include, as well, the point that was noted in the Auditor-General's report from 2022, in relation to police responses to domestic and family violence, where she talks about it being at least—2026 was when she was talking about having the ability. Let me just read this bit to you. It says:

However, police advise that connections between events or individuals are not displayed as automated alerts, and they must manually scroll and search for relational aspects or patterns of domestic and family violence behaviours in lengthy narrative summaries.

That was the bit that she was told at the time was four years away. Is that the bit now that you're saying is mid 2027? Just to be clear that that's the same.

DEAN SMITH: I don't want to certainly mislead you. Specifically in relation to that question, if I could please take that on notice and get back to you—

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: That would be really useful. I just want to make sure that is in the works.

KAREN WEBB: There's two other things that, I think, it would be useful for us to talk to. One is that we introduced the SARO, which is the online reporting of sexual assault tool. It was launched so that people could do it online from January last year. We've seen about 4,000 reports on that platform. That puts the choice in the victims' hands. It could be used as an intelligence tool or they can elect that they want to be spoken to by police. That actually differentiates those that want police action and those that don't. What predates that is a great body of work led by Mr Hudson with one of the research doctors that we have around the sexual violence strategy. That reviewed about 4,000 events for a whole year, one by one. We took detectives offline to work through that. I'll get Mr Hudson to talk to what we discovered in that work.

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: I think I've heard about that before. Is it relevant to the IPOS stuff?

KAREN WEBB: To the point around what you're trying to distinguish about whether it's a victim that seeks withdrawal or the police discontinue. I think those things are—

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: Was data collected in that process?

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DAVID HUDSON: I would think the important part is only 37 per cent of victims actually made a statement.

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: Okay, but we're talking about the cases—

DAVID HUDSON: You're talking about prosecution.

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: —that have actually been brought, where charges have been laid and then the prosecution hasn't happened or it's been withdrawn. That's the point that we're interested in knowing so that we can look at systemic issues. That's the thing that every other State and Territory has been able to do for some time.

KAREN WEBB: That's going to be difficult given that once they're charged and before the court, they'll be predominantly DPP matters.

DAVID HUDSON: I would also say there would be a responsibility of the DPP to provide that. They're the prosecuting authority.

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: This is something that is provided in every other State and Territory. On supplementaries I will put out the entire detail again so that we're clear on what we're talking about because maybe we're at cross-purposes.

KAREN WEBB: Maybe they've got better data.

DAVID HUDSON: I don't think we hold that data.

KAREN WEBB: Yes, and maybe they've got a better joined-up justice IT system in other States and Territories.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: Is that what we need?

KAREN WEBB: Perhaps.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: I want to go back, probably through you, Commissioner, to Mr Pisanos again. Last time we were here we were talking—specifically in relation to Mongoose—about some more public reporting when there had been arrests. I did notice, after we'd talked about it—I'd love to say it was because we talked about here at budget estimates but I suspect police were going to be doing that, anyway. I think that was helpful in terms of that community information. Is there any intention to continue to do that or do it on a more regular basis? Related to that, getting advice out—particularly to those areas where we are seeing increased numbers of break and enters and car thefts—about the best way, as residents, to prepare or keep yourself as safe as possible from the likelihood of being a victim of crime?

KAREN WEBB: The crime prevention messages?

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Yes.

KAREN WEBB: That certainly occurs. To take my mind back to when I was a local area commander, we had Neighbourhood Watch and that's how you'd spread those messages. Crime prevention meetings and community safety meetings, it depends on your local arrangement but there's certainly avenues for that. As you point out, the data around our arrests and I know from reading media advisories every morning that the regional areas in particular—Tamworth and other locations—are actually doing quite a bit on the police activity as well as some of that messaging. I'll hand to Mr Pisanos. Some of the messaging might be fine for those people in a digital environment but not everyone in the country has access or regularly uses it, so it would be just more traditional—newspapers, radio, those types of things. Certainly that peace, around reassuring community members, particularly the older members and vulnerable members of the community, is an important focus for us.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Did you want to add anything?

PAUL PISANOS: To that point, I had a meeting this week with our public affairs media executive around this issue, really talking about maintaining the crime prevention community safety messaging in regional areas that we have really ramped up, but also about the other things that are happening in communities. As you know, there are still wonderful and amazing things happening day to day in communities, just to keep them ticking along and keep people safe, and just basically civic activity. Definitely from my way I'm going to push more responsibility into the OICs, which are generally your OIC inspectors, to do more localised—they're doing a lot but I think we could do it even more. One thing we're really cognisant of doing during some of this uptick in offending, we wanted to be careful that we didn't appear to be shifting responsibility by driving community safety messages out, making it look like—I guess from my perspective—that we were shifting responsibility back towards victims in the community.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Sure.

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PAUL PISANOS: I was very careful in maintaining the messaging. It was more about us pushing the messages out about the arrests and the prosecution side of it. We wanted to utilise that as a way of maintaining that safety and that sense of safety in community, relying on the officers in charge—the OICs—in our sectors and regions to maintain the positive messaging in the programs. I was just trying to get that balance right—

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Yes, and I respect that.

PAUL PISANOS: —and that we weren't sort of victim-shifting at that time to say, "Look, you've got to do more," when, as we know, a lot of the regional offences—the entry is gained through kicking in doors and smashing windows, and I don't think there's a whole bunch we can do that people aren't already doing.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: I think that's right. People are keeping their homes secured. A lot of people have got extra security if they can afford it, or whatever. But, I mean, someone even said to me—this is an anecdotal thing—particularly with the increase in car thefts, that at the beginning, particularly in our community, it sort of seemed that they'd come in, take your keys and then go. Now it has escalated a bit. There was a comment the other day at the school gate—where all the best advice is given, I can tell you—about whether you are better to leave your keys in plain sight on the kitchen bench, or are you better to hide them, because people go looking for them. I know that might sound a bit silly, but people are actually talking about that, not knowing what the best way is. To your point, they're gaining access already—and they are. There's nothing you can do to stop someone kicking your door in. But how do you keep your family as safe as possible in terms of what you're doing within your home as well, if you are unfortunate enough to be in a position where you're a victim of that sort of behaviour?

PAUL PISANOS: I agree with your points and I think it speaks for itself. I know those discussions are being had by people in regional communities about just pretty much keep your keys in your car type of thing. But, look, I think we continue to look and evaluate the types of messages we're putting out there. I don't dispute the fact that we can probably do a little bit more to certainly get that balance between the positivity of life in community at this time versus really trying to keep people safe—getting those messages out.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Fantastic. Last time we also spoke a little bit about—and this is not just unique to regional areas—youth crime across the State and the role of social media. I think there were TikTok challenges about which vehicles you'd steal, and the burnouts. Again, we addressed it in the last hearing last year. Has there been any further work or developments done with some of those social media companies around how they work with police? I know you can't stop trends. Don't get me started on social media as the mother of two young girls, and how we manage it. How are police working proactively with some of those social media companies, and is there any update for us?

KAREN WEBB: We certainly are working with them. I signed an MOU with the eSafety Commissioner last year that we've got a policy around removing harmful content from social media platforms. We have quite a good relationship with most of the platforms. The unfortunate thing is that it's post the event, often after it's already gone viral. How do you disincentivise kids from posting in the hashtag whatever is trendy at the moment where they're trying to outdo each other? That's a vexed issue. But certainly we're working with the social media companies to remove harmful content.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: It might be public, and I'm sorry if it is and I don't know, but is that MOU with the eSafety Commissioner available online—or could you provide a copy, if possible?

KAREN WEBB: I'll take that on notice. We had a public signing.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: It would be good to understand. The eSafety Commissioner does great work, I know, in a range of areas, but if we could understand, again, ways that this work is happening, that would be good. If you can take that on notice, I'd appreciate that. Turning to a different issue, in terms of the challenges around retention and recruitment—obviously the Minister gave some evidence about the number of vacancies. We've also heard about the proliferation of domestic violence issues as well. Is there any update in terms of redistributing officers from other roles, such as the domestic violence liaison team needing to go into other roles within the front line? We spoke about this in the last estimates too. How is that tracking, particularly in relation to anyone working in the domestic violence space?

KAREN WEBB: It has been in place for many years now in terms of managing the front line—I guess we call it—in calls for service. The police and Police Association have local memorandum agreements around first response, although they're reviewed regularly about what is a minimum first response—the number of vehicles, the number of officers on particular shifts on particular days to meet demand. It's really designed to meet demand and that's why it needs to be monitored regularly. With any policing situation, but particularly when we're short, we must always meet our calls for service first. There will be times that we'll just call on other staff in the station to be rostered to assist if necessary. That doesn't exclude or include necessarily the DVLOs. I think I've said on record here many times that a straw poll across the organisation—anywhere I go—shows that DV takes

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up more than 60 per cent of our time. I find it highly unlikely that we would draw from the DV teams because of the focus on that as one of my priorities. It may be drawn from other areas—proactive teams. On some occasions it might be detectives or it could be other liaison roles from within the station. Certainly it's an all-in-type scenario when we're trying to meet calls for service first.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: You may not, but do you collect data on how often, or is it really just up to the local situation? I appreciate that it can be very individualised, depending on it.

KAREN WEBB: It's nuanced. It will be nuanced. That's why we have commanders in place and OICs—so they can manage those things.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Again, in relation to community information around domestic violence more broadly, because it's clearly something that is very concerning. There are many media reports—it feels almost daily and I'm sure it does to you—about really horrific things that are happening. Is there anything new or different in terms of community messaging out about DV and how we're tackling it as a huge concern? You said it's one of your major priorities, which I would agree with.

KAREN WEBB: It is, and necessarily so. It is one of those crimes that has been increasing in numbers in terms of reports. One could argue about whether that is an increased prevalence or an increased confidence in reporting to police. I don't know the answer, necessarily. It's probably a bit of both. But I'll hand to Mr Lanyon, who's the corporate sponsor for this area in terms of all the work that has been done following the domestic violence review and project, the establishment of the registry, gearing up for coercive control et cetera, and all the training and work that has been done.

MALCOLM LANYON: I can answer that in a few ways, if that's okay, Ms Mitchell.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Please.

MALCOLM LANYON: In terms of the public, we've been very open about Operation Amarak and the work that we've been doing from a very proactive perspective to make sure that we're targeting our most dangerous domestic and family violence offenders. We've had five of those operations now and charged almost 3,000 persons. When we give that information to the public, as much as anything it's about providing victims with comfort that the police are taking those matters seriously, that we want victims to come forward so we can act on it. That has been a very strong bit of public messaging. The Domestic and Family Violence Reforms program started in late 2022. It has nine working groups, looking at things like systems and processes and IT, and looking at the ways we can do better to provide better outcomes for victims. I know Ms Boyd will have a question later on about the DV SOPs and I can address that as well.

One of the biggest drivers from the NSW Police Force is how we work in partnership with others; how we work with the sector. So DVNSW, Women's Domestic Violence Court Advocacy Services and all of those agencies and all the stakeholders were very much getting together, because they really are the voice to the community. A lot of work has been done in that space. As we come up with different initiatives, such as the Empower You app, which is forward facing and designed for victims to be able to access services more quickly and record incidents. It will obviously assist them if we want to go to court with those victims. But it allows victims to know that they have other ways of accessing the NSW Police Force. Again, it's very much about being very forward facing and very much about ensuring victims that the NSW Police Force are here. We need you to come forward. We will provide the best service to you. But we're really putting offenders on notice that we won't tolerate the crime.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: Perhaps I can follow up on some of the questions of my colleague and go back to you, Commissioner, in relation to eSafety, harmful content and all of those issues. I want to focus on matters that might well be covered by section 91Q of the Crimes Act, which is that offence of distributing intimate images without consent, including images which have been altered. Given the proliferation of the use of AI—and we've seen lots of very public examples of that recently—if even I can go on the internet and find DeepNude and Shotkit, I'm sure other people would be more proficient. Do you have any views about whether you're able to prosecute people under this section or are there enforcement issues—any way that we can be dealing with these issues better than we are?

KAREN WEBB: Thanks for your question. It is a complex area. In fact, recently the Executive had an intelligence briefing from our intelligence area about that very matter and dealing with the risks posed in that space around AI and the generation of languages I've never even heard of: Google Dorking, Deepfakes and all those sorts of things. It's way over my head, I must say, but it is going to be challenging to work in that area. Certainly we encourage people to report it. They will be difficult crimes, often, to investigate, given you need to identify the source—whether they're an onshore internet provider and all those sorts of things—and working

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through the complexities. I think we'll see more and more of it. I have no doubt. I might see if Mr Hudson's got anything more to add in that serious crime space.

DAVID HUDSON: Not really, Commissioner. We haven't had a lot of complaints in relation to that. It will be dealt with as the same as any other harmful content that's been brought to our attention, and we would approach the companies to have it removed, which is more in the child protection space that we enliven those arrangements, and also with social media groups in relation to the youth offending that's going on that Mr Pisano has spoken about. We're currently in a trial for that removal of harmful content policy. We've had three months. We've extended it for another three months to see if it's worthwhile, but there's not a lot of manufactured photographs that have been brought to our attention that would draw a charge under that section.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: It's just interesting in terms of being brought to your attention and complaints that have been made. I wonder whether we're dealing with a situation like some of the romance fraud, and whatever, where victims feel so shamed that they don't feel that they are able to bring it to your attention. Is there a way of reaching out to victims to let them know that this is a policing matter and it isn't just something they have to bear alone?

KAREN WEBB: I think we've actually spoken about that. I think we sent out, and it's online, communications around those scams. We actually see a lot of it on our Instagram, reminding users around the risk of it et cetera. There is opportunity for people to report these things—I've forgotten the name of it—a Commonwealth online reporting tool and directly to the eSafety Commissioner. Some matters may not come to us. If they do come, they might go somewhere else, of course—onto the Commonwealth portal. But there's opportunity for victims in that space that perhaps a Crime Stoppers report or something—if they don't feel like they're confident enough to come and report it as a crime, there's always the intelligence side of it.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: Are you aware how many briefs of evidence for prosecution have been prepared under 91Q?

KAREN WEBB: I'll have to take that on notice. It's not something I've seen in my career or time as the Commissioner, but we'll certainly find out for you.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: I recognise it's an issue of child safety. It's also an issue that affects adult women, including Ms Swift, who's visiting our shores at the moment. As I understand the provisions, it's not just a matter of taking it down and finding the ultimate source. It allows the prosecution of anybody who distributes, so I would assume that would include anybody within Australia who's distributing images, no matter where they're created?

KAREN WEBB: That's quite possible and I know we've had investigations where schools—there's been high schools or hopefully not primary schools, but there have been those sorts of occasions. Whether it's 91Q or there are other charges being preferred but those sorts of circumstances. I'll take that on notice.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: If you could also take on notice if you think there are any existing barriers to enforcement or prosecution that need to be addressed, I'd be very grateful. I have a small question about the Sheriff and Court Security Amendment Act, which now allows sheriffs to be responsible for judicial safety outside the courthouse and also envisages a memorandum of understanding between the heads of jurisdiction and the sheriffs. Do you have a view about whether the police should be party to that sort of MOU and the possibilities of confusion as to who is responsible for the safety of judicial officers?

KAREN WEBB: From a policing point of view, I think we're busy enough. It's not something I'm volunteering to take on. There has been some inquiry, I think, through other Ministers. I'm not quite sure what that position is. I understand the Police Association are very much opposed to that, but it's certainly not one that's come to me to make a decision on. I think it'd be a matter for DCJ, as far as I know, unless there's anything to add.

DAVID HUDSON: We were asked to comment on the bill. All the advice I got, even after speaking to the Police Association, was that there's nothing negative from the policing commands in relation to it. My understanding is it was codifying something that they do already in that protection space, escorting judges to their motor vehicles at night in places.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: Absolutely, but I understand it allows for protection at a judicial officer's home and all sorts of other places outside the court.

DAVID HUDSON: It goes a lot broader than that in the actual bill, but they don't attract dignitary protection from our police. If they feel threatened, apart from ringing the local police—which I'm sure the sheriffs will do if they think there's a threat or a risk—it's probably a worthwhile process in keeping the judiciary safe.

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Ms SUE HIGGINSON: The sheriffs did assure me they wouldn't be applying for more use of weapons, and they promised they will call the police for those circumstances needed. I stopped singing *I Shot the Sheriff* after that inquiry, which was very hard. I want to go back over one thing. You said the current pilot program with the youth-focused—

KAREN WEBB: The replacement for STMP?

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: The replacement for STMP.

KAREN WEBB: It's not just youth; it's for everyone.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: I think it was a bit confusing earlier on when I was talking about the youth justice strategy and how that interacts, and perhaps that was my fault. Can we just be clear here? There are two very separate things: There is the Youth Strategy, and there is the new program that has replaced the STMP and that is currently being trialled.

KAREN WEBB: Maybe I'll try to be clearer.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: Thank you. It's really my fault, I think.

KAREN WEBB: No, that's okay. The STMP has been suspended—all bar DV STMPs, because I didn't want to put the community at risk. The replacement for STMP is in pilot. I think we're just going to call it PDR. Within PDR, the command team at a local area command, police area command or police district will develop strategies to treat a problem that arises. If it's a youth problem, they will go to the Youth Strategy and use youth strategies. There'll be a menu of things. They'll go to youth command and look at what's best for that particular problem. If it's a DV problem, they will go to the DV registry for best-practice advice.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: As Deputy Commissioner Hudson said—correct me if I'm wrong—we're no longer taking an individual, targeted approach to offenders. We're looking more broadly at what are the inputs to what is causing the disruption or the harm, and that's your prevention aspect of your PDR. Is that how I should best understand it?

KAREN WEBB: Sort of. If you've got a crime environment or antisocial behaviour or whatever it is in a command, then the PDR is to consider prevention, disruption and response.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: Wherever this sits within this pilot program—1 March, you're saying, the pilot ends? Is that right?

KAREN WEBB: Or consultation finishes, one or the other—soon.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: How will we see the outcomes? Is that a public thing? Is that something that I can look at and say, "This is working. These are the things we've trialled"? Is that going to be the process?

KAREN WEBB: We'd probably finish the trial. The people working for us will submit to the Executive for our consideration, and it's likely we'll brief the Minister on how it's going, because there's a lot of interest in this, obviously.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: Is this something that the LECC will be informed about?

KAREN WEBB: They've been consulted, and they're, obviously, a key stakeholder in this.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: Thank you. Could you indicate what's been the input into that from First Nations groups or First Nations organisations.

KAREN WEBB: I'll just read the list of people we've consulted: Children's Guardian, Aboriginal Legal Services, Redfern Legal Centre, Uni of New South Wales—an associate professor in there, around youth—the Shopfront Youth Legal Centre, LECC and the Public Interest Advocacy Centre.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: Great. Will they be made aware, as well, at the end of the pilot? Is it ongoing?

KAREN WEBB: I imagine so. That's the point of a pilot. We value their feedback and input. And, obviously, they want to know where we landed at the end of it.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: Thank you. I think I've got a bit of a better understanding now about what was happening, and sorry for the confusion earlier. Can I just move on, then, to bail compliance checks at the moment. I think we touched on it last estimates. There was a question about where persons of interest are checked, in terms of bail compliance, at their home, or compliance checks but where there was no court-ordered enforcement condition. There was a conversation, I think we had, where it was impossible for police to know where those bail compliance checks were being undertaken if there was no court-ordered enforcement condition. Has there been any reconciliation around that, in terms of how you're undertaking those bail compliance checks?

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MALCOLM LANYON: Ms Higginson, there's a new policy. We put out a new policy, basically, to direct officers and give them instruction on how to undertake that there. I don't think the reconciliation was the problem. Police attending to conduct a bail compliance check will make a record of that to happen. What we wanted to make sure as part of the new policy was that the bail compliance check was conducted in accordance with the actual bail conditions, whether there was an enforcement order and just really make sure that—I think you've previously raised an issue where there would be a repeated bail compliance check on a particular person. The new policy sets out exactly the restriction on that and what we do now. It is a new policy that we've actually put in place to help our officers understand their responsibilities.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: Are you aware whether there is an improvement in that? Or are you not hearing complaints about that practice taking place? Or will it take time?

MALCOLM LANYON: They certainly don't come necessarily directly to me, whether there's any complaints. I've certainly not been made aware of any particular issues with that. The guidance that was put out was fairly simple, and it was designed to make it easy for officers to understand how they can comply with the requirements of the bail conditions.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: Was it along the lines of, "If there isn't a condition, don't go and check"? Is it that simple?

MALCOLM LANYON: It certainly provided very clear instructions on what they could make as compliance.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: Thank you. I'll put some questions in, in terms of supplementaries, but one of the areas that I'm still seeking assistance on is: What is the total number of bail checks without a court-ordered enforcement condition? How do you calculate that? I'll still try and put that in in case there's some kind of record there, of what is happening. Particularly in relation to First Nations people is where the concern is just still coming forward. Can I just ask you just one quickly. Are you aware of the Cheryl Grimmer matter, the longstanding unsolved matter of Cheryl Grimmer?

MALCOLM LANYON: No, not personally, ma'am.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: Wollongong, yes. Cheryl Grimmer's family is still looking for justice. In recent months, five informants and one witness have come forward and the family believe that the police are yet to speak to these people and investigate further.

MALCOLM LANYON: I'm personally unaware of it, ma'am, but I'm happy to take some details off you and follow that up.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: Thank you. That would be great. It's one of those longstanding issues where justice is still being sought. I'll hand over to my colleague.

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: Just so I'm very clear, I talked about—I can't remember what I said—the COPS-IPOS issue in relation to the discontinuation of sexual violence proceedings, I'm just looking at a question and answer. It's an answer I received to a written question on notice back in June 2021. The answer I got back was:

The functionality to capture data related to the discontinuation of Court proceedings, including sexual violence proceedings, is in scope for the second phase of iPOS. It is expected to be delivered within the next four years.

So by mid next year. It's that functionality that I was asking about. If you need to take that on notice, that's fine. I would like to know when that functionality will be.

DEAN SMITH: Thank you, ma'am. If it's okay, we'll take that on notice and get back.

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: Great, thank you—and apologies for messing up the terminology previously. Can I come to another issue I've been banging on about for a bit, which is in relation to training for coercive control. We talked about this last time and then I got some additional information back from you afterwards. I had received information from the domestic and family violence sector that they were unhappy with not being consulted in relation to that training. Deputy Commissioner Lanyon, you came back saying that they had been consulted. I think we maybe have a disagreement on what consultation means. The training, which I understand is now being rolled out, the face-to-face training—

MALCOLM LANYON: Phase two, yes.

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: Did the domestic and family violence experts see that training before it was rolled out?

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MALCOLM LANYON: They certainly participated and they were part of the actual video that accompanies that training.

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: Did they see the video before it was completed and sent to, or used, for training?

MALCOLM LANYON: Can I take that on notice?

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: Yes.

MALCOLM LANYON: I'll confirm that for you.

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: Because my understanding, from what you've said, is that there were a number of specialists who were brought in to talk generally about coercive control, which is great, but that the training was then designed by the police, keeping that in mind, as opposed to it being somehow co-designed with the sector. Would you say that was right?

MALCOLM LANYON: Yes. I'd say it was always designed as police training because, obviously, it's about understanding the legislation and being able to enforce the legislation.

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: Yes.

MALCOLM LANYON: The purpose of having the sector and consulting with the sector was to make sure that we understood the particular influences of other parts of the sector in constructing that training, but it was certainly police-designed training.

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: Okay. During the joint select inquiry into coercive control that we held before the legislation came in, we were looking at the situation in the UK, particularly in Scotland, in relation to how they had implemented their offence.

MALCOLM LANYON: Yes.

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: One of the strong recommendations that we made out of that committee was the, I guess, success or otherwise of the legislation, or of the offence, would be very dependent on the quality of that training and that it should be co-designed. In Scotland, for instance, it was co-designed with SafeLives, the organisation over there. It's still not perfect but it was a big step forward. Why was the decision made here not to co-design with the experts in the field?

MALCOLM LANYON: I think, in part, ma'am, we actually have a statutory responsibility under the Coercive Control Implementation and Evaluation Taskforce to construct training and to report to that evaluation taskforce on training.

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: But the statute didn't tell you not to design that training with DV experts.

MALCOLM LANYON: No, it did not. But, as I've indicated before, the consultation was to make sure that we were informed of the attitudes and the views of all stakeholders. That's really why it was such a wide piece of consultation. The actual training that needs to be given to officers is an understanding of the legislation and an understanding of what evidence to collect, what may constitute an offence and how we would prosecute that matter.

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: But doesn't it also require an understanding of what coercive control is?

MALCOLM LANYON: That was the reason for consulting with stakeholders and having them as part of the video to actually represent their views as part of the training that officers are exposed to.

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: But their expertise was not sought in designing that training, only in informing the police when they came to design the training?

MALCOLM LANYON: I think I'll have to refer back to the part that the training we are trying to deliver is for police to understand the legislation and to enforce the legislation.

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: The legislation is talking about very complex matters and the whole point of the coercive control reform was to give a better understanding or educate the public on what domestic and family violence was actually about. A huge part of that was understanding what coercive control looks like on the ground. Was it not thought appropriate to involve the experts when designing that training to make sure it would be effective at achieving that goal?

MALCOLM LANYON: I think we are probably at cross-purposes. I believe that the consultation that was undertaken—the involvement of stakeholders in the actual video that forms part of that training—is to inform police of the types of activities, the types of actions that would constitute coercive control.

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Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: How long was that forum where these experts were talking?

MALCOLM LANYON: I'd have to take that on notice, sorry.

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: How long is the video of that forum that has been included in the training package?

MALCOLM LANYON: I will take that on notice. It forms part of a two-hour face-to-face training package.

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: Is it a big part or a small part of that?

MALCOLM LANYON: I don't know. I'll come back to you, sorry, with an actual accurate time.

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: So we have two hours of face-to-face training on something as complex as coercive control. What time of the day is this training?

MALCOLM LANYON: When do we deliver it?

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: Yes.

MALCOLM LANYON: That depends where it is in a training calendar. Officers would be scheduled for a shift to actually undergo training, so it could be at any time during the day they could undertake the training.

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: Do you have data on when the training has been held? Is it late at night? Is it early in the morning?

MALCOLM LANYON: It is very unlikely it would be late at night. It would be during the daytime. I don't have those details on hand.

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: When officers are watching this training, is there anything to ensure that they're actually paying attention to the training?

MALCOLM LANYON: It's facilitated by either officers from the domestic and family violence registry, or by DVLOs—trained DV officers who actually engage the participants in the training.

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: Is there any kind of test or examination afterwards to check that the officers have taken any of the information in?

MALCOLM LANYON: If I could take that on notice, I'll come back to you with whether the officers actually perform a proficiency test at the end of that.

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: Thank you. I was lucky enough to go to the UK at the beginning of the last month and speak to stakeholders and politicians and others in relation to the implementation of coercive control in Scotland and in England and Wales. One of the major learnings that they have now—four or five years down the track, in some cases—is that although they thought they'd done quite a good job with days of face-to-face training, co-designed et cetera, even that level of intense training for officers, now they have done assessments, has not been as good as they wanted it to be. I am concerned, when we look at what we've got here with this two-hour face-to-face—how are we going to work out whether our police officers have actually taken this information in?

MALCOLM LANYON: Again, as part of reporting to that evaluation task force I spoke to before, that will be taken into account. We are actually working through what the evaluation of the training will be. I think what I should say to you is phase 1 and phase 2 to training are really foundational. There is an ongoing process to ensure that officers are upskilled in terms of what coercive control is, and we need to also bear in mind that the legislation hasn't been implemented, so how it's going to be accepted by the court, what evidence is going to be acceptable, is still to be worked through. We have a domestic and family violence conference which will be run at the end of June this year where we actually have representatives from Scotland coming to provide lived experience. We have a number of families, including Hannah Clarke's family, coming to provide lived experience. It is actually about taking officers forward on that journey. If you consider phase 1 and phase 2 foundational, we will continue to deliver training and education to ensure that officers have the best opportunity to understand what is coercive control.

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: In one of the recommendations or findings from the Auditor-General's report into the police responses to domestic and family violence, she found that the effectiveness of training across the Police Force was not monitored. There was no way of actually working out, in many cases, whether any of training of police is effective, particularly in relation to domestic and family violence. It also showed that in professional development, even for those domestic and family violence specialist police, training was not mandatory. Have things improved since the Auditor-General put together those findings and recommendations?

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MALCOLM LANYON: They most certainly have. As part of the domestic and family violence reform program, education and training has been one of the key pillars. I'm more than happy, on notice, to provide the additional training that is now provided to officers, whether they're in a specialist role or a generalist role, so that you can see there has been an ongoing development of that training.

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: Thank you. Commissioner Webb, we spoke last time about the use of section 181D in terms of holding perpetrators of DV to account. You said last time there were two dismissals, I believe, under that section in the 2023-24 financial year.

KAREN WEBB: I'll have to check that.

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: How many now?

KAREN WEBB: I'll give you the exact numbers. But to the point you raised and, obviously, this morning the discussion around the recommendation—whilst we've got 57 officers currently charged with 180 charges, that doesn't mean they're on the front line serving DV customers and victims. They are probably doing alternative duties or may actually not even be in the workplace while—

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: Are you able to give data on that?

KAREN WEBB: On notice I will be able to, yes. There's a process that I implemented when I became commissioner for a mandatory referral process through Professional Standards Command to bring those matters where they're serious—like domestic violence, sexual violence or matters of that kind—directly to me for consideration at the earliest opportunity, which brings them forward, I think, on average about four months, rather than 18 months, as was the case in the past.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: Commissioner, how many full-time equivalent police officers do we have in New South Wales as of today?

KAREN WEBB: As at 18 February we've got 16,573 headcount.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: How many new recruits were sworn in to the Police Force last calendar year?

KAREN WEBB: I'll have to take that on notice, and perhaps if I can make it up to next Friday then I can give you another 170 or something.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: That'd be great, thank you very much.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: I think you've got three weeks till they're due, Commissioner.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: We've heard figures before, but that still leaves us with significant gaps to fill.

KAREN WEBB: Sure, yes.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: What do you see as the main factors contributing to the shortage of police officers?

KAREN WEBB: There are a number of factors. To some of the discussion we had this morning around the Optional Disengagement Scheme, obviously that was a package that incentivised people with 10 years or more to leave the organisation if they chose to. We're obviously just going into round three. There'd be officers that are unwell and, to Mr Latham's point, the PMES survey—the People Matter survey—showed us that police officers are burnt out. They've been working really hard and they continue to work really hard, and so things like the PULSE program and other wellbeing programs we are putting around them to support them.

Part of the PULSE program that I'm really proud of is the decentralised clinicians in commands. There's maybe one clinician per three commands, for example, where all staff, not just officers, have access to clinicians that they can build trust and rapport with. Through that program, there are early referrals to treatment. There have already been a number of those referred for treatment. So it's proving to be successful. We're onboarding another lot of clinicians now. We've got a number of things within that suite of programs. It's going to be a multi-pronged attack and perhaps a pay rise in July might help as well.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: It always helps.

KAREN WEBB: The point that was just mentioned is it's not unique to New South Wales police. It is actually a global problem. There has been recent reporting that defence can't recruit either, so it's the workforce generally, but particularly in military and paramilitary organisations it is difficult. There are sometimes better

CORRECTED

money and conditions elsewhere. You can work from home, and I can't offer as much work from home in this role.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: I'm interested in the clinicians. Are they psychologists?

KAREN WEBB: Yes.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: We've heard in other forums the real difficulties of attracting sufficient numbers in the mental health workforce and psychologists. Are you having difficulties attracting clinicians to work in these roles?

KAREN WEBB: No. I visited the induction program last week. There was one clinician who was rejoining the organisation for a third time, I think. She was heading out to Broken Hill, which is refreshing, and there were people who had come from other—so I've probably poached from other parts of the public sector. But that's great because they come with experience. There has been a rigorous process to select the right people. It won't work if we don't have the right people in those roles.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: In some other industries there are hesitations expressed about seeing a mental health worker who's connected to the employer. Are there any hesitations expressed by police in that regard?

KAREN WEBB: In my 37 years in this organisation, we used to have internal psychologists that were centrally located, and there was a reluctance to see them. We then brought in programs like EAP so that you could go to your own. In the most recent few years, that has proved difficult because they didn't understand police work, and it sometimes took police officers weeks to get an appointment. If a police officer is ready to talk and wants that help, then they need it straightaway. It's always going to evolve, but I think it's showing promising signs.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: On that figure, that means we are 350 sworn officers down since the last budget estimates. Notwithstanding everything that the Government has done—paying recruits et cetera—is it material that we're 300 down? How are you planning to get back to that number?

KAREN WEBB: Any number down, but it's always going to be a sore tooth in terms of the number. I think the attrition rate per month is about 80 or 90. The attrition rate is about 6.9 per cent without optional disengagement. A few years ago we were at 2.3 per cent. There's a healthy threshold in any organisation. It is high at the moment and that's why we need to work hard to recruit and retain our officers.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: Realistically, you would be explaining to the Minister that the current Government policy—I'm not asking you to comment on the policy—means it's unlikely that those numbers will increase the way the Government thinks that they might be able to. It looks very unlikely, no matter what we do at this point.

KAREN WEBB: It's hard to say. There were times not that long ago that we had 1,500 people in the waiting room, if you like. The new recruitment program around paying recruits is showing great promise. I think it's really too early to say. Maybe next time we come before you it will paint a better picture, because it will be 12 months down the track by then. To the question, so I can answer it while we're here, last year 656 probationary constables attested and there are 159 attesting next Friday.

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: In relation again to that STMP report, which has been well ventilated, there's a quote in there saying that the "criminalisation of disability has been well documented. It is also widely recognised that this occurs because of various factors, including the impact of frequent and intense policing." Last year a report was handed down that was scathing about the VERA-2R tool that was being used by the New South Wales Government, which alleged, without basis, that autism was a sign of criminality. There's been a few of these sorts of incidents coming. What consultation has been done with disability stakeholders, following the STMP report, to address—

KAREN WEBB: I'll have to take that on notice. I'll have to get the name of the report that you mentioned. I hadn't heard of it.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: Can I just also ask, in this one minute—it's come to my attention that there is a document named forestry protest quick reference guide, and it is a Coffs-Clarence police document. Is it possible to get a copy of that?

KAREN WEBB: Can I take that on notice? I wasn't aware that that existed either.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: Absolutely. No, I wasn't aware of it, but it looks very interesting, and I think it would be great to understand the contents, if that's possible. And just in the last 30 seconds—

The CHAIR: You're not going to get a copy of that.

CORRECTED

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: I think your chances might be slim. It's probably operational.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: I've got a feeling it's going to be hot reading. You could probably charge for it and make a killing.

DAVID HUDSON: It's very short; it just says, "Arrest."

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: Are you in it, Sue?

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: I hope so. Could I just ask—

The CHAIR: Can we get a copy of the forest activist's guide?

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: It's online. You can see it. Absolutely. Just in the last 13 seconds—on a very serious note, we talked about, at the last budget estimates, the firearm prevention orders. I think that there was an undertaking to look at what is happening around FPOs and whether there is a concern about the misuse of those FPOs. We can take it up after the—

The CHAIR: We'll just have a break now for 15 minutes.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: Yes. Then we'll come back and talk many more things. Thank you.

(Short adjournment)

The CHAIR: Mr Barnes, I have been heavily lobbied to relieve you, if you would like to go now. You are released.

(Michael Barnes withdrew.)

The CHAIR: We will resume with Opposition questions. I am told that there are plenty of them.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: I am sorry no-one else is having an early mark at this point, but we will do our best to get through as quickly as we can. Through you, probably, Commissioner, but I am happy for others to make comment as well—the payments for recruits at the academy. I understand that there was some data provided earlier that you are seeing an uptick in people wanting to train, which is great. Is there any intention, other than looking at overall policing numbers, to measure over time the efficacy of that program in terms of retention? Because, as we discussed last time, one of the barriers was that cost when people had to go for 12 weeks to train. Obviously that funding program takes that away. But are you going to track if those who are coming through the academy under this financial support are staying for six months or 12 months or five years? I know it will take time to collect that data, but is that the intention?

KAREN WEBB: I will ask Mr Smith to talk to it—whether a longitudinal study is in scope.

DEAN SMITH: Thank you, Ma'am. The short answer is absolutely, now that we have that benchmark and that starting point in regards to the payment of our students. We always track the attrition rates of our probationary constables in any case, and we have a good data set to go from about, historically, that percentage, and then we are able to track them along the life cycle of their career. What we still know now is that the average time for a New South Wales police officer in the service is at around about 13 years—a little bit more than that. And the average age is 38 years of age. We keep that data, we monitor that data, we look at the recruitment data about the age sets that are entering the NSW Police Force, so we have all of that.

As part of this program, which is Project Celsius, about the recruitment itself, we have an evaluation process built in with the Police Academy to look at all of those things that you have said. So we will be able to look at that in a longitudinal view to make sure that we are addressing the needs. Because once we have them, we want to retain them, and we want to make sure that they clearly understand that once they are in the NSW Police Force, they have multiple careers within a career to be able to choose a path into different areas of the NSW Police Force and hopefully not leave the police force to pursue other things. That is what we want them to do. They come to us for a reason: the job that they love. We want them to continue to love that job, but make sure that when we are identifying their talent and their career pathway that they understand from the day they walk in to the day that they walk out of the NSW Police Force, what that looks like and the number of careers that they can have during that time.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: The data of 13 years of service, is that at the higher end of public service? It is my understanding that it is. People stay in the police force potentially longer than some of the other public servants. If you don't know, that's fine.

CORRECTED

DEAN SMITH: I don't know specifically. I know that we do compare across public service as a whole, but I would have to get that to you.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: If you could on notice, that's fine.

DEAN SMITH: I could probably find that very quickly, so before the end of the day.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: That would be great. You just mentioned the age sets of people entering the academy. Have you found, particularly in the latest recruits now that that financial incentive has been there, that has had an impact or had a change in terms of the age demographic of people coming in?

DEAN SMITH: It's probably too early to make a definitive comment. However, what we do know is that, realistically, around about 80 per cent of our classes that go into the academy are generally between that 19- to 25- to 28-year-old. That is the make-up more broadly. Given the fact that the class that will be starting on 1 March is really the first full class to be paid, we will have to monitor that over the coming recruitment phases to see whether that age demographic—the employment demographic—shifts to make sure we can have an informed opinion about that.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: If I could continue with questions in relation to the demographic spread of the Police Force, if you're able to answer these questions. Maths is not my strong suit, but I did some very quick figures that suggested that new probationary constables make up about 5 per cent of the current Police Force and the median length of service is 13 years. I am just wondering whether you have any comments about issues with respect to enough senior police? It's my understanding that on any job, and certainly I would imagine in the Police Force, you learn but then your training really is on-the-job and training is often observational as much as anything else. Do you see any issues in terms of the demographic make-up of the police? To the extent that there may be those issues, is that actually a retention issue because the younger serving members of the force perhaps aren't having those opportunities to learn and be supported?

KAREN WEBB: I'll defer to Mr Smith in a moment, but my observation as the Commissioner is that we do have a lot of experience in the senior officer rank, particularly inspector and superintendent and above. As a generalisation there is a gap in that middle band. We often ask ourselves about how we attract and retain certainly people into sergeant roles and other roles, because it comes with responsibility, and trying to attract women into those supervision roles as well at a critical time in their own life and work cycle. We do have a big cross-section across the organisation. Only last week I had a send-off for a fellow that had 60 years service. We do have—my colleagues here—more than 150 years experience between us. I've got 42, and 40—so there's a lot of experience at the top table.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: We can't tell.

KAREN WEBB: They joined when they were three, they tell me.

DAVID HUDSON: That's very ageist.

DEAN SMITH: That's the old side.

DAVID HUDSON: That's the pretty side.

KAREN WEBB: We do have a lot of experience but it's at 13 to 15 years service that people do make life changes and we need to have a really good look at that. I'll go to Mr Smith, if he's got anything else he would like to say.

DEAN SMITH: Without having the full demographic picture in front of me, which we do carry as an organisation, in terms of what is the make-up of our workforce across all types of demographic measures, it does take time to become an experienced New South Wales police officer. We have the promotions process, which is about moving through the ranks. That is done over time, whether that is from constable to senior constable to sergeant, inspector and as we go through. Certainly in regards to the range of experience, I can't sit here and say that we are lacking across the range of experience in front line, in specialists and others. People choose their career paths for various reasons and gain experience as they progress into whatever career path that they choose within the NSW Police Force.

We do keep the data in terms of average age, average years of service, each rank and the demographic within each of those ranks and the generational impacts of policing in the modern environment and organisation. They're all the things that exist within our organisation that we are looking at all the time to dictate what we do next, who we need to target, what are the people who come into our job, what skill sets do we need to look at the capability of our organisation and continue to build that.

CORRECTED

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: Perhaps this next question is to you, Mr Smith, or perhaps it's to you, Commissioner Webb. I think you gave us the figure of roughly a 16½ thousand-strong Police Force. How many of those officers are currently available for service? If we take out everyone on sick leave, maternity leave, long service leave or any other form of leave—including anybody who may be suspended from duty—what's the active number?

KAREN WEBB: I'll take it on notice. We do calculate that because that is what we call our operational capacity and those people that can do operational duties. We do hold that data; I'll just have to take it on notice.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: Is recruitment keeping pace with attrition? Is attrition outstripping recruitment?

KAREN WEBB: At the moment attrition is outstripping recruitment, and that's why we moved to the paid recruit training model. It's not assisted by the optional disengagement program, but it is what it is and we'll work through that.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: How many officers have we lost to incentive schemes offered by Queensland Police Service since they were initiated?

KAREN WEBB: We were asked this last estimates, and it was a relatively small number. I've got Operation State of Origin happening here, and most people that wear blue in this State want to stay blue. I think there were some that we lost that probably lived in Queensland, or they were attached to the Tweed-Byron area. They're certainly not big numbers, that I'm aware of, but I can take that on notice.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: It would be interesting to explore that in terms of retention. Obviously fair and adequate salaries are important, but clearly there are other factors that go towards retention other than just that.

KAREN WEBB: We're biased, but I think we're the best in the world, arguably. If we lost people to Queensland and other jurisdictions, including Commonwealth jobs in the Australian Capital Territory, it was through those that left with optional disengagement.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: I understand from various statements the Minister has made that she's developing innovative measures to address falling policing numbers. Are you able to share with us what any of those innovative ideas look like in practice?

KAREN WEBB: I think some of that might be tied to award negotiations, so it's probably premature to talk about that.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: We're hearing reports that in some areas—we clearly have staffing shortages in the police at the moment. Are they distributed equally across the State, or are there some areas where they're more acute than others?

KAREN WEBB: Yes, I mentioned to Ms Higginson earlier that Northern Region is over-represented, and that has been the case for as long as I've known it. For whatever reason, it's in the drinking water in Northern Region. It's not just general duties police or police attached to police districts; it's actually specialist officers as well.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: Am I the only one from the north in here?

KAREN WEBB: Certainly it's a great place to work, but it's also busy. There are a lot of factors, but they are over-represented—I think 20 per cent, or something, of the cohort.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: I think I heard figures that in Lismore the police are at 52 per cent operational capacity, which would be quite a strain on the other police if that is accurate. The statement was made, which I think is very encouraging, that there are a variety of career paths within the police. To what extent, though, do staffing shortages impact on the ability to choose career paths? For example, we're hearing reports that in some places detectives are being told to go back in uniform because there are critical shortages there. In other places there are issues about people being expected to take on more responsibility than they're ready to in terms of investigations. Is that what's happening in the Police Force at the moment because of staff shortages?

KAREN WEBB: As I said earlier, our first commitment is to calls for service. If there are resources that are moved in to support calls for service on the front line, it's not a permanent move. We all chip in, roll up our sleeves and work together to work through those issues. Mr Smith, in his former role as the Assistant Commissioner for People and Capability, was leading a working group with some of his peers to look at the timely movement of officers around the organisation—so, not to limit people's opportunities, or at least to manage some expectations that they will eventually get to where they want to go.

CORRECTED

There's a point that you allow movement across the organisation, at the same time balancing the operational needs on the front line, without blocking people's careers. But I know personally that when I talk to officers out there, they've got transfer dates for future dates to go into specialist areas et cetera, so they've still got optimism that they'll be able to follow their career path. I've recently instituted and approved additional resources in the organisation to create a careers advisory unit to help officers navigate their way around the organisation, as a way of helping to retain officers. It's a big organisation. There's about 200 different roles that they can opt in. Most officers wouldn't know what's available to them, so I'm really hoping that that will also be a retention strategy.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: If police are being asked to fill roles that aren't their chosen career path within the police, to what extent would that be contributing to burnout and attrition?

KAREN WEBB: I couldn't say. I'd be speculating. Most—some of us like variety in our job and every day's a different day, but I can't say, really, with any great certainty. Everyone's different.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: I wonder, Mr Smith, have you looked at that, or has anyone within the Police Force looked at this issue of filling roles? I understand that public safety is the number one but if a detective is being asked to do frontline duties, does that lead to burnout?

DEAN SMITH: In terms of managing the expectations, ma'am, the Commissioner has obviously spoken about the importance of frontline. There is no doubt that keeping people in the career paths that they choose is very much important as a retention strategy. However, those things don't last forever. They are not permanent. If people are in a career stream, then that's a career stream that they are in at that point in time. If they are diverted for operational reasons for a period of time to meet a demand for service, then those things are explained by their commanders, whether it is a roster period or a shift. All of those things, yes, are factored in. If I could answer the question around the average years for a public service, it's 11 years, and the average age is 39—so we are one year younger and two years longer, so a heads-up in that space.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: Commissioner, perhaps you can walk us through—we've heard today and in other forums that police are relying heavily on overtime to address staffing shortages. How much overtime are police being asked to do?

KAREN WEBB: I'll have to take that on notice because it's not a routine ask of officers. There might be shift changes. There might be time and a half arrangements if it's a user-charges type event, and there's other arrangements that can be made. It's not strictly all overtime, and that might take some time to gather, to quantify.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: If it's possible to provide those figures—the comment you made in relation to user-charges events, some events such as—

KAREN WEBB: Commercial or hallmark events, for example.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: Extra security at the Taylor Swift concert would be user-pays?

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: You've got her in twice. You're beating my KPI.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: The football—those types of things?

KAREN WEBB: Those types of events, yes.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: What about protests? Are they user-pays policing?

KAREN WEBB: No, they're not. We just use a system for rostering for us to help manage resources, but they're not charged out because they're not commercial events. They're additional hours.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: Is that overtime, or is that classed differently?

KAREN WEBB: I think it's time and a half. It's time and a half.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: And overtime is double time?

KAREN WEBB: Double time after two hours, or something like that.

DAVID HUDSON: Time and a half for the first two and double thereafter.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: Time and a half for the first two hours, and then double time all the hours after that.

DAVID HUDSON: Yes.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: Okay. And shift changes—are there issues? Can we be confident that all police are getting the right amount of time off between their shifts?

CORRECTED

KAREN WEBB: The award talks to a minimum 10-hour shift break. The award also indicates that officers need 24 hours notice for a shift change. I've had no issues raised with me at the union executive level. Those things would be dealt with at the branch level, at the local level.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: Okay. Sorry, just to be clear: There are issues, but they're dealt with, or there are no issues?

KAREN WEBB: If there are issues, it will be dealt with at that branch and local level. If there's issues that can't be resolved, then they're escalated, as a normal course, but I've not had any issues escalated to me of that nature.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: Are staff shortages impacting on police being able to take approved leave at the times that they wish to?

KAREN WEBB: The annual leave balances are something we do measure. Some areas are increasing on the basis that they're making sure that they cover the gaps, and we'll just have to juggle that.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: So it impacts on whether people can take leave.

KAREN WEBB: Certainly the award provision is that each officer must take a minimum of two weeks consecutive each year, and I'm pretty confident that all officers have met the award conditions. Some officers choose to bank their leave so they can take a bigger break, so there'll be all sorts of circumstances. Again, that's managed at the local level, with the commander and the officer.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: Talking about the local level, are KPIs in place for chief inspectors to meet when keeping stations under budget?

KAREN WEBB: I'll have to take that on notice. They're certainly a key leadership position in the organisation and work as part of the command leadership team. A superintendent and a number of inspectors will form a leadership team at that command level. Each commander is responsible for a budget, but I'd have to further explore the question you've asked.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: If you could, I'd appreciate it. Thank you very much.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: Can I just ask just in relation to the very sensitive matter of the police officer being charged today in relation to the murder of the missing Sydney couple. I know we can't talk about this, and I don't expect you to in that regard, but what seems materially known is the access to the police weapon. Is there something that you will be doing, Commissioner, immediately, in terms of the weapon systems and how we allow access to weapons?

KAREN WEBB: As you say, it's a very live matter, so I can't talk about it in great detail. But, because of the issues you raise, it would be put up for consideration for a critical incident investigation for that very issue to be examined.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: I say this because I think it's the much bigger, broader, deeper issue that many members of the community are always concerned about, and that is the fact that we do have 17½ thousand individuals who are sworn officers that walk around the State, very heavily clad with weapons that are designed to kill people. It feeds into that broader narrative that we are finding it very difficult in relation to police recruitment, police training. I suppose I'm going to this idea: Are we looking at modern policing through many lenses, including consent of policing and consent in policing? We know that policing survives, basically, because there is an implied consent on part of the community. Policing is fundamental and important, and I know we have a Minister at the moment that really, really supports having a strong police force. But also, we've been hearing evidence all day about our needs to approach policing from a community wellness perspective. The role of weapons, is that something that, as commissioner, you're constantly assessing and calibrating in your mind, whether we're on the right track?

KAREN WEBB: Of course, it is. The question around police legitimacy is on the front of the Executive's mind all the time. We operate in a Westminster system under the Peelian principles; our values are underpinned by that. The issue of officers and their appointments et cetera have evolved over years, around protecting the community but also their safety. It's a very complex environment. But we're very mindful of the vast array of equipment, and it seems to be growing. When we all joined the police, we had a firearm and a set of handcuffs and maybe a baton that was accessible to us in the vehicle. Over time, because of the dangerous nature of the work of police officers, we've had to add to the cadre of options that they have available. It has becoming, in some respects, more dangerous. The matter you referred to is an isolated event. But we do have robust systems in place, and we will deal with that matter like we deal with every other matter. But the safety of officers is my primary concern.

CORRECTED

The Hon. GREG DONNELLY: Hear, hear!

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: From that, though, with the special incident that will now be commenced in relation to this matter, is it a guarantee that the way weapons are accessed by police officers, whether on duty or off duty, and the access to those weapons, will be in this review? Is it by standard, normally?

KAREN WEBB: It will be. In matters like this in the past or other matters that have been dealt with previously or are under review by the Coroner, that will be a factor.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: On that topic, can I turn to what we didn't finish earlier about the firearm prevention orders? I am still receiving some concerning reports—and I think I've referred some on to your deputies—about the issuing of firearm prevention orders against members of the community who have never had a firearm, and then, of course, the perverse ploy of that when people are targeted, searched et cetera, because of that firearm prevention order that's placed upon them and the policing of those people. Has that been addressed?

KAREN WEBB: It has, and I'll hand to Mr Hudson in a moment. We've certainly made two step changes in respect to what we colloquially call FPOs and the process. We have a system whereby the application is made on our system and comes through the various lines of authority. The policies and procedures around the use and application of FPOs have been reviewed and, I think, just been resubmitted in the last couple of weeks. The Firearms Registry is playing a bigger role in the oversight and administration of FPOs. I'll hand to Mr Hudson for a more complete answer.

DAVID HUDSON: The review was undertaken of the standard operating procedures for firearms prohibition orders. There have been some modifications made to those standard operating procedures and some increased governance around those, including, as the Commissioner said, a 10 per cent dip sample of all FPOs by the Firearms Registry. They are currently issued by delegates at each region, and that level of governance will add to the scrutiny applied to the issue of them.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: What has been found with the dip sample? Did you find cases like the ones I'm aware of?

DAVID HUDSON: Not necessarily. The issues that we identified—compliance/governance reporting issues rather than on the issue of the actual FPOs. The intent of the FPOs is to restrict an individual's access to a firearm because of their perhaps history or intelligence which would suggest that they've been involved in criminal activity, that they're members of outlawed motorcycle gangs or that they are likely to come into contact with firearms through intelligence and—

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: Can I ask how many FPOs have been issued or used on juveniles or young people?

DAVID HUDSON: Yes. We had to respond last year in relation to that. I think there were 13.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: What are the factors that would suggest an FPO would be issued against a juvenile?

DAVID HUDSON: Their access to firearms which, by the very intent of the legislation, we sought to prevent, bearing in mind some of the individuals we're talking about are 17 years of age and quite violent in their histories.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: In the dip sample, though, you didn't find any cases where you would suggest an FPO was wrongly issued?

DAVID HUDSON: There were some anomalies identified, but very few, and they were withdrawn.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: Sorry, they were withdrawn?

DAVID HUDSON: They were withdrawn. There are a large number of FPOs in existence. It's a useful preventative tool in relation to especially—

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: But, as you know, they also permit warrantless searches of the person. That's the issue.

DAVID HUDSON: That's correct.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: The issue is that when somebody is subject to a warrantless search for no proper reason—that is, they've got an FPO and they shouldn't have one—then that perpetuates a terrible circumstance for that person and the people around them.

CORRECTED

DAVID HUDSON: If an FPO is issued against an individual, they can appeal that and have that reviewed. We have very few reviews or appeals.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: Respectfully, Deputy Commissioner, I would say that often that's because some of the people that contact me who have an FPO—and, in earnest, shouldn't—are not necessarily the people with great capacity to engage in an appeal or review process. It's not that simple, especially once you're being targeted by police. I think this is where sometimes we forget or are numb to the circumstances of those people. Once they find themselves in a cycle of over-policing and are the victim of wrongful policing, the last thing somebody is going to do is contact the police or go through a review process. That's the problem here. Do you think there's merit in what I'm saying?

DAVID HUDSON: I think if somebody tried to serve an FPO on me, I'd certainly want it reviewed or appealed.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: Of course you would, Commissioner, because you're very able and you understand the system. The process requires going to NCAT. If you're a 17-year-old, are you going to do that?

DAVID HUDSON: I'm sure there would be groups that would advocate for their appeal if they thought that they had a chance of overturning that FPO, I would have thought.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: I understand what you're saying, but I am challenging that. That's not how it works. I work with victims of over-policing all the time. Not only are they disempowered; they're traumatised. That's what it's like. You're a man in uniform, and it's been a long time you've been in that uniform. The constituents that talk to me are absolutely petrified by that uniform and would never seek to challenge it. They run and hide, and they're traumatised by it. Do FPOs issued on juveniles lapse once they turn 18 or do they carry on? How does that work?

DAVID HUDSON: It would continue on, because the risk would not be mitigated.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: So how does a juvenile deal with it? Are you suggesting to appeal, if you're a juvenile, and you have to go to NCAT to do that? Do you have capacity, before you're 18, to go to NCAT to review that?

DAVID HUDSON: You do.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: Or would someone have to go on your behalf?

DAVID HUDSON: I think there are currently about 8,000 FPOs in existence in New South Wales. I think there are 13, and the decisions to issue those FPOs were not made lightly. Firearms prohibition orders have been instrumental in stopping the gangland violence in western and south-western Sydney. The number of FPOs that have been executed on suspects—

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: Are those 13 all in Western Sydney?

DAVID HUDSON: I don't have the addresses, but they were certainly involved in high-level criminality.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: So did you say there are 8,000?

DAVID HUDSON: Correct.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: How big is a dip sample?

DAVID HUDSON: The review initially started at 10 per cent, but it went more broadly than that.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: What's the regional proportionality?

DAVID HUDSON: There's a fairly even spread across the regions, including a large number that are issued by State Crime Command. However, they are subject to review. We've given an undertaking from the Commissioner's executive team to review all of them every five years to make sure that they are still current and valid. So they will all be reviewed every five years.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: Finally on this point, if somebody's never had a firearm, what would be the indication—so you're looking at other factors as to why you would then—and they've never even applied for one. Why is that a tool that you go to?

DAVID HUDSON: Because we have information that because of their involvement in organised criminality, outlaw motorcycle gangs or other criminality, to prevent their access to a firearm would be in the interests of the community, to protect the community.

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Ms SUE HIGGINSON: Just honestly, what do you think the percentage of the 8,000 relates to organised crime?

DAVID HUDSON: What percentage of the—it's not—

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: Intuitively. You've been at this for a long time. What would you think?

DAVID HUDSON: Well, 8,000 would be related to criminality, and that's—otherwise we couldn't issue them. They wouldn't reach threshold.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: I find it very interesting because a couple of the people I've dealt with—in terms of criminality, I would suggest we are talking about the lowest end of the spectrum. I've referred somebody to one of the deputies. I'm not sure that that's quite the best way to put it in—I mean, is there some threshold that you're working with before issuing a FPO?

DAVID HUDSON: Yes, there is a threshold, as I said, because of the level of their criminality or their history, or their behaviour. There is—

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: But can just suspicion be it, or does it have to be perpetration of previous acts?

DAVID HUDSON: We have to justify that preventing their access to a firearm is in the community interest. The issue of an FPO is to prevent their access to a firearm.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: Yes—very, very discretionary. So you have undertaken a review, you're doing a dip test and you're continuing that review?

DAVID HUDSON: That's correct.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: Thank you, that's pleasing to know. Mr Lanyon, you look like you're about to say something.

MALCOLM LANYON: No, Ma'am.

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: I want to ask some questions about facial recognition. Thank you so much, because after the last estimates hearing there were questions taken on notice, and they came back and they were really fulsome answers. There has been quite a noticeable increase in transparency since the last term of Parliament, which is great. There was quite a notable jump in the instances of the use of facial recognition to generate leads for investigations. We had 316 in the 2022-23 financial year. In the 2023 financial year to date—this is at the end of last year—it was 453. It increased quite a lot. Do you have an up-to-date figure for where we're at now?

KAREN WEBB: I'll have to take that on notice.

DAVID HUDSON: We're heavily promoting it internally.

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: In the answers, we're told that the facial recognition that is used within the NSW Police Force is developed by Cognitec Systems and the US-based National Institute of Standards and Technology, which is an agency of the US Department of Commerce. Testing 189 facial algorithms from 99 developers, which was the majority of commercial developers, including systems from Microsoft as well as Cognitec—that investigation found widespread racial bias, with the systems falsely identifying the faces of people of colour 10 to 100 times more than Caucasian faces. Are New South Wales police comfortable that their systems are not exhibiting this racial bias?

DAVID HUDSON: Yes, we are. We don't use facial recognition or facial matching services as the only evidence that we will use to charge someone. We use it as an investigative tool to give us an indication of matching, say, a CCTV photograph with our offender photographs.

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: But the problem with the bias is that it would lead, presumably, to people being identified. Even if they're then subject to further investigation, they're still being contacted 10 to 100 times more than Caucasian people because of the bias in the facial recognition software. Can New South Wales police be comfortable that its software does not exhibit that bias?

DAVID HUDSON: We haven't found that. We haven't found biases in it.

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: No, and when I asked about this last year I was told that there was no—it says here in these answers: "The software was commissioned"—the one from Cognitec systems—"and has not been tested for bias." So I appreciate that you haven't found any bias, but from what you told me last year you've not tested the system for bias, so how would you know?

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DAVID HUDSON: Because of the outcomes that the system produces. It hasn't been raised that biases are apparent. As I said, we don't use it as a decision maker in any charging process; we use it as a filter.

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: But is a decision maker in terms of who you contact? Are people who are getting—

DAVID HUDSON: Not necessarily.

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: If there's bias but you don't know—I mean, there could be bias in your facial recognition system that is leading to more people of colour than should be being approached by police in the initial stages of an investigation. Isn't that true?

DAVID HUDSON: Not that we've identified. If the suspect is of colour it will give an output of colour.

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: But have you actually tested your system to make sure that these issues that are being identified around the world with racial blindness—especially over-policing concerns—

DAVID HUDSON: It depends how you use the system. If we put a photo in and we're trying to match someone to the photograph that we have from a crime scene, it will come up with people similar to that crime photograph.

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: Okay.

DAVID HUDSON: If the person in that crime photograph is of colour, it will provide photographs of colour.

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: Right.

DAVID HUDSON: I would hope all options because otherwise it would be inaccurate.

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: And that's it. That's all you're using it for.

DAVID HUDSON: That's all we use it for.

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: I'll come back, thank you.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: I'm interested in intelligence gathering—predictive policing, if that's the right word. For example, with the neo-Nazi incidents relating to Australia Day, how was intelligence gathered and shared among law enforcement agencies to be ready to meet those groups?

DAVID HUDSON: Because of the nature of that particular group, NSN—counterterrorism. It is a group that we monitor. We did become aware that they were congregating in Sydney on a certain date. There was a police operation set up under Mr Lanyon at the police operation centre into management of activities for Australia Day. Counterterrorism command set up an incident management team on that particular day and over that weekend and fed intelligence into the police operation centre.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: A lot of those groups, I imagine, are active online, spreading their messages and seeking to recruit online.

DAVID HUDSON: Correct.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: Are you able to police online, or that's a Commonwealth responsibility? How does that work?

DAVID HUDSON: We monitor groups online.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: But if, for example, people were engaging in hate speech online or inciting others to vilification, can that be policed by the New South Wales police?

DAVID HUDSON: Yes.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: You could identify the perpetrators and you could arrest them?

DAVID HUDSON: Yes, our online engagement team and our own online investigative teams are separate to the Commonwealth. We separated 18 months ago.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: And we've got sufficient laws in place that means that we can prosecute for online offences as well as physical offences?

DAVID HUDSON: We can prosecute with all Commonwealth offences as well.

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The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: Okay. So you would prosecute it as a Commonwealth offence in New South Wales?

DAVID HUDSON: Sometimes. We would charge with the most appropriate offence—whether it's Commonwealth or State-based laws.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: Just to recap, I think you said there were that there were six people charged with the matters around Australia Day. Is that right?

DAVID HUDSON: The NSN?

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: Yes.

DAVID HUDSON: I've never said that.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: Sorry, I haven't got my notes from this morning.

DAVID HUDSON: My understanding is that there were 61 tickets issued and a public safety order issued to prevent their attendance in the Sydney CBD. That was on Australia Day. The police operation centre managed the next day, which, I think, they congregated in North Sydney. There may have been charges there; I'm not sure.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: You say "a ticket". What's a ticket?

DAVID HUDSON: Infringement notice.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: That's a court attendance notice or it's a penalty fine on the spot?

DAVID HUDSON: Penalty fine.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: No other charges, other than that, were laid?

DAVID HUDSON: Not on Australia Day, no.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: And in the days following?

MALCOLM LANYON: If I can just have five minutes, I'll come back to you with the answer to that question, just with numbers.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: Certainly. Is that because there was, if you like, pre-emptive policing—a problem was identified, police were able to move in and issue tickets and move-on orders to stop anything else happening?

DAVID HUDSON: Correct.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Can I ask a question just relating to that. This is mainly for my own information because I'm not sure, but there was some public commentary, I think, from the Premier and others about the ability of police, because we heard evidence that, obviously, they were wearing face coverings or balaclavas. Do police have the power to rip off or to remove someone's balaclava? What's the circumstances in which you can do that in a public setting? I'm not sure, and I'm just keen to know the answer.

DAVID HUDSON: If we're issuing process against them, such as an infringement notice, we have to be assured of the identity of that individual. In that regards, we are allowed to ask them to reveal themselves.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: If they don't, what happens?

DAVID HUDSON: If they don't, they'll be subject to arrest. They'll be charged with the offence.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: So it escalates further.

DAVID HUDSON: Yes.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Thank you. I just was curious. I'll hand back to Sue.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: After they've identified themselves, they are then at liberty to replace the face covering?

DAVID HUDSON: They would be able to, yes.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: They would be able to?

DAVID HUDSON: Yes.

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The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: So the laws aren't to rip off balaclavas and walk down the street, open faced; the laws are to identify.

DAVID HUDSON: Yes.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: Thank you. There would need to be a change in the law to give that power to police?

DAVID HUDSON: I'm sure Ms Higginson would be a big supporter of that.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: I'm over here. I'm very concerned about where we're going.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: No, I'm not—the reason that I asked is because I think the Premier was on 2GB saying that, if you're partaking in this sort of behaviour, the police will, I think, rip the balaclavas off and reveal you to your friends and your colleagues. While I don't disagree with you having the right to do that, it doesn't sound like you do until they're arrested.

DAVID HUDSON: Until we issue process against them, causing them to or us to be convinced of their identity, yes.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: The events on the Opera House steps in October—there are three people charged with common assault?

MALCOLM LANYON: That's correct.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: Are there any ongoing investigations into relation to 93Z prosecutions?

MALCOLM LANYON: No, there's not, not arising from the Opera House, at this stage. We've been unable to identify any person who may have committed an offence.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: So if people could be identified—various people were making certain chants. If those persons could be identified, would you be happy that a brief of evidence could be prepared against that person?

MALCOLM LANYON: There's probably several steps in that process. We would need to identify a person. We would need to ascribe an action to them—whether it's a chant or a particular form of words. Then the context of those words would need to meet the threshold of 93Z. It may well meet the threshold for another offence, like offensive conduct. It would really be the context and the nature of the action.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: Are you considering offensive conduct charges in relation to any of those events?

MALCOLM LANYON: No. As I've indicated, at this stage we've been unable to identify any person and ascribe the words to a person.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: Are there threshold issues with 93Z or is it identification of perpetrator issues?

MALCOLM LANYON: Again, that's probably two different parts. To make out an offence of 93Z, a person must, obviously, incite or threaten. So there is a certain threshold to get to. But, if we're talking just as a whole, you would absolutely need to identify the person, identify their actions, make sure they meet the threshold for that test.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: Would it be your advice that "Where's the Jews?" would meet the threshold?

MALCOLM LANYON: Again, it would need to be taken in context.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: If the context was a large group of people walking down the street towards a gathering of Jewish people chanting, "Where's the Jews?", is that likely to meet the threshold?

MALCOLM LANYON: We'd need to take all the circumstances. We'd need to look at that by simple words. It may well or it may not. So we would need to look at the actions of the group, taken as a whole, and then the individuals as well.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: Is that something that you have looked at?

MALCOLM LANYON: Absolutely. As I think I said to you before, I think the largest challenge for us has been identifying individuals and ascribing actions or words to them.

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The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: Yes. My questions really go to the nature of 93Z and whether it's fit for purpose and whether the threshold tests are satisfactory. I suppose, if the persons could be identified, would that conduct meet the threshold?

MALCOLM LANYON: It is a threshold test so, as I've said to you before, incite or threaten need to be taken in a different way. We would certainly get legal advice on those matters to ensure that we had sufficient evidence to proceed.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: And have you had legal advice on those matters?

MALCOLM LANYON: No, we haven't because we haven't got a person that has been identified and the actions ascribed to them, so there's been no need for legal advice.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: Right. How did you identify the people that you charged with common assaults? How were you able to identify those but not identify any of the people who were yelling out those chants?

MALCOLM LANYON: Because the three that were arrested and charged were actually from an isolated incident where there was a victim who was able to identify those individuals.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: Okay. All right. Thank you.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Commissioner, I think you mentioned in earlier evidence the PULSE Program. I've got some more specific questions but I'm also happy for any general remarks in terms of how many officers have engaged with that program and I guess the feedback from them in terms of how well it's working for their wellbeing support.

KAREN WEBB: I can ask Mr Smith whether there's any actual data that I can produce today, or we can take it on notice.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Sure.

KAREN WEBB: But it's certainly relatively new. We're still onboarding the clinicians in some locations and some of the other services are only in their infancy, but certainly encouraging signs, as I said.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Okay. I apologise for my ignorance, but services through that program will also be offered in some cases to families as well. Is that correct? I'm happy for any information that you can provide.

DEAN SMITH: That's correct. As part of the PULSE Program, there is also an increase in regard to family support employees. Those services are available to families as part of that program and the onboarding of additional resources to support families. We have already seen on a number of occasions those resources being used. In relation to PULSE itself, we now have, as at March, 19 clinicians in the field and we will look to roll out to 28 clinicians in the field certainly by the end of this financial year. We're on track in terms of that recruitment. We've already had over 2½ thousand engagements with the 11 clinicians that are in the field, and they cover off around about 35 police area commands, police districts and business units.

In terms of some of the feedback already as part of the evaluation, we have seen direct contact and emails from those who've engaged our clinicians who say, "Never take our clinician away. They are part of our team. They are embedded in the work that we do." We've had multiple examples of being able to have those clinicians and those support services available at the times when our officers go to highly traumatic incidents and jobs. We know that the police love having access to them, and they are actually part of a team. They are sitting in muster rooms. They are attending training days. They are providing support to our supervisors and inspectors and commanders about how to have conversations with officers in regards to how they are feeling, their wellbeing and what that looks like.

Part of the program—the early access to treatment initiatives—we have already seen over 700 engagements in that program and nearly \$90,000 spent in that space where employees, both sworn and unsworn, have been able to access services without cost to them, which is certainly a huge benefit to us. The next tranche also involves training and support around better steps to health and fitness, about health leadership and wellbeing in the wellbeing space. So the program is well and truly on its way. We are onboarding the additional 70-odd resources very quickly and we are seeing the benefits around accessing and removing some of that stigma about reporting and knowing that certainly having those clinicians in the field with our officers is certainly making a difference. We have online e-well checks, which is a wellbeing check that can be done by the officers just as a bit of a self-assessment as to where they are at. And then that system is done and referred. That can be a direct referral to the clinicians to provide support as needed to those officers. Connecting the dots in all of this and making sure

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that we are signing off and capturing as much as we can is very, very important in the program, but we are seeing those early benefits.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: That's great. I'm probably more interested in some of the family supports as well, because I can't imagine what some officers would see on the job and how they deal with that, as well as their loved ones who maybe haven't had the same kind of training. Is there an example? When you say resources would be available to families, what does that actually look like in practice through this program?

DEAN SMITH: In practical terms, our family support officers make direct contact with families—with officers and with their families. They can provide advice in regard to getting the families to seek treatment themselves and have counselling sessions, access to employee assistance programs, working with our chaplaincy and looking at activities around how they might gain financial support, how they might gain other support. When their loved ones who are in the NSW Police Force may or may not be in a position to tell them what's going on, we have that connection to say, "These are the services that are available to you. This is how you access them, and this how we can support you and walk you through that environment to make sure that you are as informed as you possibly can be."

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: That's great. I genuinely wish you all the best with that work. I think it's really important. Thank you for the update. Quickly going now to the PACER Program that we spoke about in October, is there any update in terms of that program? From my recollection, there was some work happening between Health and the police about whether it would continue, and I think we asked the mental health Minister about it too. Are there any updates in terms of where that's in place and how long it's going to continue for?

KAREN WEBB: The PACER Program is in 16 locations. It's funded until the end of June 2024, as I understand, at this stage. It's not a 24/7 service. It is useful to those commands that do have it but, of course, it doesn't cover the whole State. It was mentioned this morning about our internal review of the police response and mental health issues. PACER is one of those options, of course, but we need to look at other things as well that give us more 24/7 coverage in support. Certainly, when I go to commands where they have a PACER or PACERS, I speak to officers and PACERS and there are some great outcomes. But it's not a 24/7 response.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Is there any data—and I'm happy for it to be taken on notice—in terms of ways of measuring the impact of the commands that have them?

KAREN WEBB: It has been evaluated, as I recall. It's a Health program. It's funded—

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Through Health. That would be better with Health. That's fine if that's the case.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: Could I jump in on PACER? We've heard in different forums that there's some reluctance of police to be involved in the PACER Program because they see it as a Health response rather than a police response. I wonder if you've had any comments on that.

KAREN WEBB: I haven't heard that. In fact, as I indicated, at every police station I've been to where there is a PACER—and I've been to quite a few—they're embraced well. The PACER clinicians work within the muster room in the police stations. They're welcomed and used by officers. I'm not aware of instances where that's not the case, and I don't know whether any of my executive have heard of them not being embraced.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: No. Thank you. I just thought it was a good opportunity to check that. We hear all sorts of things.

KAREN WEBB: I'm sure you do.

MALCOLM LANYON: I was going to ask Mr Chair's indulgence. Ma'am, can I answer your question before? As far as we're aware, there were no persons charged from NSN on either Australia Day or the following day, but a number of infringements were issued.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: I thought the Minister said something this morning about three charges of common assault and one person with two counts.

MALCOLM LANYON: No, that was from the Opera House.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: How many infringement notices from that?

MALCOLM LANYON: I believe there were 61 on Australia Day. I don't have the numbers for the following day, but there were certainly several infringements—predominantly traffic infringements.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Back to PULSE, Mr Smith, I have a couple more questions I noticed I didn't get to. Are there any KPIs for the PULSE Program?

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DEAN SMITH: We have just onboarded an evaluation specialist. What we will be focusing on is, obviously, a reduction in workplace injuries and certainly a better understanding of psychological wellbeing and psychological fitness. Certainly, the impact of the PULSE program will be about reducing those officers who are subject to both psychological injury and physical injury. That evaluation process and the metrics for that are being developed. But, ultimately, that is the aim—for people to be more aware of their psychological and physical wellbeing, and that we reduce the number of psychological injuries and exposures to members of the NSW Police Force.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Again, I commend you for wanting to reduce that, but there will still be times when that happens. Will you also look at things like improved return-to-work outcomes and less medical discharge rates? Will that be part of the evaluation as well?

DEAN SMITH: Most certainly that is the case. We want people to be at work. We want them to return to the job that they love. Where that is not possible, we want them to be able to transition from the NSW Police Force in a manner in which they can gain other employment and they can be supported and make sure that both themselves and their families are supported in that process.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Again, I appreciate that it's in its early stages, but do you have a time frame that you'd like to be able to see a positive impact on some of those factors? I know you said there's an evaluation, but when would you expect there to be some data or information?

DEAN SMITH: We are already trying to build that dataset and what that looks like in terms of trends in injuries, nature of injuries, time lost to injuries and return to work. But the PULSE program really was set up at the start of financial year last year.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Yes, I know it's new.

DEAN SMITH: But at the 12-month mark, there is an expectation that we will have built an evaluation program and evidence program to be able to answer those questions.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: I'll come back in a later hearing, I'm sure.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: I have one final question on the FPOs. What is the age of the youngest person that is subject to an FPO?

DAVID HUDSON: I'd have to take that on notice.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: Thank you. If you could, I'd be grateful. Going back to Right Care, Right Person, and the expedition to London—this is probably for you, Commissioner. I know this is something that you're across. I just want to be clear here. What we're looking at is a way of ensuring that when we are dealing with mental health issues or people experiencing psychosis of sorts, the desire is for a non-police response to those people unless there is a weapon or a safety issue. Is the lesson from the Met that the Right Care, Right Person is still a kind of response tool? The program that they have there and what you've been looking at is about a decision-making tool—whether to send police officers or not and, if so, which police officers would be sent and how they would be sent. Is that—

KAREN WEBB: Sort of. I think, really, there are a number of factors in the Right Care, Right Person model, and maybe Mr Hudson can probably explain it better than I. It, for example, has set up a different phone number to call. Instead of calling 000, it might be 111 or something or other for mental support, where there's a triage process around what's required—what is the best service for that client at that time. I think it's something like 80 per cent of occasions, it doesn't require police. There'll be a small number—20 per cent or 30 per cent—where police might go with someone or on their own because of the safety issues.

It's been operating in Humberside and I think also in Wales for three years. The Metropolitan Police commenced it in October last year, so it's early stages for them, but it's certainly an option. I guess that's the point of our internal review: We know what the demand is for officers and staff, and some of the outcomes in the existing processes. There's PACER and, of course, Queensland and other policing jurisdictions in Australia have other options. The work is really about saying, "What else can we do and what might be better?"

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: For example, if you made a decision or if it became apparent that we would be much better not sending police to calls, people in New South Wales will always ring 000 because they don't know who else or where else to ring, because we've had nothing else forever. In that event, is it open at the moment to your recommendations that might come back to this, that at the 000 point there would be some kind of diversion at that point?

KAREN WEBB: Currently a call for service for a mental issue might come in in different ways. Some might go to 000 and some might just go to the local police station. One of the benefits, I think, out of the Right

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Care, Right Person model appears to be that calls are centralised so the triage is consistent—whether that's through a dedicated number or through 000, for example. Queensland, for example, have a clinician or clinicians inside their VKG centre, as I understand. There's some work that we can do internally. To the point that was raised this morning by the Minister, the report has been tabled. We have examined it as an executive and tabled it to the Minister. I've met, and Mr Hudson and others met, with the Secretary for NSW Health, Susan Pearce, and her deputy secretary and Dr Wright to set up a working party to work through the report and the recommendations and report back to Susan Pearce and I. I think we are off to a good start, and then we will report to government as we progress.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: But the view that you are taking is not just to look at matters where police shouldn't be or don't need to be—that large percentage of carve out—but also, if police are required to go, how we can do better to avoid deaths and violence?

KAREN WEBB: There are a number of recommendations. I think the Minister mentioned this morning the opportunity for a public-facing document at some point in the near future. She didn't commit to a time, and we've got to compile that. Some of the recommendations talk to our training and other things. So there is a range of things in that report that we are considering, and I think we have to.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: Do you accept that it's an incredibly high priority matter, and that the next death is only moments away?

KAREN WEBB: Well, that's why it has been a priority for us, and it was really a priority piece of work to send the officers to the UK and have that report submitted. We have considered it as an executive. We have sent it to the Minister and we have convened a meeting already, and it is a priority.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: One other thing. Something that I raised in the last estimates, and I think Deputy Commissioner Lanyon may have looked at this, but the false accusations and the retraction matter—I am talking about a very specific case where police continue to prosecute where the only evidence of the false accusation is the retraction, or the only evidence is the retraction. You indicated that you weren't aware that it was a thing or that it was happening, I think—sorry if I am verballing you here.

MALCOLM LANYON: You are, Ma'am.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: I apologise for that. Could you let me and the Committee know now what you found? Because, again, I have just been made aware, only in the last week, of another really serious case that is taking place, and it is just quite shocking that the police are continuing to prosecute this matter. Again, it is a First Nations woman in a rural, remote region.

MALCOLM LANYON: Ma'am, if I can just go back probably a little bit, what I actually said last time was there had been reports that there were significant numbers of misidentification of primary aggressors and action taken on the basis of retraction, and all of the records we held indicated that there were very few examples of that. There is significant guidance provided to police about when we would look to charge someone on the basis of a retraction. All of that guidance says that a simple retraction on its own is not justification. There would normally need to be other evidence available. Whether it's evidence such as a text message that someone may have—there may be CCTV that completely contradicts a version—that may form basis for it. In relation to the matter you're talking about there, I would appreciate—if you would like to provide the details to me, I'll certainly look at that matter there.

Across government, obviously misidentification of primary aggressor is something that we want to make sure that we get right, and there is currently a misidentification consultation group, which is chaired by DCJ, and we are a principal player on that group. So it is something that we continue to work towards. There are processes in place. But, if we were to look to charge someone on the basis of a retraction, it must go through the crime manager, and we're also looking to extend that, that we must get advice from our operational legal advice before any charge would be preferred.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: I will alert you to the one at the moment, but there are still some where literally retraction is the only evidence or that scenario, and it's really alarming that it's happening.

MALCOLM LANYON: I'd certainly appreciate the details of that because the matters that we have going before the court and the matters that have previously been reported, they're incredibly few. So I would be very interested to know the details of the matters you're referring to.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: Thank you. Just the last thing on the FPOs. The Ombudsman recommended that they automatically expire after five years. Is that something that you've taken on board as a recommendation? That might be Deputy Commissioner Hudson. Sorry. I know you weren't paying attention then. The Ombudsman's

CORRECTED

recommendation that FPOs expire automatically after five years, what's the current status? Is there a reason why that doesn't happen?

DAVID HUDSON: As I said, we've reached agreement to review them after five years. There might be some reason. We will discontinue them when there's no longer a need. But an—

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: If the Ombudsman's recommending that it should be that, that would reverse the system a bit, rather than you reviewing them at a time and it might be five years. If they expired at five years, would that not provide more impetus to really be more rigorous about the status of them whilst they're current?

DAVID HUDSON: Then we'd have to issue another one. But if it was still valid, there's still a reason for it, and some of these individuals would require renewal after five years. I can have a look at it.

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: Just coming back to that facial-recognition discussion, in the answers to the questions I asked last time in estimates, it says:

... the NSW Police Force is currently engaged in a procurement process for its new Integrated Biometric Platform.

Where is that procurement process up to?

DAVID HUDSON: Still not finalised. It's commenced. I don't think it's progressed too far through the procurement process.

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: You're not going to be using Clearview AI, though, are you.

DAVID HUDSON: No.

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: Can I ask you one last question on facial recognition. At Mardi Gras last year there was reporting of the use of some new facial recognition, an artificial intelligence system that could track the mood and movements of revellers. Was this correct? Was it used?

KAREN WEBB: First I've heard about it, and I marched in Mardi Gras last year. It's news to me. Wasn't one that we had, not one that we're aware of.

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: No? No-one? That's good. So you're not using it this year then.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: You'd hope.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: Are you using it this year?

KAREN WEBB: No, and I'm marching again this year, so I hope—I really don't know what that is, and it's not one of ours.

DAVID HUDSON: We use social media monitoring about—

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: No. This was reported. Basically, it was a form of facial recognition that could maybe identify if someone in a crowd was looking aggressive, for instance, and that this was going to be used by the police to identify potential troublemakers.

DAVID HUDSON: We don't use live facial-recognition technology.

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: That's a weird report, then. That's good. It's comforting. That's all I have. I'll go back to you, Ms Higginson.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: Thank you. I think this one is for you, Deputy Commissioner Lanyon. I am not going to repeat any words or anything like that here in this inquiry. With your findings in relation to the video and the purported spoken, chanted words that you found could not be proved as being those words, is the Police Force now in a position to be able to explore and verify and test whether material doctored through social media and video forms—you're in a more competent position to respond to complaints that they're not true or that they're false, after Operation Mealing, was it?

MALCOLM LANYON: Mealing.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: Mealing.

MALCOLM LANYON: That is quite a tricky question, ma'am, so I'll just work through that. It's not that I or the investigators said those words were not recorded. We actually had an expert who reviewed audio and video that had been provided as part of gathered evidence that included audio and video from media and a range of other sources. We provided that material to the expert. Forensic analysis of that material was carried out, from which the expert said with overwhelming certainty that the words that had been reported widely, the words that were recorded on the subtitles of a video, were not the correct words that were used. I have said quite clearly, but

CORRECTED

when I have had a media conference, that there is no evidence that the videos themselves were doctored to purport the words that were in the subtitles. The videos that had the subtitles are really compilations of master recordings that we have, so we can say the source recordings are the same. They have been put together in a compilation video and obviously the words that have been widely reported and were on that video are someone's interpretation of what they heard on the video, based on the expert's advice.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: Do you think then, if a similar thing was to happen and social media was rife with subtitles or an interpretation of words that were being chanted, and then parliamentarians went and kept saying these things over and over and over again, and then somebody made a complaint to you, would you be in a position to respond more quickly than what we have experienced over the last few months?

MALCOLM LANYON: I think what the community and what Parliament would expect is that we take a rigorous step through our investigation. There was obviously significant evidence in terms of both audio and video files. It was really important to gather all of that information, because we want to be accurate in what we present to the public.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: Is that why it took so long? Because I know even at the last budget estimates I was raising with you the fact that there was serious contest about what was allegedly chanted and those subtitles, and the truth or untruth of that. It was months and months later that we then have the New South Wales police stand up and make a statement about that. You know, I respect all the processes, but it took time.

MALCOLM LANYON: Serious questions require a thorough investigation. The most important thing was that the public record was accurate, based on all of the evidence we had at hand and that the expert had analysed. So, absolutely, I would have liked to have been able to be in a position to say definitively earlier, but obviously we had to gather that evidence and we had to give the expert time to properly review that evidence and provide a report.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: Can I ask: What was the expert? What was their expertise? You may have said this publicly and I may have missed it, but just for the record here—

MALCOLM LANYON: I think I would do him an injustice to actually read it out now. He's probably got a page and a half of qualifications going back decades in the field of biometrics and audiology. He's a renowned expert and he's someone—obviously, we could provide his qualifications.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: Right. Thank you. Given the seriousness of that and the response that happened with all the members of this Parliament that jumped up and said things, if, in the event, is that something that in future you would seek to be more efficient in relation to that exploration?

MALCOLM LANYON: I think the investigators take matters very seriously from the minute they do that. I think there would be more concern were it to be the case that we did not go widely and gather all the evidence that we could and then have that analysed. Again, ideally I would like to have a resolution to matters quickly but I think it's more important that we have them resolved fulsomely. I'm very pleased, obviously, in the investigative processes and the investigators that took part in that investigation. Obviously comments that are made in Parliament are not something that are for me to comment on. As a police force, we have, and have always, maintained the position that we're here to ensure public safety. That's really what we've done from the beginning of the conflict over in Gaza.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: I've only got a little bit of time. The increase in remand numbers in New South Wales, when I asked Corrections about what they can do to improve remand circumstances—like our remand centres are not in the greatest condition in terms of a number of views. When I asked Corrections what we can do, they say, "Well, you know, it's police and magistrates. It's their fault." I know we heard one of our colleagues this morning talking about why are you not doing more to lock up more people and apply the Bail Act, but what's your view at the moment in terms of those enormous remand figures and the escalation in those? It's really large and you'd be aware of it. What is the police view? Why are we putting so many people on remand?

PAUL PISANOS: Are you talking about juvenile detention or adult or both? Or all? It's a bit global.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: It's both. The remand figures and the escalation of them in recent years—and I know we've amended the Bail Act and we've made it harder for police to grant bail et cetera, but is there some order in terms of we're refusing bail because people don't have addresses, is it because there's lack of diversionary programs? The figure for remands right now is enormous.

MALCOLM LANYON: Ms Higginson, we don't actually put persons on remand; that's something the court does.

CORRECTED

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: That's right, but police argue and don't challenge. This is why, when people are seeking bail and police oppose, people go into remand.

MALCOLM LANYON: Well, we simply argue on the basis of public safety and there are very clear mandates—very clear rules—on the basis for which bail can be applied and that's what we do before a court. It's up to a court to interpret both the circumstances and history.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: On that basis, are you tracking? What is the proportion of First Nations people that are getting bail refused and being held on remand? Do you have any power or discretion at that point to be working harder and seeking more diversion—I know you already are but in light of the enormous increase in remand figures?

KAREN WEBB: Ma'am, I think we talked about this earlier in terms of the work that we're doing to try and find options for juveniles, in particular, and certainly options for anyone. That would be prevention, disruption, diversion et cetera, where we operate within the law. The BOCSAR report published last year was an assessment of police bail determinations about whether we had any bias and the answer was no. That gave me great comfort that we apply bail objectively based on the circumstances and our job to protect the community. At the end of the day, if we can stop people offending, that'd be great but really our job is to keep the community safe and investigating, arresting and charging those responsible.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: Are you seeing then, at the localised level, the same people go on remand? It's very difficult to track. Recidivism rates we can get it—that is, once you've been sentenced and placed in custody whether you reoffend—but in terms of remand you might not get sentenced and you might not end up but what do we do about the revolving door of remand? Are you seeing that at the local level?

KAREN WEBB: We are certainly seeing recidivism. As I said, the remand question is a court decision but certainly we're seeing examples. I think Mr Lanyon has got an example—we are talking young people here—bail determinations, 32 occasions, and continues to breach and commit offences. I think there is one example in Moree or regional New South Wales just this week—15 bail determinations they breached. Police are doing as much as we can to protect the community, but, really, that issue around—it particularly concerns me young people that are repeat offending, breaking into homes at night when people are asleep, stealing cars and then travelling at like 300 kilometres an hour in a car, videoing themselves. It just shocks me.

I really don't know what we do to stop it, but police are doing everything we can to play our part in that. As we have said before today, the Youth Strategy has two phases. Phase one is those kids that we can divert; that we can put into programs—Fit For Life, PCYC programs—feed them, take them to school, engage them in whatever way we can. Phase two is those kids that are well past that point. The problem is we have got a cohort of young people that are criminals who are now teaching 11-, 12-, 13-year-olds the ropes.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: Do we need more innovation in that phase two that's not prison, that's not the system, more intensive—

KAREN WEBB: It will be a decision for government. Really we have said it before and we will continue to say it and the Minister said it this morning: We don't want to put young people in jail, but our job is to protect the community, and I don't know how you stop these young ones offending.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: But is what you're saying you don't have any further options at that point?

KAREN WEBB: At that point?

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: Yes.

KAREN WEBB: Yes.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: Thank you.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: It sounds like we need an inquiry.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: We do need an inquiry—a talkfest, apparently.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: Perhaps these questions are to you, Mr Lanyon. I just want to follow up on some issues raised by my colleague Ms Higginson. Excuse me for going back to the threshold of 93Z, because I am struggling to understand how it operates myself. If the offence was utter, I completely understand why that detailed investigation taking four months involving an expert would be necessary. But, given the offence was incite or threaten, isn't the threshold about what was perceived by people there rather than whether or not certain form of words was actually used?

CORRECTED

MALCOLM LANYON: If I can just rely back where I spoke to before on basics, we haven't identified a person that we can ascribe as being party to that that would constitute an offence.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: I guess that's my next question. If there is no offender identified, why was there a four-month process of inquiring as to what may or may not have been said by nobody who could be identified?

MALCOLM LANYON: Because the actual review of evidence is something that we always do, and there was significant evidence on both the audio and video cassette that needed to be examined.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: Is that type of detailed biometric assessment done routinely?

MALCOLM LANYON: It can be. It depends on the seriousness of the matter. I think, as you've alluded to before, it was a matter of significant public interest and significance. So it was a matter that we wanted to make sure that we investigated thoroughly.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: But is it a threshold question for 93Z what was said or what was perceived to be said?

MALCOLM LANYON: Sorry, it's what would be said, not what's perceived to be said.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: If the offence was utter, the threshold would be what was said. If the offence was incite or threaten, somebody can be threatened by a motion, by tone, by—it's not necessarily these words are threatening or these words are not. I'm just inquiring why there were so many resources devoted to determining what was said when the whole context of something could have incited or threatened, and it could have been quite innocuous words.

MALCOLM LANYON: We put resources not only into ensuring that we gathered all of the evidence and what was available in both audio and video, but in identifying and interviewing people that were there—certainly, going through every part of an investigation we can. We circulated widely in the media to try to identify persons that were present there, who may have committed an offence. As I said, outside of 93Z, there could well have been the offence of offensive conduct, and we would have prosecuted had we been able to identify and ascribed someone words that were offensive.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: I understand that after the fact it might be quite difficult to identify people, but police there on the night, were they not able to make arrests on the night of people that they heard saying things?

MALCOLM LANYON: Commanders have to make a decision. It's obviously a very dynamic environment. There were 1,000 to 1,500 persons there. There were 110 police officers there. The commander needs to make a decision at the time whether they wish to make police go into the crowd to identify and arrest someone or whether it's more important to ensure public safety at the time. The commander who was present decided the best strategy at that time was to ensure public safety and contain those people who were down there.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: Okay, and that's what's—

The CHAIR: Order! Time has expired.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: You can put it on notice.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: I will put it on notice. Thank you.

The CHAIR: Put your next question on notice, please. Thank you all very much for coming today.

The Hon. GREG DONNELLY: I still have questions.

The CHAIR: You want to ask a question? I beg your pardon. We're getting ahead of ourselves.

The Hon. GREG DONNELLY: My first question is around the matter of the support the NSW Police Force provides—

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Greg, it's really hard for Hansard—sorry, you're not near a mic.

The Hon. GREG DONNELLY: Sorry. My question relates to the matter of the support the NSW Police Force provides councils in cases of emergencies and disasters. I'm wondering if I could direct that question, perhaps through you, Commissioner, to Deputy Commissioner Thurtell to provide an explanation about the extent of that and what it looks like.

PETER THURTELL: No worries. Thank you. How long do I have? Fifteen, 20, 25 minutes?

The CHAIR: You have got 14 minutes.

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PETER THURTELL: I think it's fair to say that the relationship between the police and all local governments is one of mutual cooperation when it comes to emergencies. They rely very heavily on our resources and our leadership during the actual emergencies. New South Wales has a three-tiered approach to emergency management and the local level is where the vast majority of emergencies are managed. Local government areas have a local emergency management committee, which is chaired by the local government, but they do rely very heavily on the police local emergency operations controller to provide that leadership and to guide that committee very strongly. Whilst the councils chair the committee, really the vast majority of operational leadership and input comes from the police and the other emergency service organisations.

In addition to that, we employ region emergency operations officers who are in regular contact with the councils and sit in on all the LEMC meetings. They help facilitate the NSW Police Force to LEOCON and the REMOs. They also help to facilitate all sorts of exercises, be they desktop exercises or practical exercises, with the councils so that those committees are well practised when it comes into emergencies and also the preparation and prevention of emergencies, where possible. In that response phase, they also work very heavily together.

As the State Emergency Operations Controller, NSW Police also facilitates the exercises at a State level and a region level. On that, only just recently I attended a combined North Shore local emergency management committee at Taronga Zoo, where we did a joint exercise on emergencies within the zoo. Coincidentally, it was overlooking the magnificent new chimps enclosure within the zoo. I don't know if anyone has been there but it's quite something to look at.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Not yet, but I'll take the kids.

PETER THURTELL: I urge you to go if you haven't been. Also, we have our incident and emergency management command within the NSW Police Force, which at a State level and region level—and at times at a local level—helps councils and those LEMC meetings gather the information they need to be better prepared for emergencies across their area. Also, the local police chair the local rescue committees for those council areas with other emergency service organisations.

I think it's fair to say we work very cooperatively with the councils and they rely very heavily on us. Recently we have developed a digital emergency management platform within the NSW Police Force, which enables us to track the training of our officers and the training that our REMOs give to council workers as well. That is something that the councils can then rely upon us to give them some guidance as to what officers they have and haven't got trained within their area.

The Hon. GREG DONNELLY: My second one just quickly, one of the members in a line of questioning earlier around the matter of firearms made—it was more of a statement than a question, to be frank. There was an imputation in the statement that there is, within the community of New South Wales—in fact I think it was suggested quite a large number in the community had some issues or concerns about the matter of firearms and the police. It was put in those terms and then just left hanging. I'm not asking you to comment, Commissioner, on the matter that's live, and it will take its own course in terms of the very detailed investigation and ultimately the reporting of it. But, Commissioner, is it the case that the NSW Police Force maintains very rigorous standards and controls with respect to the issuing and the use of firearms?

KAREN WEBB: Yes, that's true. I think we're the best in the country in terms of the way we administer the Firearms Act through the Firearms Registry and New South Wales police in terms of the licensing requirements and inspections et cetera. Gun Safe has been spoken about, in terms of the computer system or the portal that's used. I think it's best in breed as well. We've got over 250,000 licence holders in this State. We've now got over 1,100,000 registered firearms in New South Wales.

The Hon. GREG DONNELLY: Sorry, this was in respect of the weapons of the NSW Police Force.

KAREN WEBB: Sorry.

The Hon. GREG DONNELLY: Sorry, because that's what the imputation was—that there was an issue.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: Point of order: There was no—

The Hon. GREG DONNELLY: I wasn't referring to you. I was just saying there was a line of questioning. This is the internal standards and controls with respect to the issuing—

KAREN WEBB: And we do have many and we have done for many years. Supervisors have keys, gun safes, padlocks et cetera. The matter that was raised is, as I said, a very live investigation. It will be borne out through the investigation and we'll work through those circumstances.

The Hon. GREG DONNELLY: Thanks for the confirmation, Commissioner.

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KAREN WEBB: Sorry, I misheard your question.

The Hon. GREG DONNELLY: That's fine.

The CHAIR: Thank you very much. If any questions were taken on notice today, the secretariat will be in contact advising you when the answers are required. Thank you very much for coming.

(The witnesses withdrew.)

The Committee proceeded to deliberate.