

PORTFOLIO COMMITTEE NO. 5 - JUSTICE AND COMMUNITIES

Wednesday 12 March 2025

Examination of proposed expenditure for the portfolio areas

POLICE AND COUNTER-TERRORISM

CORRECTED

The Committee met at 9:15.

MEMBERS

The Hon. Robert Borsak (Chair)

The Hon. Scott Barrett
Ms Abigail Boyd
The Hon. Susan Carter
The Hon. Greg Donnelly
Ms Cate Faehrmann
Ms Sue Higginson (Deputy Chair)
The Hon. Cameron Murphy
The Hon. Rod Roberts
The Hon. Emily Suvaal

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 fourth hearing of the Portfolio Committee No. 5 – Justice and Communities for the additional round of inquiry into budget estimates 2024-2025. 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. I am Chair of the Committee. I welcome Minister Catley and 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 of the hearing. I urge witnesses to be careful about making comments to the media or to others after completing their evidence. In addition, the Legislative Council has adopted rules to provide for procedural fairness for inquiry participants, and I encourage Committee members and witnesses to be mindful of these procedures.

Welcome again and thank you all for making time to come and give evidence today. 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. I also remind some witnesses that they have already been sworn before this Committee during this inquiry and, therefore, do not need to be sworn again.

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Ms KATE MEAGHER, Deputy Secretary, Delivery and Engagement Group, Premier's Department, affirmed and examined

Mr MICHAEL BARNES, Commissioner, NSW Crime Commission, affirmed and examined

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

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

The CHAIR: The hearing today 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. until 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 crossbench, which is me. A good place to start, isn't it? Minister, thanks very much for coming today. I just want to ask some questions around the issue of the disabled, and the issuing of firearms licences and those sorts of things to the disabled. Is it the policy of the New South Wales police to discriminate against the disabled when it comes to issuing firearms or renewing firearms licences?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: I don't believe that to be the case, Mr Borsak. I know that you have raised with me an issue around people—

The CHAIR: Could I just get you to talk a little bit more into the mic.

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: Is it on?

The CHAIR: It is on. I'm just an old shooter, my hearing's not much good.

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: I'm sure that question will come up, too. I don't believe that to be the case. I do know that there was the issue with the range that was specifically used for people who were sight impaired. However, my understanding is that other ranges have tried to accommodate those people specifically. If there is anything further that I can assist with—because the last thing we want to be doing is discriminating against people with a disability. I know that some of those shooters that we're referring to are, in fact, elite athletes going to the Olympics for those with disabilities, and we would be only too happy to try to make sure that they have the correct environment to practise in.

The CHAIR: Minister, are you saying then that the disabled should not be treated, or subjected to less favourable treatment by the police, or required to comply with unnecessary requirements simply by virtue of their disability?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: As you know, that has been explained to you in terms of sight-impaired people. They still have to meet the requirements of—as we know, it is a privilege to have a licence to use a firearm and they still have to meet those requirements.

The CHAIR: Minister, do you agree that the Firearms Registry is conducting an administrative function?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: Yes.

The CHAIR: And not a law enforcement function?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: Yes. However, they have to follow the rules that are outlined for gaining a licence and for operating a firearm. It has to be within the framework of the law.

The CHAIR: I do understand that. That's right. What right does the Firearms Registry have to gather and use personal health information that isn't directly related to their activities and necessary for the purpose of gaining or renewing a licence?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: Again, I think you know as well as I do, Mr Borsak, that the requirements around holding a firearm licence are in accordance with what the community would expect because, as I've just said, it is a privilege to have a firearm licence. In relation to people's health records per se, I think that you need

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to be more specific with that, in actual fact, if we're talking about sight-impaired people. That is important that they know that.

The CHAIR: Are you aware of the Firearms Registry's recently released so-called health risk assessment?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: Yes, I am. Can I say that we know that that has not been a process that, I believe, meets the expectations particularly of the Committee. I have been assured by the new Assistant Commissioner Christopher Hayward that that will be opened up again and reviewed again, and consultation will begin again with that. I have to also note for this Committee's purpose that anybody who has been interested in this has had a full briefing from the assistant commissioner, and from my staff and myself, and we will continue to work with you because we want to make sure that that is right. We've committed to ensuring that that health assessment is done in collaboration and cooperation with the broader group.

The CHAIR: That's appreciated, Minister, but our problem is just in terms of the general background of how it's being handled, that's all.

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: I don't disagree with you. I don't think that it was handled well. I have admitted that to you and others who have been interested in this. That is why we are doing what we are doing. As I said, the assistant commissioner will be opening up that consultation again and we welcome your feedback.

The CHAIR: Yes, I hear what you're saying. I just think that the whole thing is not well based. It requires applicants who disclose, say, a physical impairment, perhaps they're in a wheelchair, to submit to a full medical, covering off their documented medical history, including any history at all of emotional, neurological or physical conditions that have no connection at all with the health condition that they've disclosed and shouldn't be relevant to the assessment of the risk. That's where we're going with this. It's not specific; it's a catch-all. If someone goes along to the doctor and says, "I'm here because I need to fulfill this requirement", they can then turn around and examine their whole medical history. Most of it, of course, is not directly relevant to the application. This turns out to be a fishing exercise.

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: As you well know, the intention here was to make it easier for those people who have a gun licence—particularly those people in regional, rural and remote areas—to be able to access their GP for a health assessment, instead of what used to be the case to have to have a psychological test. We all agree that is a better approach. I agree with you that the consultation here has not been correct. Let's work together on this to make sure that we actually meet our objective, and that is that those people in those areas that I've just alluded to have access to their GP for those medical assessments.

The CHAIR: I've had some advice on a number of matters that—I've been told that they're likely to constitute unlawful disability discrimination by the Firearms Registry in the way that it's currently being handled. I think if you end up stepping outside of the area of inquiry, you could actually end up transgressing the discrimination laws.

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: I take that advice from you very seriously, and we'll be making sure that isn't the case, Mr Borsak.

The CHAIR: Do you actually endorse the way the registry is handling it at the moment?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: Mr Borsak, I've asked for it to be reviewed and the assistant commissioner is doing that. So I think you know my answer to that. We need to look forward and work together. I do want to work with you and others on this. It's important.

The CHAIR: Will you ask the Firearms Registry to withdraw the health risk assessment process as it stands and rebuild it from scratch again?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: That is what we are doing. We are starting that consultation process again. That is underway, as you know.

The CHAIR: Minister, the updated version that we got simply removed the table. I don't think it changed anything else.

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: I'll speak to you about that, but if that's the case we definitely need to do more.

The CHAIR: Minister, just to talk to you a little bit about recruitment and retention, and I know you've talked a lot about structural change in the New South Wales police, what actual changes have actually happened? What actually has been done?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: Mr Borsak, it's been no secret from me that when we came to government, there was no program, if you like, in the NSW Police Force for recruitment, retention, and police's wages were

CORRECTED

going backwards. All of those were front and centre of mine, and they are three things that I have been very focused on, working with the commissioner and others to ensure that we look at that. In terms of recruitment, paying the recruits has had a significant uptick in the number of people who are applying to be police in New South Wales. The most significant pay increase that the police have received, that will certainly go towards a significant retention piece. In addition to that, the health and wellbeing unit that we have set up to ensure that our police are looked after—wrapping those services around them I think is a real piece to not only retain police but to show them that we value them. They're amongst some of the most highly trained police in the country, and we want to keep them.

The CHAIR: Minister, thank you, but could you point to some actual evidence to demonstrate what changes have actually been made? I mean what hard changes have been made.

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: Yes, in December we had the largest class attest, with more than 300 new recruits attesting down there. That's the largest class in a decade. Almost a thousand will go through Goulburn this year, which is getting those numbers back up. I'm not patting myself on the back, and the Government's not patting itself on the back—I want to be clear about that—but hopefully we're turning a corner. That's what we have to do.

The CHAIR: You're still 2,000 short.

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: Absolutely, and it will take some time to fill that. I'm not suggesting that's going to happen overnight either; it will take a long time.

The CHAIR: What about paying police more?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: The police are paid more. It will take a long time to do that. That's why I said I'm not patting myself on the back, but I do believe that we have turned a corner. We are making it attractive for people to come into the New South Wales police. We, in fact, have had more than 80 applications from our mobility program, from other jurisdictions and New Zealand as well. We've got Be a Cop in Your Home Town that also has been very successful. In fact, I've met a couple of them just last week when I was down in Albury. We're thinking outside the square and looking at opportunities to incentivise people joining the New South Wales police.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: Minister, I just want to turn, if we could, to the Dural event. Could you inform the Committee when you became first aware that this was not a terror threat event, was not motivated by ideology, religion or politics, and was in fact a con job?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: I received confidential briefings from 20 January by senior police officers in New South Wales police. I then continued to receive daily briefings and was provided information related to the progress of the investigation. I have not shared that information with anybody, and I won't be sharing any of the content of those conversations with you today. I do that on the basis that it is to keep the community safe. That is my job, after all.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: Could you just elaborate, keep the community safe from what, at this point, in relation to not disclosing something that is now in the past?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: I will not be detailing the conversations of the information I was getting about an ongoing investigation.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: The question did not ask you to detail the content of the briefings. What it did was ask when you please first became aware that this was not a terror threat event and that it was in fact a con job?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: I was being kept up to date with the progress of the investigation. They were very confidential briefings, and I will not be sharing the content or the detail of those briefings.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: Minister, would you appreciate the fact that the Premier stood in front of all of New South Wales and made a declaration that this was a terrorist event? Did you experience a deep sense of relief, put it that way, when you became aware that this was not a terrorist-fuelled event?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: I think that we need to ensure that we remember what the environment was at that point in time.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: Minister, I do appreciate this.

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: The Jewish community were experiencing firebombed cars on their streets. They were experiencing antisemitic attacks every second night. In fact, it's true to say that since—

CORRECTED

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: Minister, every second night?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: In some weeks. I've got the dates here. I'll give you all the dates.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: I'll take those later, if you like.

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: No, I want to share them now. You asked the question, so I just want to give you—

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: Minister, can we please go back to my initial question: Could you please inform the Committee, as the police Minister who was receiving very important, as expected, confidential briefings, when you first became aware this was not a terrorist threat or attack?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: I will not be sharing the details of my high-level briefings that I have with senior police in New South Wales.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: Minister, can you please then, at least, if we're going to play guessing games around treating the community with some respect here, and the Parliament, tell me was it before 11 February?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: I won't be sharing the details of those conversations with you. I've made that very clear. These are very high-level briefings that I have had from senior police, and I don't share them with anybody.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: Minister, the police, the Premier and yourself have now disclosed to the public this was not a terrorist event. You've made that very clear in no uncertain terms. Deputy Commissioner Hudson said he suspected on 30 January this may not be a terrorist event and looked very much like an organised crime event. Deputy Commissioner Hudson is the expert in this State on terrorism, counterterrorism and organised crime. You came out and said, "This is a terror event." The Premier said, "It is a terror event." Could you please tell this Committee, so that we can do our job as an oversight committee and an accountability body on behalf of New South Wales, did you become aware that it was not a terrorist event before 13 February?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: I'm not going to divulge the conversations that I had with Mr Hudson. If Mr Hudson—

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: I'm not asking you to divulge. I'm asking you what you knew.

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: You are asking me tell you what happened in my very highly confidential meetings.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: No, Minister—

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: Yes, you are.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: Minister, I am not asking you that. I am asking you—

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: If Mr Hudson wants to tell you his version or account, then Mr Hudson can tell you that. But I have a responsibility to keep that information that I am provided confidential, and I will.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: So you are not going to tell the people of New South Wales whether you knew and whether you were deeply relieved to learn that this was not a terrorist event before 11 February, or on 11 February?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: I am not.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: But you were prepared for the Premier to go out and say it was not a terrorist event in the last couple of days?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: The Premier was relaying what he had been told by police.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: Minister, I am really struggling to understand why you are not willing to tell the truth to this Committee right now.

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: I do not accept that.

The Hon. GREG DONNELLY: Point of order—

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: I am not not telling the truth.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: Okay, why you are withholding information.

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: I am not withholding.

CORRECTED

The CHAIR: Order! There is a point of order taken.

The Hon. GREG DONNELLY: The statement about not telling the truth, I think, is a pretty stiff statement. It's a very serious statement directed to the Minister, the Crown representative.

The CHAIR: Yes, I don't think you can actually say that the Minister is not telling the truth.

The Hon. GREG DONNELLY: I'd ask that that be withdrawn, please.

The CHAIR: I think you should withdraw that.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: To the point of order: Withholding really important information is an omission of fact, and right now that's what I'm asking for. But I accept the point of order. I will not use the word "truth". Why are you—

The Hon. GREG DONNELLY: I'd ask that you to please withdraw the statement.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: I will withdraw the statement in relation to "truth". Minister, why are you withholding very important factual information to this Committee that would help the people of New South Wales, and the Parliament, understand when you were aware that this was not a terrorist event? Why? Why are you not telling us?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: These were very serious matters that were raised, and these briefings were very highly confidential—obviously senior police were there. This is not the first time, in fact, that I have had these types of briefings, particularly in relation to terrorist events. I have not shared that information because it is my obligation not to share that information—

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: Minister, why did you allow—

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: —and I'm not going to share it with you.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: Why did you allow the Parliament on 11 February, up until the last sitting day of the last hearing, be bombarded with legislation on the false basis of terrorist events, this included as being a terrorist event, and that we were forced to have legislation rushed through this Parliament to address this and many other events when you knew this was not a terrorist event or threat?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: Ms Higginson, that legislation you're referring to is the hate speech legislation.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: There are three tranches of laws.

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: That was in relation to hate speech and hateful crimes that were occurring on our streets here in Sydney. That's what that relates to. It does not specifically relate to the caravan event. You cannot, at all, walk away from the fact that this was happening on our streets.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: You cannot walk away from the fact that you drummed up—

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: The Jewish community were experiencing extraordinary fear. I was meeting with the elected representatives from the eastern suburbs. I was meeting with the elected representatives from the eastern suburbs—

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: Minister, do you accept—

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: I was meeting with the elected representatives from the eastern suburbs, where a lot of these, or most of these, attacks were occurring on a weekly basis—all of them, regardless of their political stripes—and I'm telling you, the fear in these people was real. It's all related to hate crime. We've seen Nazi salutes from more than a year ago.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: That's because you went out in no uncertain terms, telling everybody this was a terrorist event. Minister, can you please confirm there are 14 people—

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: I'm sorry, but do you have amnesia? This has been going on for more than this year. In fact, I've got a full list here—

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: Minister, you and the Premier went out to the public and said this was a terrorist event. You and the Prime Minister and the Minister said that this was a terrorist event. At no point did you, before imposing on the Parliament these laws, go to the public and disclose the truth of the matter that this was not a terrorist event. Why did you not do that?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: I will remind you, Ms Higginson, that from July 2023 until January 2025 there have been more than 700 antisemitic events and incidents and arrests in this city.

CORRECTED

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: Minister, is it correct there have been 14 people arrested as part of Strike Force Pearl and not one of them was motivated by ideological, religious or hatred motivation?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: Yes.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: Is that true?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: Yes, that's what we were told.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: Why did you not tell the public that the Dural event was not motivated by ideology, politics or religion?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: Well, that has now been disclosed.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: Why did you not do it at the timely point when you could have helped the State of New South Wales?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: Operational policing matters are for police, and can I say Mr Hudson certainly did that this week.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: He did it earlier.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: Minister, you've told us that you received your first briefing from police about the Dural caravan event on 20 January.

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: Briefing, yes.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: When were you briefed that it was a criminal plan rather than a hate-inspired plan?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: As I've just said to this Committee, I will not be disclosing the detail of the briefings I got, and I won't do that for any briefings that I get at that level.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: Minister, I'm not asking you to disclose the detail. I'm asking to get the timeline. You've told us the detail of the 20th, that you received the briefing on that date.

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: I had one, then, pretty much every day—not exactly every day—right up until now.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: On which day did you get the briefing that said it's not a terror plot and that it's a criminal—

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: Police were, as any good investigation should be, looking at every line of questioning and kept their minds open.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: When were you briefed that it was a criminal plot and not a terror plot?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: I think it's just important to remember that police, as I just said to you, kept their line of—

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: Thank you, Minister. You've told us that.

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: No, no, it's important.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: The question remains on what day were you briefed that police thinking was that this was a criminal plot, not a terror plot?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: The lines of inquiry were constantly open from the very get-go, and that's exactly what we expect from expert investigators.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: Do I understand from that that from the very beginning you understood that it could be a terror plot or it could be a criminal plot?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: As I say, the police had an open mind, and they continued to keep their lines of inquiry open.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: The briefing you received on 20 January was then that the police had an open mind and there were two possibilities?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: I won't be disclosing what my briefing was—any of them.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: That's effectively what you have just told us, Minister.

CORRECTED

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: That is not what I've just told you. Don't put words in my mouth.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: Well, then when were you told that it could be a criminal plot rather than a terror plot?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: I've had those briefings almost daily. They obviously weren't daily towards most recently.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: So was it 21 January that you were told it could be a criminal plot?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: I won't be divulging—as I've said to you, I will not be telling you the details of my—

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: I'm not asking you for the details. I'm asking you for the date.

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: And I'm not telling you them.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: Why not?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: I told you that I had the first one on the 20th.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: Why won't you—

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: My obligation is for the safety of the community. It is for that reason that I do not divulge and do not share highly confidential information that the police provide to me.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: But, Minister—

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: If I did, you'd then be having a go at me.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: Minister, may I continue speaking? Minister, this information is no longer confidential, is it? It's in the public domain. It may have been confidential, but it is no longer confidential, so why won't you share the what is no longer confidential details of the date on which you received the briefing that this could be a criminal event and not a terrorist event?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: Well, I'm not.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: Why not?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: I'm not, because—I've just explained to you.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: So you believe that, as a Minister, you have no responsibility to answer to Parliament through this Committee?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: I believe that my responsibility as the police Minister is to ensure that I do not share confidential briefings that I get from senior police.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: Minister—

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: I will not do it. You can ask me—

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: I am not asking you for confidential details. I'm asking you for details that are no longer confidential.

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: Well, they are—they were confidential briefings, and I'm not sharing—

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: They were? Thank you, Minister. They were.

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: I'm not sharing them with you, like I haven't shared any of my confidential briefings that I've received on these matters.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: Minister, this is no longer confidential, and I find your recalcitrance to actually provide details to this Committee distressing, but let's move on. Commissioner Webb, may I ask you when did New South Wales police first communicate with the Australian Federal Police about this matter?

KAREN WEBB: I will defer to Mr Hudson. I was on leave when I was notified of the caravan incident. I understand that the AFP attended Dural with us. But in terms of other particulars, I will draw on my expert, either now or later.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: Mr Hudson, when did New South Wales police first communicate with the AFP about the Dural caravan?

DAVID HUDSON: On 19 January, and they deployed to the scene.

CORRECTED

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: Was it the New South Wales police who told the AFP or the AFP who told the New South Wales police?

DAVID HUDSON: It was the New South Wales police who contacted the AFP.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: And you did that because?

DAVID HUDSON: Because the caravan, with explosives and the literature found within that caravan, treated at its highest, amounted to acts in preparation for a terrorist event.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: Can you, on notice, provide the documentation about the communication that occurred between New South Wales police and the AFP?

DAVID HUDSON: I didn't make that communication. I would suggest it was probably a phone call in a joint counterterrorism team environment.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: There wouldn't be a file note or dates about that?

DAVID HUDSON: Potentially, but I'm not 100 per cent sure of that.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: On notice, can you undertake to look and provide the details that do exist?

DAVID HUDSON: We can do that.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: Minister, the Premier described this incident as a terrorist threat. Was he briefed on this as a national security risk?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: Let me be clear: Our briefing was in response to the caravan that had been found with a large amount of—

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: Thank you, we're aware of the details. Did you brief the Premier about this as a potential terrorist threat?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: No, we were briefed by senior police.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: On 20 January, I think you said, you and the Premier were briefed together on the same occasion?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: We were briefed separately, and then the next we day we were briefed together.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: And you were briefed by?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: Senior police.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: Senior New South Wales police or AFP?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: To be clear for the Committee, I have never been briefed by the AFP.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: So it has always been the New South Wales police?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: Correct.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: This question is either to Mr Hudson or Commissioner Webb, acknowledging you were on leave, Commissioner. New South Wales police initially refused to call this a terror threat, yet of course the Premier did. Was the Premier briefed that this was definitely a terror threat?

KAREN WEBB: As I said, I was on leave. I can either rely on—

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: Commissioner Hudson, perhaps you can help us.

DAVID HUDSON: I can. Mr Thurtell was the acting commissioner at the time the Minister and the Premier were originally briefed.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: I'm happy to hear from whoever the appropriate person is. Deputy Commissioner Thurtell, if you did the briefing?

PETER THURTELL: Yes, no problem at all. It's not accurate to say that we refused to call it a terrorist matter. It's accurate to say that the matter was in its preliminary stages and a determination was being made.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: What did the police say they thought it was, at that preliminary stage?

CORRECTED

PETER THURTELL: Exactly what it was, which was the discovery of the caravan with the note, with the explosives and the fact that the police were investigating. You've got to bear in mind that that briefing was only, I think, less than 12 hours after it was discovered, so still early stages.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: But at what stage did New South Wales police first indicate that it could be a terror threat publicly?

PETER THURTELL: I wasn't the acting commissioner at the time, so I can't remember exactly.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: It certainly wasn't 20 January, though, was it?

PETER THURTELL: I couldn't be sure, but I don't think so.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: Can anybody help me on the exact date that New South Wales police came out and publicly said, "We believe this to be a terror threat."?

DAVID HUDSON: We didn't make any public comment until 29 January, when there were stories reported in the media.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: On 29 January, was it your view that this was a terror threat, or was it your view that this could well be a criminal enterprise masquerading as a terror threat?

DAVID HUDSON: The investigation at that stage was 10 days old. I think it is correct to say that we had suspicions about whether it was a terrorist threat or not from the very early stages, just by the very nature of the discovery of the caravan. But we needed to treat it at its highest, which is what we've said, and we continued to do that until we could discount some external reporting, which I indicated on Monday, which was fed into the investigation.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: So the briefings that you were providing would have indicated that while this needed to be treated at its highest, you entertained suspicions about the true nature of the Dural caravan?

DAVID HUDSON: We could not discount the external reporting which was being ingested into the investigation and, until that happened, we couldn't categorically say one way or the other.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: Just for clarity, the briefings would have been that you couldn't categorically say it was terror or it was criminal, and both lines were being investigated.

DAVID HUDSON: Treated at its highest, yes.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: Minister, we know, of course, that the public—and Deputy Commissioner Hudson has just confirmed this—only learnt of the incident 10 days after it was discovered. You've indicated that your duty is to keep the public safe. If there was concern in your Government that this was a genuine threat, why wasn't the public immediately warned of this?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: It was on the advice of police. It was their investigation. They determined the public-facing communication.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: So you are not concerned that the public were not put on notice that we were living in a heightened environment of terror when there were caravans of explosives in outer suburban streets?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: I take my advice from the experts. As you quite rightly said, we have one of the most experienced counterterrorism police sitting next to me, in addition to the 140 years of experience at this table. I take my advice from them.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: Going back to the briefing, Deputy Commissioner Hudson, was the Premier ever told specifically that this caravan was a terrorist event?

DAVID HUDSON: The Premier was told that we were treating it as a terrorist event, yes.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: Was he also told that it could be part of a criminal conspiracy?

DAVID HUDSON: The details of that, as I said, were complicated by external reporting that entered the investigation, which we couldn't discredit. Until that was discredited, we treated it as a terrorist incident.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: But you were briefing the Premier before that external reporting, weren't you, Deputy Commissioner?

DAVID HUDSON: Not before the reporting came in, no.

CORRECTED

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: Sorry, I thought I just heard from the Minister that the Minister and the Premier were both briefed on the 20th independently, and then together on the 21st, and now we're talking about the independent reporting that became clear on the 29th. So the Premier would've been briefed before public reporting.

DAVID HUDSON: The independent reporting entered the investigation on the 21st, the same day that we briefed the Premier and the Minister. It became public on the 29th.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: With respect, Minister, to the public learning about that incident, who in government knew about the leak to the Sydney newspaper?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: I don't have that.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: So you've made no attempt to discover the source of that leak, on a matter of major public safety?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: The professional standards will look at any leaks that come out of the New South Wales police.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: Your office was not involved in looking at this? Your office didn't attempt to suppress or control the story before it went public?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: No.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: So you didn't want the public to know, because of your advice, yet when you thought it might leak out in uncontrolled circumstances—

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: Excuse me, I did not think it might leak out. Can you withdraw that, please, because I did not think that at all. I didn't know that anybody knew. It was a very closed—

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: But when it did, you didn't seek to limit the story for the same public safety reasons you've given us before why you won't tell us anything about it?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: As I said, and I will say it again, those conversations were with senior police. My briefings were with senior police. I had no idea that others knew. I did my due diligence by saying nothing.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: When you say that it's subject to a professional standards investigation, does that mean—

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: I didn't say it's "subject". If there were a leak and that's forwarded, it would be that—

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: So that means you believe that any leak would've come from the police rather than from other people who were aware of the information?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: I don't know of any other people that were aware of the information.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: Minister, who in your office knew about the information?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: As I said to you, they were very high-level confidential briefings, and nobody in my office—certainly not me—relayed them.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: Who else in your office knew about that information, Minister?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: My chief of staff.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: The Premier, how many of his senior staff knew about the information?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: I can't speak for the Premier, but I doubt that the Premier was leaking, if that's your assertion.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: I'm not asserting anything. What I am querying is why you are so confident that it was only the police who could've been the source of any—

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: I didn't say that at all.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: I find that surprising as well, Minister. I don't believe that the senior police would've been leaking this story to the media.

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: I would like to think not, too.

CORRECTED

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: I am wanting to know what steps are being taken to look across the board to find out where this leak came from and what attempts were made to control the story once it was in the public domain.

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: I'm not undergoing—sorry?

DAVID HUDSON: I can answer that.

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: Mr Hudson says he can answer that.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: Did any of your senior staff or any of the Premier's senior staff authorise or facilitate the release of information for political purposes?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: No.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: Commissioner Webb, was the NSW Police Force media unit aware of or involved in the leak of this incident to the press?

KAREN WEBB: Not that I'm aware of. Can I just say, though, that part of this investigation is still ongoing. The Kissinger part of this investigation is still ongoing in the joint space with AFP and others. The resolutions on Monday were the Strike Force Pearl arrests. However, there are many possibilities in terms of those that may have motive to have leaked. Police is one, but it could be many others, including those involved in the operation.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: The Premier's office, Minister—could they have been involved in the leak of this material?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: I would doubt that. Look, I cannot believe you're asking these questions.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: Well, Minister, I can't believe that you were suggesting that it may be the police when there were many—

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: I did not suggest that. I said that the professional standards—

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: The implication that it would be sorted out by a professional standards inquiry means that you were thinking that it had to come from the police, and I'm suggesting—

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: Do not put words in my mouth. I did not say that. You'll withdraw it.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: —that there's the Premier's staff, there's your staff—

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: I did not say it. You'll withdraw it.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: Minister, I believe that you said that it would be found out by a professional standards investigation.

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: If there were a leak. If there were, within the police—

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: I'm sorry, Minister, how did the information get into the public domain? You described how closely that information was held. You were briefed; your chief of staff knew. The Premier was briefed, his senior staff were informed and police were involved at a very senior level. That's who knew the information. How else could it have got into the media without a leak from one of those sources?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: It was a joint counterterrorism—

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: If it's not the police, then it's your office or the Premier's office.

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: Let me take you through, chapter and verse. This is a joint counterterrorism event. It was not just the NSW Police Force; there were others involved. You might need to ask them.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: So you're now suggesting it's the AFP that's involved?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: You might need to ask others.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: Minister, was anyone in the Premier's Department—the secretary, deputy secretaries, executive directors—informed about this incident before it was leaked?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: Not that I'm aware of.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: Perhaps, Deputy Commissioner Hudson, would you know if any of those people were informed about it before it was leaked?

DAVID HUDSON: Not to my knowledge.

CORRECTED

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: Perhaps this is to the commissioner as well. Did you ever receive any instructions or advice on how this information should be handled?

KAREN WEBB: In terms of the leak to the media?

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: In terms of public disclosure of the information or the leak to the media—all of it.

KAREN WEBB: Certainly I understand there has been a referral to professional standards in the event that there's a suggestion it could be from the NSW Police Force. But, as I said earlier, it can't be ruled out there's actually players inside the—those with a motive to leak it.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: Sorry, is it your suggestion that people who were trying to construct a false antisemitic terror plot would be leaking that it wasn't an antisemitic terror plot?

KAREN WEBB: We've just got to keep an open mind. I think you've asked the questions—

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: Okay, I just find that a confusing suggestion. Are you able to table all the communications between your office, the Premier's Department and the NSW Police Force regarding the leaks?

KAREN WEBB: I can't table them right now.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: If you could take it on notice?

KAREN WEBB: I will take that on notice.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: That would be great, thank you. Commissioner Webb, when exactly were your deputy commissioners and senior counterterrorism officials briefed about the Dural caravan incident?

KAREN WEBB: It was located on the 19th. Police attended with the AFP on the 19th. Obviously the matter was briefed up internally at that time.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: Were there any delays in sharing critical information within the NSW Police Force about this event?

KAREN WEBB: Not that I'm aware of.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: Minister, given that this was orchestrated by organised crime rather than terrorists, when did you personally become aware that this was a hoax?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: I find the word "hoax" offensive, quite frankly. I think it is offensive to the Jewish community.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: I think we've all acknowledged that it's a—

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: No, I don't agree with you. There was a caravan found with explosives in it. That was incredibly frightening, and that was on the back of a significant number of antisemitic attacks that had happened on the streets in our community, so I find the word "hoax" offensive. As I said to you, my briefings were at a very high level by senior police. I will not be disclosing the information of those briefings.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: Ms Meagher, when did the Premier's Department or senior staff in the Premier's Department become aware of the Dural caravan and the implications?

KATE MEAGHER: I did attend one briefing; I think it was 23 January. Our secretary was on leave, so I attended one just as a support official and because I have a relevant security clearance.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: Would you undertake to provide on notice all the correspondence between the Premier's Department and police about this, the leak and the management of that leak?

KATE MEAGHER: We haven't been asked to undertake any work around a leak.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: No, briefings, contact, any correspondence.

KATE MEAGHER: Sure. I doubt very much, respectfully, that there would be a lot to provide, but I will certainly check with colleagues.

The Hon. ROD ROBERTS: Good morning all, and welcome. I have plenty to cover today, but we'll stay on this line of inquiry at the moment. Mr Hudson, you are the most senior and most experienced officer at this table, and certainly you have control of counterterrorism. At what time did you inform the Premier that this was—and I am going to use the word "hoax", although the Minister takes offence at that; let's even call it a con job. When did you inform Premier Minns?

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DAVID HUDSON: I think early on in the investigation—probably from the outset—we had suspicions about it, but because of the ingestion of information into the investigation by another agency, we had to treat it at its highest. Until we discounted that, we couldn't come out and say that. I think, categorically, I haven't informed the Premier of the exact status of the investigation, but we briefed the Minister last Friday.

The Hon. ROD ROBERTS: On 29 January you made a public statement to the press, and I will quote from it here. First of all, we find out this week that it's a criminal organisation or individual—I don't know and I don't want to know; it is part of the ongoing investigation and I'm not going to interfere with that—who is seeking to perhaps get a reduction in a criminal sentence that they're facing or get some sort of comfort from providing this information. Is that correct?

DAVID HUDSON: We're not exactly sure of that motivation. That's from another agency.

The Hon. ROD ROBERTS: But that's the inkling that we've all got.

DAVID HUDSON: Generally, yes.

The Hon. ROD ROBERTS: So on 29 January—way before this week—you said, "Whether someone was looking for some assistance at court"—which it turns out to be, or—"whether someone was going to disclose the existence of those explosives to us prior to it being recovered". You are the most experienced officer at that table, as I said. There is no way you would have released that information if you thought (a) it was going to compromise the investigation, or (b) you didn't believe it to be true. So on 29 January, as an experienced investigator—you would have formed an opinion way before this, by the way. Everybody knew from the get-go that this thing stunk, that there was a note found and all that sort of stuff—we all know that—but you did treat it at its highest and I respect that. You have to eliminate that possibility. But early on in the piece, everybody thought, "Hang on, this is odd." On 29 January you publicly say that you have your suspicions, so by 29 January we know it is a fair dinkum gee-up, don't we?

DAVID HUDSON: I couldn't prove that, sir.

The Hon. ROD ROBERTS: You said it publicly. You lead counterterrorism. It didn't compromise any investigation—

DAVID HUDSON: I said it was a possibility.

The Hon. ROD ROBERTS: —and you were quite prepared to say that on the record.

DAVID HUDSON: It was a possibility at that stage that it wasn't a terrorist, as per the definition, act. But also, in the context of that media statement, it was trying to allay public concerns in relation to further attacks. We made statements at the same time in relation to trying to allay public fear by saying we didn't think there was any ongoing threat to the community—that was part of that, but also the fact that the explosives were old, there was no detonation devices found with the explosives, the fact that the explosives had been recovered and the fact that we had arrested the individuals who owned that caravan—to try and mitigate the threat and the fear within the community. Those comments were made in the context of that—that there were alternatives to terrorism that were being considered by the investigation.

The Hon. ROD ROBERTS: I put the proposition that it was more than being considered. Anyway, we will move on.

DAVID HUDSON: If you ask me when I had suspicions, sir, I had them on 19 January when I got told about it.

The Hon. ROD ROBERTS: As did quite a few.

DAVID HUDSON: But I couldn't disprove it.

The Hon. ROD ROBERTS: I understand that, and you have to follow these things because let's say it turned out to be fair dinkum; we would be sitting here having a completely different discussion.

DAVID HUDSON: Correct.

The Hon. ROD ROBERTS: But it didn't, did it? Factually, it wasn't fair dinkum at all, and you told the public on the 29th basically:

... whether someone was looking for some assistance at court, whether someone was going to disclose the existence of those explosives to us prior to it being recovered ...

So on 29 January you are prepared to come out and make a statement knowing that it's not going to compromise any investigation, knowing it to be factual because you wouldn't say anything that wasn't factual. So on 29 January, we're pretty much certain at this stage that this whole thing is a gee-up, correct?

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DAVID HUDSON: On 29 January that was still an option, but we couldn't disprove, at that stage, the fact that it was a valid terrorism threat.

The Hon. ROD ROBERTS: When did you determine that it wasn't a valid terrorism threat?

DAVID HUDSON: The information being ingested into the joint management committee was discredited on 21 February.

The Hon. ROD ROBERTS: Minister, when was legislation that passed before this Parliament at 4.00 a.m. two weeks ago first considered at Cabinet in relation to this?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: I will not be discussing anything from Cabinet.

The Hon. ROD ROBERTS: I don't want to know the internal discussions inside Cabinet because that's Cabinet in confidence. What I'm asking for is a timeline. When was this legislation decided on?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: You might need to speak to the Attorney General, because it's his legislation. He has carriage of it.

The Hon. ROD ROBERTS: He had carriage of the legislation. You're in Cabinet though. You're the police Minister.

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: And I won't be divulging anything that came out of Cabinet.

The Hon. ROD ROBERTS: I'm not asking you to hide behind the facade of Cabinet in confidence. I'm not asking that. I'm asking for a timeline of when this was discussed, because, quite clearly, the police know by at least 29 January that this is not fair dinkum, and yet the Parliament is not informed and legislation is passed before us asking us to analyse the information given to us and make a decision in terms of passing laws. Clearly, the Government, including yourself, the Attorney General, the Premier and all of Cabinet, would have known before that legislation was tabled in our Parliament and debated that this thing was a complete gee-up.

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: The legislation relates to hate crimes.

The Hon. ROD ROBERTS: There are no hate crimes, Minister. We haven't seen any hate crimes.

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: I beg your pardon?

The Hon. ROD ROBERTS: What we have seen is organised crime leveraging off the Jewish community for furthering their criminal enterprises.

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: Mr Roberts, I will remind you that there has absolutely been hate crimes on our streets, and I will take you through them.

The Hon. ROD ROBERTS: I have the same list, Minister. Don't bother wasting our time with the list.

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: I'm not wasting your time.

The Hon. ROD ROBERTS: I have it.

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: I'm giving you the facts.

The Hon. ROD ROBERTS: Well, tender it. We don't need to read it out. I don't want you chewing into my time.

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: No—malicious damage on 15 October.

The Hon. ROD ROBERTS: Point of order: I haven't asked for that. I asked a specific question. We're all aware of the incidents; we debated it till 4.00 a.m. the other day. We don't want the Minister wasting the Committee's time by detailing every individual incident as she wants to do.

The Hon. EMILY SUVAAL: To the point of order: The honourable member has specifically made a reference to hate crime in his line of questioning. The Minister is being directly relevant by providing to the Committee important details about instances of hate crime that are not only of interest to this Committee but are also of interest to the people of New South Wales.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: To the point of order: The Minister is proposing to tender a list of things that were at the time believed to be hate crimes. We now know that they were hateful but they were not actually inspired by hate. I think that is exactly the point that my colleague Mr Roberts is trying to make.

The Hon. EMILY SUVAAL: Further to the point of order: The Minister hasn't been able to say anything because she has been interrupted, so I would suggest that it's in the Committee's interests that she be allowed to do so.

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The CHAIR: I think the ruling has to be that the Minister can answer the question anyway she likes, but if she would like to tender that list, we would be happy to accept it.

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: No, I'd like to talk to it, thank you, and that is because—I like the comment made that it's not hate crime. Try telling the Jewish community that. Try going out and telling the Jewish community that it's not hate crime. The fear in that community was resounding, and as a government we responded correctly, and that was by the hate crime speech. You are trying to set up this situation because of the caravan. It had nothing to do with the hate crime legislation. Let's go through them. From 15 October 2024, malicious damage at Lewis' restaurant. They tried to burn down a restaurant; imagine if somebody was in it. Then we had the malicious damage and graffiti in Woollahra on 20 November. We had on 11 December arson and graffiti, cars burnt in the streets. We had Alex Ryvchin's house, and he said, and I will quote—

The Hon. ROD ROBERTS: His former house, Minister. Don't mislead the Committee. It was his former house, not his house.

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: His former house then. He said:

... diminishing of the severity of the anti-Semitism crisis and has empowered dark—

You are trying to diminish the fact that our Jewish community absolutely believed and are experiencing hate on our streets. That is what you are trying to do.

The Hon. ROD ROBERTS: Don't put words in my mouth.

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: All of you are.

The Hon. ROD ROBERTS: The same rules apply.

The CHAIR: Order!

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: The hate legislation is in response to that. I do not walk back from that one iota, because those people who I met with every week, not just the elected representatives and other community leaders but in addition to that other members of the Jewish community, my heart goes out to them. I respect them entirely. If the government of the day can put legislation in place to protect them in their community, then I make no apology for that.

Ms CATE FAEHRMANN: On a different topic, Minister, do you think that the Early Drug Diversion Initiative is doing the job it was intended to do?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: No. We have talked of this before, of course. Unfortunately, no, it is not.

Ms CATE FAEHRMANN: Why is that?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: As police have described to me, we need to make some changes. Police have never opposed this, as you know. This is something that we're happy to work together on. From the Drug Summit, we'll see some changes, but police are certainly supportive of some changes to be made to EDDI.

Ms CATE FAEHRMANN: Since 29 February last year, which is when it came into force, what's the latest data in terms of the number of people charged for drug possession offences, and up until what date is that data?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: Can I come back to that? I will answer it at the end but just so I can give you the correct response.

Ms CATE FAEHRMANN: The reason I'm asking that is to see if it has improved since the data that my office obtained, which I have for up until 31 October last year. That found that of the number of people charged, 9,197 people—so roughly 1,150 people per month in this State are charged with low-level drug possession offences—less than 7 per cent of people are being diverted to treatment. Is there any indication that diversion of treatment has improved since we pointed out how abysmal it was in October?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: Maybe marginally, but I think the reality is it's not achieving what we want it to achieve.

Ms CATE FAEHRMANN: Why is that?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: We have to look at the legislative framework and the requirements for being able to issue the court notice.

Ms CATE FAEHRMANN: What about the whole tricky issue of police discretion? The data that my office obtained also asked for it to be broken down between local area command. For example, why is it, do you

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think, that Auburn local area command had 36 per cent, so roughly one in three, of the 300 people caught with drugs during that time last year diverted to treatment but Bankstown local area command had just 1.8 per cent of the 274 people caught with drugs diverted?

That doesn't sound like it's so much—although the law does need to be changed and amended. But that also sounds like it's an issue with police discretion. Don't you think?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: Police tell me it depends on other circumstances in relation to the person who is caught.

Ms CATE FAEHRMANN: What do you think the difference is between Auburn and Bankstown to account for that?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: I can't make judgement on Auburn and Bankstown. I'm not going to do that. But they do tell me that, for different individuals, it depends on their circumstances and what other offences or what other interactions they have had with the justice system in the past may have been. There are some things we need to look at—I agree with you—and we will.

Ms CATE FAEHRMANN: That's good to hear. Do you think, for example, that the requirement in this law that people who have prior drug convictions can't be diverted to treatment is an issue?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: I think we should speak about these things, yes. I think there are a number of things that we need to talk about.

Ms CATE FAEHRMANN: Speak about them, Minister? You've been to the Drug Summit.

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: Let's wait to see what the Drug Summit says. All of these things were discussed, though, by the way. Were you there?

Ms CATE FAEHRMANN: I was there. We were at the same table. Remember?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: No, I don't remember, sorry.

Ms CATE FAEHRMANN: We were discussing this very issue.

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: I agree with you.

Ms CATE FAEHRMANN: You did say that it was an issue—

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: Yes, it is.

Ms CATE FAEHRMANN: —and the laws needed to change. But the Drug Summit didn't get a lot on the record in terms of what everybody discussed, which was one of its failings. I want to get this on record for you in terms of your opinion, because your opinion as police Minister is going to help drive policy reform in this place—although, for the people around the table, probably not so much. For example, of the 3,725 people over that time up until October who were caught with a personal quantity of meth, just 3.7 per cent were able to be diverted to treatment. For cocaine it was 22.7 per cent. Surely, right now, you can say that if that is an issue—for example, because I've got prior drug offences—that's got to go. Doesn't that data say, given the ice inquiry recommendations—

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: I agree with you that it's not achieving what we want it to achieve. We will look at a suite of measures.

Ms CATE FAEHRMANN: Because this did come from the ice inquiry. That's where the drug—

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: Yes, I know.

Ms CATE FAEHRMANN: Minister, just in terms of EDDI and training, what has happened? I think I asked you questions last time around the fact that police in some local area commands just didn't seem to be across it and didn't know it was even in place. The difference between Auburn and Bankstown suggests that there may be differences in how it's being applied. There can't be that many differences in the people who are caught. What's happening there?

DEAN SMITH: In terms of the training environment, there is the training which is available. However, in terms of the application of the scheme itself, I would have to defer to one of the other deputies in relation to that. But the training environment is in place. The training has been undertaken. I would have to take on notice the numbers who have taken up that training.

Ms CATE FAEHRMANN: That would be good. I'll come back to you in the afternoon about more detail in relation to that. Minister, user-pays policing for music festivals—there was a reform at the end of last

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year that was aimed, in part, to reduce the regulatory burden for music festival organisers to save music festivals in some ways. There's an appeal mechanism now for music festival organisers who are charged certain fees. They are able to appeal. I understand NSW Health, from questions I asked yesterday, has received one appeal. However, I was told that appeals within New South Wales police potentially go to local area commands. What has happened with that appeal mechanism? Have any festivals at all appealed their charges?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: It's Health led now. The application and the safety—

Ms CATE FAEHRMANN: There's an agreed health and medical plan. In the legislation, which I tried to amend, in fact—

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: That's who they appeal to.

Ms CATE FAEHRMANN: —there is the ability for police to continue to impose conditions, including exorbitant fees, which are killing music festivals in New South Wales. That is still in this law. Is that appeals process established, firstly?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: Yes.

Ms CATE FAEHRMANN: Have any music festivals appealed, over the summer, since that legislation was reformed?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: Pete will know if there are any.

PETER THURTELL: Since the change of our policy in relation to user pays, which you have correctly pointed out, it does allow for appeals at a local level. However, I'd just need to point out that that's a formalisation of existing practices that have been around for many years; it has just been put into our documents. There have been 10 reviews of user pays across the State. Eight of those were successful. Four of those eight were for music festivals. Two of the four were successful. However, one of those was because of a reduction in the anticipated crowd numbers, so therefore less police were required.

Ms CATE FAEHRMANN: That's very useful. Thank you. Would you be able to table, on notice, the details of that in terms of which festivals they were?

PETER THURTELL: I've just got it written on a scrap piece of paper, but eventually I can, yes.

Ms CATE FAEHRMANN: More formally would be great. I have heard in terms of naloxone that in Corrections—and I know this isn't Corrections, so I'll get there. Apparently in terms of dogs in Corrections, officers are able to carry naloxone to administer to the dogs working in Corrections if they inadvertently ingest a drug. Are New South Wales police officers able to carry naloxone and administer that naloxone to humans, or is it just to drug detection dogs? Is there a policy on that?

KAREN WEBB: That has been raised with us before. We've conducted a risk assessment. We're not medical experts, and we don't know what drug a person might be affected by, in terms of which antidote to give. Certainly we'll call an ambulance et cetera, and we've certainly done a formal risk assessment around that. Our reach is getting broader and broader, and I defend our position in terms of not having to be paramedics as well.

Ms CATE FAEHRMANN: But you can give it to dogs. Is that right? That's the question.

KAREN WEBB: I'm not sure that we have that policy in New South Wales police.

PETER THURTELL: That's the first I've heard of that.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: Minister, thank you for the impassioned statement you made about your concern about the real threat being experienced by the Jewish community—a feeling we all share. Can you tell us what your response was to the grief that the Jewish community was feeling on 9 October 2023 when they were invited by the Premier to mourn collectively on the steps of the Opera House?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: I attended the vigil on—I don't know the date—the Wednesday after that. I can't recall the date, sorry.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: The one at the Opera House?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: No, on the Wednesday.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: I'm asking you about your advice to the Jewish community on the 9 October gathering to share their grief together at the events that had happened in Israel on 7 October—the largest loss of Jewish life since the Holocaust. What was your advice to the grieving Jewish community on 9 October?

CORRECTED

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: I didn't provide advice, but I did seek and listen to advice given to me by Mr Hudson.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: And that advice was that they were welcome to come and grieve together at the Opera House? Was that the advice, Minister?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: I can refer you to—

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: What, you can't remember something as significant as the events of 9 October?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: I'll refer you to the last estimates. I've got it here.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: Were you too working late and so unaware of what happened on 9 October, Minister? I think everybody in New South Wales remembers what happened on 9 October. What was the advice given to the grieving Jewish community, for whom you care, on that night?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: I didn't provide advice.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: What advice was given by—

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: The advice that was given to me was what I took from Acting Commissioner Hudson at the time, which—

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: As the Minister responsible, as the leader, you are happy that—

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: As I said, I took the advice of the experts.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: And as the Minister you were happy to think that grieving Jewish people were turned away from the Opera House where they had been invited to mourn collectively?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: I was disappointed that the Jewish community didn't have the opportunity to mourn. However, on the Wednesday evening, I did attend their vigil. I did—

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: Did you do anything to ensure that there was policing so that they could mourn the way in which they had been invited to do?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: I took the advice of the expert police.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: We have acknowledged the enormous fear that the Jewish community are feeling at the moment, that they're being targeted by people, arising out of hate simply for the fact that they are Jewish members of our society. When you first became aware that the Dural caravan was perhaps not just a terror attack, for how long did you prolong that fear in the Jewish community by not disclosing that, while it may be hateful and appalling in its impact, rather than inspired by hate, it was a venal and cynical criminal enterprise? For how long did you prolong the fear in our Jewish community that they were targets of hate?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: My fear for the Jewish community has been long felt and, sadly, that fear has been realised on the streets in the most vile ways. I won't take you through the list again, since you don't seem to want to hear it. But we have seen, as I say, firebombs, buildings burnt down, all of those—

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: Minister, the question goes to—

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: I'm answering it.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: No, Minister, with respect, you're not answering the question.

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: I am answering it.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: I wonder whether you actually understood the question I was asking, Minister.

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: I still, today, feel for our Jewish community. I do that because we've had, from the Jewish Board of Deputies, David Ossip, say, "In fact, this plot could only succeed by exploiting already strained social cohesion and unprecedented levels of antisemitism in Sydney." The community is still feeling that.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: Thank you, we're all aware of—

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: So I continue to feel that, sadly. I'd like to get to a point where we don't feel that, where social cohesion is prominent in our community.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: We are all in furious agreement on that point, Minister.

CORRECTED

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: However, that is still the case.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: Can I take you to another issue. Were there any instructions, advice or requests from the Premier's Department about how the matter should be handled publicly?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: No.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: Commissioner Webb, what direct involvement did the secretary or deputy secretaries of the Premier's Department have in liaising with New South Wales police about this incident?

KAREN WEBB: None that I can recall.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: Were there any instructions, requests or advice from the Premier's Department about how the matter should be handled publicly?

KAREN WEBB: No.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: Were there any senior bureaucrats from the Premier's Department engaging with the police about public disclosures of information?

KAREN WEBB: Later on, and on occasion, the Secretary of the Premier's Department were in briefings, but that was just the nature of the briefings, not for advice or anything else.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: Can you take on notice—releasing emails or correspondence between New South Wales police and Premier's Department about this issue?

KAREN WEBB: I'll take that on notice.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: Minister Catley, was it the Premier's Department, the New South Wales police or your office that ultimately made the call on when and how the public was to be informed?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: I took my advice from the police on public-facing information.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: So it was the New South Wales police who decided when and how the public were to be informed?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: Well, yes, but through the joint counterterrorism team.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: Who made the decision?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: The police; that team. The team, actually. Would that be correct to say, the team?

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: The New South Wales police or the AFP?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: Would it be true to say the team?

DAVID HUDSON: Bearing in mind the announcements on Monday, the arrests were made exclusively by New South Wales police under Strike Force Pearl. Additionally, apart from those enforcement activities, Kissinger, for the caravan job, did do a number of search warrants. No arrests have resulted out of those. But we decided, rather than to just announce the Pearl arrests, that we would do it in conjunction with the Australian Federal Police for the activity to, in essence, give some comfort to the community that there was no ongoing threat to it.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: Deputy Commissioner Hudson, you said in response to a question from the Hon. Rod Roberts in relation to when—it was confirmation it wasn't a valid terrorism threat. I think it was words to the effect, "The information being ingested into the joint management committee was discredited on 21 February." What was the information that had been ingested?

DAVID HUDSON: That matter, as no-one has been arrested for that, is still confidential. I'd prefer not to say, because the people responsible for that are still under investigation. That hasn't been resolved as yet.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: Commissioner Webb, has the Premier's Department, or any of its secretaries, been involved in selecting, approving or influencing the appointment of media advisers or communications staff for New South Wales police, including for yourself?

KAREN WEBB: No.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: Did the Premier's Department or senior officials suggest or influence who should be the lead media spokesperson for you or New South Wales police?

KAREN WEBB: No.

CORRECTED

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: Minister, has the Premier's Department, secretary or any deputy secretaries suggested, recommended or vetoed appointments for senior New South Wales police roles or Commissioner Webb's staffing decisions?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: Not that I'm aware of.

The Hon. SCOTT BARRETT: Minister, police numbers in regional areas are down below 70 per cent of authorised strength and, in some parts, down into the 60s, I believe. Is this one of the reasons people don't feel safe in our regional communities?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: Regional crime is obviously a very significant issue, and I take it very seriously. It's true to say the more police we have, the more arrests that will be made. However, that being said, police are doing a great job. Your colleagues, certainly, in my place, definitely support that view, and I'm sure you do too. They are making significant numbers of arrests right around the regional areas in New South Wales. As has been said before, I have really put a focus on trying to recruit more police. It's important that we remember that we are in a climate of almost full employment, so we are competing with every other sector and every other industry across the country, and you have to make it attractive. You've got to incentivise it, if you like. That's the way I look at it, anyway, to try to get more boots on the ground. I think that we are some way in doing that.

Paying the recruits has certainly been an incentive. Be a Cop in Your Home Town—I'm not sure where you're from, but I was in Wagga for the beginning of that, which was being rolled out across regional New South Wales. There were a hundred kids they had at what the police had put on, and it was really well received. When I went to Albury the following week, they had actually had people sign up at the event, which is another really positive thing. In addition to that, we've got our mobility program and so on. I think that we all want the full complement of police. That's not going to happen overnight, though, and I'm not going to suggest that it is.

The Hon. SCOTT BARRETT: How many areas would be down in the 60s as far as their strength—60 per cent of authorised strength?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: I don't have the actual commands, if you like. But it's no secret we are short on police. The more we have, the better off we'll be. I agree.

The Hon. SCOTT BARRETT: To help us for this afternoon—and I've got a list of things that possibly go to you, Deputy Commissioner Smith. The numbers for the authorised strength, the current strength and the number of people who are on leave, and those stats for each command over the last five years—would we be able to have a look at that this afternoon? Are they stats that you can pull together on notice for this afternoon?

DEAN SMITH: We'll have a look at that. Probably the higher level stats we can talk to. The individual commands in terms of vacancies and operational capacity for—are you talking about every command across the State?

The Hon. SCOTT BARRETT: Yes, please.

DEAN SMITH: Okay.

The Hon. SCOTT BARRETT: Thank you, I appreciate that a lot. Minister, were you pleased to hear the reneging of the commitment to remove 9½ thousand poker machines out of pubs and clubs in New South Wales?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: The reneging?

The Hon. SCOTT BARRETT: Before the election the Treasurer said they were going to remove 9½ thousand pokies out of pubs and clubs; apparently, that's no longer the goal.

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: I think it's important to note that there has been a number of measures put in place and legislative changes in relation to harm minimisation for gambling. In fact, this Government has done more for that than your Government did in the 12 years that they were in government. There have been a number of measures put in place for that.

The Hon. SCOTT BARRETT: Just to help, can we go specifically to the money laundering side of it?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: The election commitment was for the first term of government. As I understand, the committee that was set up has actually given guidance on that. That has a broad range of members of the community, government officials, bureaucrats et cetera on that. They are determining what steps the Minister is making in relation to that. Again, I listen to the experts. If that's what the experts have suggested, then I would think we all should listen to them.

CORRECTED

The Hon. SCOTT BARRETT: Specifically, what measures have been put in place to reduce money laundering, which was part of the initial impetus for getting this work done?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: There's face recognition, for instance.

The Hon. SCOTT BARRETT: Sorry, I'll follow that up. What impact have they had on money laundering?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: I'm not privy to the data coming out of that. Perhaps there isn't any, at this point in time, because it has been a short period of time that these have been implemented. There is certainly the face recognition that has come out. They've put in the limits on how much you can put into machines. There's a whole suite of measures that specifically address the concerns that people had. As I say, it's the committee that was set up that is guiding this. If the committee has provided this advice, then I would think that is something we should listen to.

The Hon. SCOTT BARRETT: The number of RBTs has been declining. Are you able to explain why that is?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: Just so you know, "random testing" is how we now refer to it in the New South Wales police, and that is because of the number of drug tests that are coming up. Correct me if I'm wrong, Commissioner, but one in 10 people—

KAREN WEBB: Positive drug.

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: —are positive drug. One in 200—

KAREN WEBB: Three hundred.

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: One in 300 are alcohol related.

The Hon. SCOTT BARRETT: Can we go to the numbers of tests that are happening? The question is why are they decreasing. Are our roads safer as a result of this decrease in testing?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: They haven't decreased; they've actually increased. I'll give you the numbers.

The Hon. SCOTT BARRETT: I've got the numbers, Minister, and I can see that they're decreasing.

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: Are you calculating the drug testing as well? That's happening at the same time.

The Hon. SCOTT BARRETT: I'm going off information that was provided by you to a question on notice.

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: You might not have asked about drug testing. They both happen simultaneously. As I say, we now say "random testing", which is a term we all should adopt because the presence of drugs is way more prevalent than the presence of alcohol.

The Hon. SCOTT BARRETT: So the numbers you provided, you would've broken them down just as random breath testing?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: I don't know what the question was. We would've responded directly to your question. The point that I make to you is that the combination of those two is actually more.

The Hon. SCOTT BARRETT: Are you happy with the results of the People Matter Employee Survey?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: These surveys are very broad reaching. On the whole, the police have done okay.

The Hon. SCOTT BARRETT: Surely things like only 39 per cent of respondents recommend the NSW Police Force as a great place to work have to be challenging in this big recruitment drive.

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: I don't know. In context, I think you need to look at it overall from the public service. They're an important thing to do, because people need the opportunity to respond, first and foremost. I was a public servant for 16 years and we didn't have the opportunity. I think it's important. They are a way for departments to better themselves. If we can better ourselves next time from 39 per cent, then I hope we do.

The Hon. SCOTT BARRETT: There's some good stuff in there. "I am confident in my ability to overcome setbacks" is at nearly 80 per cent, which is great work from the individual police themselves. "I feel mentally exhausted from most days at work" is 45 per cent. "I am struggling to maintain enthusiasm" is 39 per cent. The other concerning one in the midst of recruitment is "I am proud to tell others I work for my

CORRECTED

organisation", at only 54 per cent. Just over half of the Police Force are proud to tell others that they're police officers.

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: It does disappoint me. When I'm out and about—and, let me tell you, I do get out a lot to speak to police—I haven't seen a prouder workforce. As a government, we're incredibly proud of them. They do extraordinary work under very difficult circumstances. The Government has certainly recognised that, and that is why they have received the largest pay rise that they have ever seen. That is why we have set up the health and wellbeing unit, to ensure that we wrap those services around them, with allied professionals in that unit directly assisting police if they ask for it. That is why we have psychologists in PACs, so that they can speak to people about their experience. It's a bloody tough job. You don't know what you're going to experience as a cop every day you turn up for work. They see horrific things. The acknowledgement and the effort that's put into assisting them and to giving them the opportunity to talk about their horrific experiences is a good thing. I hope that therefore shows some positive results.

The Hon. SCOTT BARRETT: How many people have been charged under the "post and boast" laws that were introduced in April last year?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: I will get that for you.

The Hon. SCOTT BARRETT: Charged and convicted—are you able to provide that?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: I will get that for you today. I do have that, but I don't have it in front of me.

The Hon. SCOTT BARRETT: Do we have any evidence that this is having an impact at all?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: Yes, I think that is true. The changes that we made to legislation were in response to the spikes that we're seeing, particularly in regional areas—but it's not just regional; we're seeing it here in metropolitan—of young people breaking into a house, getting the keys, knocking off a car and then driving at ridiculous speeds and posting that on social media. I think it was necessary, and it's important that we put those measures in place. It was only a couple of weeks ago that we saw the death of one young man in an accident. We've seen a number of incidents now in regional areas. There was the death of an individual who was just a civilian out on the street on a motorbike. That was shocking. We saw the death of the young man out at Bourke, which was awful as well. We've seen another death at Casino—

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: Minister, I have a quick question about that, if I may.

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: Can I just finish, if you wouldn't mind? We've seen significant injuries to other people in those vehicles. The reality is that we don't want these kids out jeopardising their own wellbeing, including others. Quite frankly, the emergency services and frontline services that are out there—it's not just police but ambo and any emergency service or frontline worker—are risking their lives as well. Of course we want it to stop. We're putting those measures in place. It's probably a bit early for us to determine whether or not—your question was have they worked. We'll have to wait to see.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: Minister, going back to the caravan event, around that time, did any of the police and senior police officers request of you that they need additional police powers or laws to deal with any of the events?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: Just remembering that this was with the counterterrorism team, they have very broad-reaching laws. No, it wasn't suggested to me that they need more.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: This is particularly for Deputy Commissioner Hudson. You said that early on you couldn't exclude the possibility of terrorism, but your concern was that it was a hoax or connected with other crime motivations. To be perfectly clear, when did you first tell the Premier that?

DAVID HUDSON: I think, at the initial briefing, options about what was behind it were explored. The Premier and the Minister were informed that we would be investigating the incident at its highest as a terrorism matter until we could exclude it.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: And that was on the 19th of the first?

DAVID HUDSON: No, that would've been on the 21st.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: At what point did you confirm to the Minister and the Premier that you were feeling confident that it was more the hoax and the criminal organisation motivation?

DAVID HUDSON: As I said earlier, I haven't spoken directly to the Premier. That information was relayed to the Minister last Friday when we announced the operational activity we were taking on Monday.

The CHAIR: Any Government questions?

CORRECTED

The Hon. EMILY SUVAAL: We have no questions, Chair.

The Hon. GREG DONNELLY: I'm banking my questions.

The CHAIR: You've got a very big bank. We will now take a break and return at quarter past 11.

(Short adjournment)

The CHAIR: We might go back on the air and get started again.

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: Mr, Chair, I do have a few things to clear up—some questions that have been asked that I said I would provide the details for. Are you happy for me to do that now?

The CHAIR: Yes.

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: Ms Fachrmann's not here, but in relation to EDDI, she asked for the data and the discrepancies between Auburn and Bankstown. I'm advised that Auburn has the stadium where CINs—there are many music festivals and other events that attract large numbers of people. I'm also advised that, as of 21 January 2025, New South Wales police data shows that there were 996 CINs issued for low-level drug offending since 29 February 2024. Mr Barrett asked how many people have been charged with the "post and boast" laws. I'm advised that, since the legislation came into effect on 3 April 2024, 43 individuals have been issued a court attendance notice under those laws—the "post and boast" offences.

Also, you asked about the total number of RBTs and RDTs across New South Wales. I'm advised that the numbers are not going down. The total number of random testings are going up. In 2024 New South Wales police conducted over 3.4 million random breath tests. When averaged out, that represents over 9½ thousand tests each day across New South Wales. In 2024 New South Wales police conducted over 230,000 roadside drug tests. The presence of drugs in drivers remains a key evolving risk associated with road trauma. In total, that makes 3.63 million tests annually.

The CHAIR: Thank you, Minister. The New South Wales Government claims that pill testing trial at Yours and Owls was a success, but when you peel back the layers it reveals a number of problems and a frankly hypocritical approach to drug policy. It appears that the rules were bent, laws were selectively enforced, and public resources were spent on an experiment that doesn't necessarily reflect the reality of drug use in New South Wales. Minister, do you personally support the pill testing regime in New South Wales?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: It is a government-led initiative. What I will say, though, is that it's under the purview of Health, and Health are actually—

The CHAIR: Sorry, I can't quite hear you. You can actually pull it a little closer.

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: Sorry. It is a Health initiative and it is Health that are leading, or led—we've one had one trial at this point in time, as you know, at Yours and Owls. What I will say is that police are working closely with Health. However, police still policed the event as they would any festival. I'd say drugs are still illegal in this State and the police policed in accordance with that.

The CHAIR: Thank you. In relation to this trial, were police instructed not to search or arrest individuals for drug-related offences once inside the venue or in the proximity of the pill testing area?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: Police and Health had conversations in relation to this. Inside the pill testing area—I might get Mr Thurtell to add some more information to that. My understanding is they weren't inside the pill testing area, but police still policed the event as they would any event, and as they have done in the past. Mr Thurtell, did you want to add anything to that?

PETER THURTELL: Thanks, Minister. If we take the fact that there's an exterior perimeter area, and an interior which is the actual music festival area, our drug dog operations are always, and have always been, conducted on the outside of the area. User-pays police are often on the inside, but they don't conduct the drug dog testing operations. So, no, they weren't instructed not to go inside the area with the drug dogs, but that's not our practice anyway.

The CHAIR: Thank you. Were there any safe zones within the festival boundaries where officers were told to turn a blind eye to drug possession and avoid undermining the trial?

PETER THURTELL: No. Our officers were told that there are no no-go zones within the festival from a law enforcement perspective. However, they were instructed not to go inside the inner perimeter of the festival with the drug operations, which is, as I said before, not our practice.

CORRECTED

The CHAIR: Did these decisions come from the New South Wales police or the Minister for Health or event organisers?

PETER THURTELL: My understanding is that the operation commander for the operation gave that briefing to our officers—So, in short, New South Wales police.

The CHAIR: Was there a formal agreement between the police and testing providers?

PETER THURTELL: My understanding is that NSW Health and New South Wales police consulted prior to this and during the evening actually in relation to the policing operations. It was well understood that police weren't going to go anywhere near the vicinity of the drug-checking area or the health tent, which were very close to each other, I'm told.

The CHAIR: The festival featured, obviously—sniffer dogs were there, as you said, at the entrance, yet only 80 samples tested amongst 30,000 attendees. Was this low number the result of a deterrent from the police being outside, in your view?

PETER THURTELL: I would suggest no. If that was a deterrent, we didn't pick up the 80. Also, it's our job to—the drug dog operation is there to detect the supply of drugs.

The CHAIR: If there were 80 tested—and that seems to be around the number—why didn't the dogs pick them up on entry?

PETER THURTELL: I can't give you that information. However, our operations, as far as I am aware, at that particular festival, weren't a static gauntlet-type operation. As far as I'm aware, there were drug dogs operating in the outer perimeter area, but people weren't funnelled through a drug dog operation. That's my understanding.

The CHAIR: They weren't. But I thought drug dogs operate randomly around the people that are queued to go in.

PETER THURTELL: As a general rule, say, for example, at the Sydney Olympic Park operation, I suppose it wouldn't be unfair to describe it as a funnel where the people are funnelled through the dogs. But the dogs can't get to everybody all at once. We don't just send people through one at a time. There's any number of ways in which drugs can get into the festival, and clearly do.

The CHAIR: Minister, could it be characterised as those that were participating in this program were, somehow or other, given some sort of legal immunity?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: As I've already said, Mr Borsak, police policed as they would. As has been described by Mr Thurtell, Health worked with Police in relation to the pill testing vicinity and the health area. Police didn't police in there, but I don't believe that they would do that in any case—obviously, in terms of the pill testing, that's new. I don't think that that is a correct assertion that they have received immunity. I think that it was a trial.

The CHAIR: You're saying there wasn't a de facto amnesty?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: I don't believe that to be the case. It was the case that it was a trial and it was the first one that we've tried. Health will provide us with data on that, but I do believe that police were still policing as they would.

The CHAIR: If that's the case, why wasn't this legal inconsistency made transparent to the public before the event?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: The legal inconsistency? Sorry, what do you mean by that?

The CHAIR: Effectively, you're saying they weren't granted de facto amnesty but, then again, when they went in and had the drugs tested and came out with drugs, nothing happened.

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: If they were then subsequently caught with drugs—and correct me if I'm wrong, Mr Thurtell—then the same laws would have applied to them.

The CHAIR: Commissioner Thurtell, are we saying there was no enforcement going on inside the place?

PETER THURTELL: No. It's not our normal practice to have drug dog operations in the inner perimeter of music festivals. We have user-pays police in there for the safety of the crowd, for various reasons, but not drug detection operations. However, having said that, if an officer witnesses the supply of prohibited drugs, then they're well able to exercise their legal powers to arrest people and seize the drugs.

CORRECTED

The CHAIR: Is it just supply or also usage of drugs?

PETER THURTELL: Either—possession, usage, supply.

The CHAIR: Minister, how can the Government defend allowing people to run the gauntlet of police dogs, to get inside and then receive an endorsed service that tests for illegal drugs?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: This is a Government decision that has been made. From the police perspective, we have worked with the department of health to enable the testing of drugs to occur. I haven't got the results myself personally from Health, so I'm yet to see what occurred at the festival, but we will continue to work with Health, as we have been instructed to, in relation to Government policy.

The CHAIR: If this model is considered successful—and I don't know that I've heard any feedback on that yet—will we see more festivals with designated drug-tolerance zones?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: Yes, we will. I don't have the list of those festivals that the trial will continue being rolled out at. It's not determined at this point in time, but yes is the answer.

The CHAIR: Minister, is it acceptable that someone caught with the same substance outside the venue could face criminal charges while someone inside the pill testing tent is protected?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: It is a trial. This is exactly the purpose of the trial: to determine whether people's drugs have other substances in them. I can't provide you with the results of that, because I don't have them, but I'm sure that Health would be able to, if you were to ask them.

The CHAIR: Has the Government considered the legal and ethical implications of selectively applying the law in this way?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: It's a trial—again, I go to that point—of just determining if there are other lethal substances in the pills that people are taking. But, again, I'll say what I said from the very outset: Drugs are still illegal in this State and police will police that way. That was a trial that occurred and there will be others, but if you have drugs, or if you're supplying drugs, possession of drugs, ingesting drugs, then police will still police and use the laws that they have at hand.

The CHAIR: So if a sniffer dog picks someone up coming into the trial and they said, "But I'm going to go and get it tested", would that exempt them from the law?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: My understanding is there were arrests at that—is that correct? I'm pretty sure that's right, Mr Thurtell. There were arrests made outside. The laws of the day applied.

The CHAIR: So you're saying that "I'm going in to get my pills tested" is not an excuse?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: That's not my understanding, but Mr Thurtell might be able to add some—

The CHAIR: Is that the case, Deputy Commissioner?

PETER THURTELL: No. If an offence has been detected, it's been detected. There's no outs, other than through the courts.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: I think it's all about saving lives, isn't it? Isn't that the nature of the test?

The CHAIR: We don't need the commentary, thank you very much. If you want to ask a question, go ahead.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: I was just asking. I think that's the nature of the trial, isn't it, Minister?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: We should let the trial continue to occur and then we should use the evidence.

The CHAIR: It's about regularising drug taking.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: Minister, I just want to put to you at this point that you have sat here and listened to the most experienced officer in the State, and the head of counterterrorism, give extensive evidence of when and what you and the Premier were briefed about in relation to the Dural event, including that from the beginning you were briefed that while terrorism couldn't be ruled out, a hoax was suspected. Yet, you have sat here today, hidden by assertions of confidentiality and refused to even discuss those briefings. Have you now changed your position, in light of the evidence provided here today by Deputy Commissioner Hudson?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: No.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: Are you seeking to avoid accountability here?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: No.

CORRECTED

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: That's certainly what it looks like.

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: I was provided with very high-level confidential information and as my role as police Minister I will not be sharing that. I haven't shared that. I haven't shared it in the past with other briefings that I've had of a very similar nature, and I don't intend to ever share that information. What I did go on to say is that the police remain very open minded throughout the—and the investigation is still underway, let's also just put that on the table, as the deputy commissioner has advised us. Their lines of inquiry were always very thorough for this investigation, and they remained open minded.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: Minister, the offences that took place in Newtown, and the attempt to set fire to the Newtown Synagogue in Sydney on 11 January 2025—is it your understanding at this point that there was any antisemitic intention behind those actual offences?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: I would ask Mr Hudson to further describe that. What I do know is that those people have been arrested.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: They have.

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: And thank goodness they have. The police have done a great job here, so I'm very thankful for what they have done.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: But is it your understanding that they are actually being alleged around an antisemitic intention of their offending?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: I can only lean on what Mr Hudson has already described to us and that is not the case.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: You're saying it was not driven by ideology, political motivation—

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: That's certainly—

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: Is that your confirmation, Deputy Commissioner Hudson?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: —the advice that Mr Hudson has given, or the public announcement Mr Hudson made.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: Is that correct?

DAVID HUDSON: In relation to specifically the Newtown Synagogue?

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: Absolutely.

DAVID HUDSON: No, that was a job that was tasked by others to be committed. The actual ideology behind the person that tasked them is still under investigation, if there is one.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: Those people that have been arrested—specifically their intention was not anything related to an antisemitic motivation?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: It might be worth noting—and I don't mean to interrupt—that these matters are before the court. We need to be very careful.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: There's a lot of commentary already out there and matters before the court are often discussed. There's nothing that would jeopardise, at this point—

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: You're asking Mr Hudson, though, to determine what the motive was.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: No, I'm asking what Mr Hudson will be alleging is the intention. Those matters, now the arrests have been made, I'm sure have already been prepared and settled. Is there anything you would like to say about that, Deputy Commissioner Hudson?

The Hon. EMILY SUVAAL: Point of order: The Minister has quite clearly and very soundly put on the record concerns around breaching the sub judice convention. I would just ask you to remind all members of their obligations, particularly when asking questions here at budget estimates and under parliamentary privilege, to be mindful of that. As the Minister has said, with these matters before the courts I think it would be in everyone's interest to perhaps move on.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: To the point of order: All the Minister actually did was reminded us. We take that reminder, and the deputy commissioner is about to answer a question. He's more experienced than anyone else in this room.

CORRECTED

The CHAIR: I uphold the point of order, because he actually hasn't answered anything yet, but I'm sure he'll know the guidelines around all of that. I think we're all on the same page.

DAVID HUDSON: Could you repeat the question, please?

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: I can certainly try. Deputy Commissioner Hudson, what can you comfortably tell the inquiry and the hearing today in relation to the motivations specifically of the people who have been arrested in relation to the attempt to set fire to the Newtown Synagogue in Sydney on 11 January 2025?

DAVID HUDSON: The fact sheets, I think, already presented to the court would indicate that particular incident was tasked by others. The individuals we have charged—we don't have evidence of any specific ideology behind it.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: Minister, is it possible for you to please provide to the Committee the full breakdown of charges laid against the 14 individuals arrested under Strike Force Pearl? I'm happy for you to just provide that, if you're able to do so.

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: Yes, there are 29 all up.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: Sorry, I apologise, there is now. I've got numbers all over the place. There are 29 now. Is that possible for you to provide to the Committee, or take on notice?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: I'd like to check with Mr Hudson. It depends on what details you want, Mr Hudson has advised. We'll provide what we can. How about that?

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: All I'm looking for is the full breakdown of the charges laid. Minister, given the NSW Police Force itself has now ruled out antisemitic ideology as a motivating factor in the Strike Force Pearl arrests, does the Government acknowledge that it misrepresented these incidences as antisemitic to justify the rushed legislative changes your Government has done?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: Antisemitic attacks have occurred on our streets.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: The question was quite specific. It was in relation to using these events—

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: You said Pearl, and I'm just about to take you through Pearl. There are a number of arrests that have been made under Operation Pearl that have absolutely been antisemitic attacks on the people in east Sydney. That is exactly what has occurred. So it's incorrect for you to say—you may be referring to Kissinger, I think, which is a different operation. But, certainly under Pearl, as has been said, there have been 29 people arrested and charged with 143 charges under Strike Force Pearl. Yes, many of those actually have been antisemitic attacks on our community.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: Do you need, though, the new laws that you've rushed through Parliament in order to address any of the matters that are currently under prosecution?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: The hate speech and hate laws that came in are in relation to the ongoing threats to the Jewish community. They have also included around places of worship. So, yes, I believe that they are founded, and I believe that they are in direct response to what we were seen going on at the time, which has been a summer of hateful behaviour on our streets, and our changes to the legislation were in direct response to that.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: Minister, did you order or request that Commissioner Webb take leave over the same period that you were taking leave in January?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: No, I didn't. Can I also say that we didn't take the same leave over the period in January.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: In the event of both the Minister and the commissioner taking leave at the same time, would that present any operational difficulties? Is that something you would normally avoid?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: It's not something I asked, first and foremost. The commissioner is entitled to take leave when she chooses to.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: Of course. That wasn't the question.

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: She has not taken leave for—I can't recall, but I think it was the November 2023 or something. I, too, would like to take some leave at some point.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: Yes, wouldn't we all.

CORRECTED

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: But, nonetheless, the assertion that I instructed the commissioner to take leave is absurd.

The Hon. SCOTT BARRETT: Can I just come to Deputy Commissioner Smith. I know that I did ask you to take some more detailed stuff on notice. Do you have the authorised strength of the police?

DEAN SMITH: Our authorised strength is 18,374 positions in New South Wales police and 4,327 unsworn positions.

The Hon. SCOTT BARRETT: What is the current strength?

DEAN SMITH: It is a point in time, so we generally run that monthly. As of 31 January, it was 16,028 authorised positions there for sworn officers, and for unsworn it was 4,415. I know that number is above, but that incorporates temporary contractor employees and other types of people that we might bring on to undertake contract work or consultant work or programs of work or part-time officers and the like.

The Hon. SCOTT BARRETT: Do you have at your fingertips the number of people that are on leave—say, greater than a month's sick leave—and other forms of leave?

DEAN SMITH: Not specifically below what we classified as long-term sick leave. There are various forms of leave, whether that be parental leave, short-term sick leave and long-term sick leave. The long-term sick leave is currently—and that classification we use is an officer not available 75 per cent of the time over a 60-day period. That sits at just over 1,500 officers.

The Hon. SCOTT BARRETT: Thank you. I do apologise, Minister. I probably should have directed that through you, and I apologise for that breach of protocol.

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: You're forgiven.

The Hon. SCOTT BARRETT: Minister, are you aware of police resources being taken up by prisoner transfers?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: Yes.

The Hon. SCOTT BARRETT: Can you give me an example?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: Yes. This has been raised with me over the period, actually, that I've been the police Minister, particularly in regional areas. A lot of that is to do with distance. It's certainly the case in metropolitan as well, of lengths of time of police officers transferring people to prisons and having to wait long periods of time. But the police commissioner has been very proactive in that and has spoken, as I understand, to the then acting commissioner for corrections. Obviously now the new commissioner, I think, started on Monday—I think that's right, or last Monday; I'm not sure but recently—and I know that the commissioner will certainly be following that up with the new commissioner. Is that right?

KAREN WEBB: That's right.

The Hon. SCOTT BARRETT: We might come back to the commissioner this afternoon. We're talking hours away, days away from the police stations to manage this. What impact would this have on the towns, particularly our smaller regional towns, where there might only be one or two police in that community?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: It puts a strain on them. There's no doubt about that. That's why audiovisual links are so important. We're working through that becoming the norm within all of our areas. But it has an absolute impact on them. That's definitely what police are saying to me, and I concur. Having travelled the State broadly and the distances, as you probably do as well, it's completely understandable.

The Hon. SCOTT BARRETT: Do you think there would have been responses and response times affected by the fact that the police are out of town for this task?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: I don't want to speculate on that. The fact that they have to drive long distances to take prisoners to other—to court as well. It will definitely have an impact. There's no doubt about that. I'm not sure if that's measured.

The Hon. SCOTT BARRETT: What contingencies are there in place in these smaller communities to cover for this reduction of police presence?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: Often, as you have just said, it may mean in areas where there are very few or maybe even one or two police, that it's taking them away from their area that they are policing.

The Hon. SCOTT BARRETT: What steps have been taken, then, to change this practice?

CORRECTED

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: As I've just indicated, the commissioner is speaking with Corrections, and it's something we're going to have to work on together. As I understand it, this has been a long-held practice. This didn't happen on 23 March 2023. It's something that I will put my attention to, and we will work through it.

The Hon. SCOTT BARRETT: Minister, can you advise the release date for the report on the Drug Summit?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: I'm not sure of that date, I'm sorry.

The Hon. SCOTT BARRETT: Can you take that on notice?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: Sure. I'll have to find out. I don't know. It's not something led by police. It's not police led. You might be best to direct that to Health.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: Minister, just in relation to the issues with police time on perhaps non-core police duties, are you aware of issues that have been reported in relation to difficulty accessing bail magistrates and police time being incurred in holding an accused in cells for extended periods of time?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: Yes.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: Have you had discussions with the Attorney General about that?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: Yes, that has been raised, and, yes, there have been discussions. Again, these are not new practices. This has been something that has been going on for quite some time, and we will work—

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: Minister, perhaps we're at cross-purposes. My understanding is that this problem is much greater than it ever was. Your new bail laws were designed to make bail harder to get, which means more prisoners on remand. Your new bail laws meant that all matters have to be heard by a magistrate, so we have access to magistrates. There have been reports that police are having to take care of an accused and hold them in police cells for as long as 63 hours before they can access a magistrate for bail. What impact is this having on police time?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: Obviously police would have to remain in the command that they're in, so it's definitely impactful. I'm not sure if you have anything further to add on that, do you, Commissioner?

KAREN WEBB: I'm certainly happy to add to that. This has become apparent to us, particularly over the November-December period, where we've seen actually an increase in charges. I've met with Corrective Services. There's no particular trend in terms of what's caused that. It's not necessarily the DV laws or anything else, but we've seen an increase and they've seen an increase. There is a bed capacity in terms of remand prisoners. They've undertaken to work with us on freeing up more remand beds so that we can move those prisoners more regularly.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: But as well as the need for remand beds, isn't there also an issue of accused actually getting before a bail magistrate to have the question of bail determined?

KAREN WEBB: Certainly there's a need for people, once they've been bail refused by police, to go before a court, getting access to the court and then having the bail determination papers follow that.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: Is there an issue with the speed at which the bail papers can be transferred now that bail decisions have been largely centralised?

KAREN WEBB: That is a matter I've raised with the Chief Magistrate in a meeting I had with him a couple of weeks ago, and the need for us to find a more efficient way of getting those papers back out.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: What impact is that having on police time? For example—I know it's a "piece of string" question—what would be a typical time period that police may have to retain someone in police cells?

KAREN WEBB: I can't give you a typical time, suffice to say that we charge a lot of people every year and we are holding more people in custody awaiting various stages. As an executive, we've met and added a CAD category so we can better account for that time so that we get a better picture over time of the time that we're holding people for different purposes. We did a pilot and found that we could free up officers' time if we were able to move those people on.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: On notice, could you provide the most recent figures of the time that police are spending in relation to bail matters?

KAREN WEBB: If that's available, I'll provide it on notice.

CORRECTED

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: At an estimates hearing on 28 February, the Attorney General, as well as remand beds and bail magistrate availability, indicated that he saw a third possible reason for prisoners being held in police cells. That was his concern about "the rate of police bail refusal". Do you agree with the Attorney General?

KAREN WEBB: I make no apology for our job to arrest people and put them before the court. As I said earlier, we have arrested more people from November-December, and they need to go before a court. That's the process. I am satisfied that police apply the Bail Act according to the Bail Act. If that means that they're bail refused through that process because of risk to community and other matters, then that's the case.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: Minister, the Attorney General indicated that a way to deal with what he saw as one of these problems was for the Chief Magistrate to discuss the issue of police bail with the police commissioner. Do you agree with that approach?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: I think any channels of communication are always helpful, aren't they?

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: So you think it's appropriate that the Chief Magistrate discusses with the police commissioner how police exercise the objective criteria under the Bail Act?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: I'll leave that for the Attorney General to speak to them about. This hasn't been raised with me.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: So you don't have a view about the fact that police have the grave responsibility of exercising independent judgement under the objective criteria in the legislation?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: Of course. But if there are problems, we don't just come and whinge about them. We fix them, we solve them, and I will work towards solutions.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: But you would agree that there are appropriate ways to solve those issues and there are grossly inappropriate ways to solve those issues?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: As I say, it hasn't been raised with me. I'll find out if it's inappropriate or appropriate, but we're solutions focused.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: Minister, did you, Commissioner Webb and your partners take holidays together at any point in 2023 or 2024?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: No.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: You did not?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: No.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: Commissioner, did you or—

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: I didn't even go on a holiday with my partner, let alone her partner.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: Did you holiday with the commissioner?

KAREN WEBB: No. I didn't have a holiday in 2024 at all.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: What about 2023?

KAREN WEBB: No.

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: Really, does the Committee want to know about my holidays?

The Hon. SCOTT BARRETT: Back to the prisoner transfers, Minister, how long have you been working on this as an issue?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: It's been raised with me. The commissioner is working on it, and I'll be guided by her expert advice.

The Hon. SCOTT BARRETT: There were commitments made to the Police Association last year that something would be done on it. Has anything been done other than referring this to the new Corrective Services Minister?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: I suspect you're referring to Mr Moreton's comments. Can I say I very much thank him for his role in advocating for police, for our frontline workers, and thank him for his advocacy. I take his advice very seriously. This is a matter that police will speak with the new Corrections commissioner about. That has already started—those conversations have already started—and we'll work towards, as I say, solutions.

CORRECTED

The Hon. SCOTT BARRETT: But at this stage no steps have been put in place other than those discussions?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: Not that I'm aware of.

The Hon. SCOTT BARRETT: Have we got an idea of what this is costing the police? What additional drain is this on the police budget?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: I'm unsure if the police keep records that would equate to cost.

KAREN WEBB: As I explained in an earlier answer, we have put a new category in our computer dispatch system so that we can record that detail better from beginning to end and for what reason the person is being held in custody—whether it's police custody or bail refused, or some other prisoner transport arrangements. I have all of that data to go back to Corrections and others with.

The Hon. SCOTT BARRETT: Minister, can you tell me how much money is allocated to the Rural Crime Prevention Team?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: I will tell you that before we finish here.

The Hon. SCOTT BARRETT: Also on that, the numbers of that team as well—can that be with that information you provide?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: I think it is 63, but I will give you the exact amount. I don't want to not give you the correct information.

The Hon. SCOTT BARRETT: Minister, the bureau of statistics suggests a recent drop in stock theft and rural crime. However, it's reported that this probably isn't the reality because people just aren't reporting that. Have you heard that sort of claim?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: No, I haven't.

The Hon. SCOTT BARRETT: It was stated in *The Land* recently.

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: I haven't read that.

The Hon. SCOTT BARRETT: Taking *The Land* as being true, why would people not be bothering to report rural crime?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: I would be unsure as to why. I wouldn't like to speculate how other people make their decisions and for what purpose they make their decisions. Do you want to speak to that at all, Mr Pisanos?

PAUL PISANOS: I think there would be various reasons as to why there is or isn't a desire to make a formal complaint to police. It can be from work that the Rural Crime Prevention Team have been doing. We are building that culture in reporting. It can be a cultural thing on the land not to report things and to wear the impact of equipment theft or stock theft or otherwise. But I know the work that Detective Chief Inspector Whiteside has been done through industry is building that confidence in reporting and taking the matter seriously, because this serious crime does have an impact.

The Hon. SCOTT BARRETT: Minister, will you commit to make sure that the Rural Crime Prevention Team has the resources they need to build that confidence?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: My commitment as police Minister is to ensure the Police Force has the resources. But I did meet with one of the rural crime officers down in Wagga just two weeks ago. Whilst we didn't talk extensively about the theft of stock, we did talk a lot about rifles, guns and possession of guns, and he certainly expressed to me that that takes up a lot of their time. I want to thank them for being there at Be a Cop in Your Home Town. They really did a great job in talking to young ones and encouraging them to become a cop.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: Minister, at the Yours And Owls Festival, at least 90 per cent of the drugs tested, according to Minister Park, "matched what the user thought they were getting". Is the real problem with drug deaths impurities or that as little as one tablet of ecstasy, MDMA, can kill?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: I'm not a health professional. I won't be making comment on that.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: You're aware of the coronial inquest into the festival goers and the finding that the exact cause of each person's death in each case has been established as being caused by MDMA toxicity, not from adulterants or unknown substances?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: I would absolutely accept what the Coroner has said.

CORRECTED

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: If it is drugs rather than impurities that are causing the deaths, how does testing drugs for impurities assist with minimising drug deaths?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: Again, I'm not a scientist and I'm not going to comment on that. I'm not going to pretend that I know about something that is not something I'm an expert in. As has been said, and I will say it again, it's Government policy to introduce the pill testing and Health are leading it.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: Minister, in a question on notice from my colleague Leslie Williams you answered, on 20 November last year, that you anticipated an outcome in relation to the issue of confiscation of the proceeds of crime acquired by Eddie Obeid and his family by early 2025. We're now in early 2025. Can you provide an update on the investigation and the confiscation of those proceeds of crime, please?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: I can't at this point in time, but when I do know that, that will be provided.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: A rough time frame of when you might know that, when we might be able to expect that?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: I don't want to mislead you so I don't want to give you an exact time. I'm unsure.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: So you can't help us at all with a time frame?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: When I'm able to I will, for sure.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: Do you agree with the NSW Police Association president that the huge volume of protests is placing an enormous strain on police officers?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: I think it's important that we remember that people have the right to protest in this State.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: Agreed.

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: Police will police that for community safety. There is nothing new about that. Sure, there have been large gatherings on repeated weekends here, but also we've had a lot of environment protests as well, particularly up in my neck of the woods, in the Hunter. Again, police will police those for community safety. I thank them for the work they do. It is a tough job, no doubt about it, being a police officer. They do a great job. I particularly want to commend the work that they did in the harbour in Newcastle. It was a very dangerous situation.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: Minister, the question doesn't go to the importance of protests. The question goes to the impact on the Police Force. We've already heard the figures quoted by my colleague in relation to police morale, police pride. We want to make sure that the police are really able to do their job well. What steps are you taking to minimise the personal impact on police of having to police these week after week after week after week protests?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: It's part of their job. Policing is policing. As I just said, they—

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: So they just have to put up with it?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: I did not say that. Police police all protests, not just singular protests, as you're alluding to. They do a great job and they will continue to do that.

The Hon. SCOTT BARRETT: Minister, we still hear reports of stations closing at night due to understaffing. Can you outline which stations have the worst record for this? I hesitate to use the term "worst" because I don't want to criticise the police for doing this, but which stations are shutting the most often and how often is that occurring?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: That information hasn't been provided to me. Mr Smith or Paul?

PAUL PISANOS: It depends. Are you talking about regional and rural police stations?

The Hon. SCOTT BARRETT: I'm happy for you to take that one on notice. There is a bit of detail.

PAUL PISANOS: I can't say with specificity at the moment which ones, but there are various reasons. It could be due to just the staffing that's allocated at a particular station. They may not leave the actual station physically open while two police officers that are on shift go out on mobile patrol responding to jobs. That could technically be referred to as a station closure, but it is just because there is no-one at the station to leave the station open for members of the public. The station effectively becomes the mobile police truck vehicle. There's plenty of instances of that occurring every night and every morning around regional and remote locations. It is just that

CORRECTED

using the police vehicle becomes the police station, effectively. That's pretty much my response to that, without any specific police station referenced.

The Hon. SCOTT BARRETT: We might dig into that later this afternoon.

PAUL PISANOS: Sure.

The Hon. ROD ROBERTS: Minister, we spoke earlier about paying student police officers—a great idea. What's the actual cost to the NSW Police Force per year of paying students? How unusual—a budget estimates question that goes to budget!

The CHAIR: Why haven't we got a call to order?

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

The Hon. ROD ROBERTS: That's fine.

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: I do have that, but I just haven't got it here in front of me.

The Hon. ROD ROBERTS: Minister, I ask you a number of questions—either on notice or via the Minister for Agriculture, who represents you in our Chamber—which I don't expect you would have the answers to immediately. It's impossible. But when I ask a question for which you don't know the answer, I assume—and correct me if I'm wrong—that you get the information from the commissioner's office via some sort of liaison. Is that right? Your staff do, not you.

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: Obviously the DLO seeks that information.

The Hon. ROD ROBERTS: On 13 November 2024—I have a copy for everybody here, Chair, if the secretariat would like to hand it around, just to refresh your memory—I asked this question:

My supplementary question for written answer is directed to the Hon. Tara Moriarty, representing the Minister for Police and Counter-terrorism. Will the Minister confirm whether the Commissioner of the NSW Police Force has quarantined 850 positions to pay for the new police wage rise?

You replied, and you have a copy of it there, so nobody can say I'm misleading you or anything. The Minister wrote in reply the next day, on 14 November, stating:

I am advised:

No positions have been quarantined to pay for the new police award offer.

Is that answer true and correct? Do you still stand by that?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: Yes.

The Hon. ROD ROBERTS: I'm going to now show you another document. That document is a screenshot taken from the police HR dashboard on 10 November 2024 that shows that the police have quarantined 350 positions to fund the police award salary increase. Do you see that? Yes or no?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: Yes, I can see that that's on here, but I'm telling you that that's not correct.

The Hon. ROD ROBERTS: That is not correct?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: No.

The Hon. ROD ROBERTS: What is correct, then?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: No positions have been quarantined to pay for the pay rise. Could you confirm that, Commissioner?

KAREN WEBB: Yes.

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: And Mr Smith?

The Hon. ROD ROBERTS: I have one here that I prepared earlier. Let me try this. I'll direct this to you, Mr Smith, because I anticipated that that would be the answer. You're in charge of HR, aren't you, or personnel?

DEAN SMITH: Correct.

The Hon. ROD ROBERTS: I shouldn't use "personnel" because we know what Harry Callahan says about personnel. I see you get that one, Mr Hudson. Mr Smith, I'm aware of efforts by the CET, and in particular yourself and your office, to disguise these programs by using coded or imprecise language. Bearing in mind that you are on oath, if you are aware of a change in the description or language used since November 2024 to obscure

CORRECTED

the concealment of the repurposing or quarantining of positions for monetary savings from those non-filled positions—and let's take a guess: perhaps tracking it via a spreadsheet—now would be the time to inform this parliamentary committee.

DEAN SMITH: That is related to employee-related expenses. Employee-related expenses relates to positions that we have that are funded, and we are funded for our authorised strength.

The Hon. ROD ROBERTS: Yes. But your authorised strength is not full, we agree?

DEAN SMITH: Correct.

The Hon. ROD ROBERTS: So there's a big pool of money sitting there that's not going out in wages.

DEAN SMITH: That's correct.

The Hon. ROD ROBERTS: Because those positions aren't filled.

DEAN SMITH: Yes.

The Hon. ROD ROBERTS: So that money is being repurposed for other purposes, correct?

DEAN SMITH: It's a saving that we have as an organisation in relation to the component of our budget that relates to employee-related expenses, yes.

The Hon. ROD ROBERTS: The wage rise—how is that funded?

DEAN SMITH: A component of the wage rise is funded via the base wage rise as part of Government. They funded us in terms of that component of the budget over a three-year period plus a fourth-year period. That totalled around about \$600 million-odd. The other components relate to the environment of the PBRI and EPSS environment. We had to have a zero cost to government for the award. We have looked at that in terms of our employee-related expense. We now look at two components. We have actuarial advice which tells us that, and Treasury advice that tells us that, both the PBRI and EPSS funding envelope is more positive than what it was. We had \$200 million allocated to us in that space as part of—it's a non-technical term—a buffer environment around the change and what that cost would be. We still expect that at year four that will be a zero cost to government based on the current environment that we have.

The Hon. ROD ROBERTS: What does that document represent, then—the one that the Minister has, that screenshot taken of the HR dashboard that says 350 positions have been quarantined to fund the police award salary increase? Clearly I know how much, Minister, the student police are costing us because I already have the answer here in front of us.

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: You do; that's right.

The Hon. ROD ROBERTS: Never ask a question unless you already know the answer. What does this represent, then?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: Do you still want me to provide it?

The Hon. EMILY SUVAAL: Point of order: It is on a procedural matter. I just wondered—this document has just been placed before us and it has been provided to the Minister, which is great, but it has now just been handed down to Mr Smith.

The Hon. ROD ROBERTS: I have copies for all of them if they like.

The Hon. EMILY SUVAAL: It has now just been asked to Mr Smith and he has literally just had it placed in front of him.

The Hon. ROD ROBERTS: He's actually in charge of HR.

The Hon. EMILY SUVAAL: As procedural fairness would offer to the witness, it would be courteous to at least give him an opportunity to review it before we're then peppering questions to him.

The Hon. ROD ROBERTS: To the point of order: Deputy Commissioner Smith is in charge of personnel, HR, people and capability—whatever you want to call it. That's his sole domain. He's not in counterterrorism like Mr Hudson is. This is his department. He knows exactly what this document represents. I'll allow you to make your ruling, Chair.

The CHAIR: I think, yes, the document has just been put in front of Deputy Commissioner Smith, and he can answer it if he wants to or he can take it on notice. It's up to him.

CORRECTED

DEAN SMITH: The document which is outlined, as I said, does attribute and has an allocated number and a dollar figure, and, yes, the words that are listed there do look at quarantining positions. However, what I would say is that I think the question was "Has there been a direct change in language in relation to how we calculate our vacancies or otherwise?" The language which is consistent is employee-related expenses, and those employee-related expenses relate to the current vacancies that we have, which is a pool of money. When we look at what it costs, as I said, in terms of the award itself, there was a component which was attached to employee-related savings which relates to police positions, and if that value equates to that number, then that is not incorrect, but it is also not a change in environment about how we allocate and use the money which is funded to us by government in this environment. What I can say is in relation to the payment of the award and that amount of money that is linked to employee-related expenses, we are currently ahead of the amount of money, and savings which can be confirmed through Treasury in relation to savings from PBRI and EPSS will not require us at all by year four to be looking at any employee-related expenses to be utilised for the payment of the award.

The Hon. ROD ROBERTS: Further to that, I'm aware of the existence of a document—one of those infamous yellows: document No. D2024/843707, authored by Nicole O'Connell, of which you're a signatory to, I believe, that talks specifically about the need that FABS have said the need to quarantine positions. Are you aware of that?

DEAN SMITH: Mr Roberts, you've quoted a number. I would hate to know how many yellows that I see and sign and go through each and every day of the week. I'm happy to look at that. I am aware of the work that is undertaken in that space. But without specifically having a look at that specific yellow, I don't think it would be appropriate for me to comment on the context or the content.

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: This is a line of questioning I have pursued before in these estimates in relation to the number of police officers who have been found guilty of domestic and family violence and sexual violence who are still working in the force. On the basis of the data that was provided to me in answers received on 24 February this year to my questions on notice, I'm told that there are still 14 officers who have been found guilty—not just charged but found guilty—of domestic and family violence and sexual violence offences who are still employed. Do you think that is an acceptable situation for people in the police force who are looked to to be the trusted people that we go to when we find ourselves victim-survivors of these sorts of incidents?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: I think it's important to know that each of these matters are considered on their facts and that that does not override procedural fairness in relation to employment-related matters, and you would know that yourself. Being a lawyer, you know what would happen if we made a blanket rule to rule out, automatically dismiss employees, individuals, when they're charged.

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: That's not what I said, though. I very specifically talked about those who had already been found guilty of the offence. So this is not just a charge; this is not pre-judging the outcome of a court case. A court or a judge has already determined that these people are guilty.

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: But you know that that that does not override procedural fairness in terms of employment-related matters.

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: You know that you can prescribe who gets appointed and who doesn't into the police force and who is allowed to be there, so procedural fairness is not really the issue here.

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: Well, in relation to employment matters, that's what's important here.

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: Let's take a different tack, then. We have 76 people who have either been dismissed or they have resigned while awaiting the outcome of the police's procedure under section 181D to be removed. So that's 76 in the last five years who, once they were found guilty of these offences, have been removed, which you would expect, from the police force.

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: Or left, yes.

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: Why the others? Why don't you have a zero tolerance approach to these sorts of offences within the police force?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: The commissioner makes that determination. Commissioner, did you want to add?

KAREN WEBB: Can I just say, you talk about those that are found guilty, but you also haven't mentioned that there's the statistic of the number of people convicted. There's a difference between those found guilty and then convicted because, obviously, as a solicitor you would understand there are various remedies available to the court about how they're treated. Two of those officers who have been convicted are still in the workplace. They were convicted in 2011.

CORRECTED

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: That's an interesting lens you put on this, though, because those people who are found guilty and not convicted, often that's because they're police officers so the very position has allowed them to—

KAREN WEBB: I disagree. I reject that.

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: Why don't we look at, for example, the number of police officers who have had an ADVO granted against them in the past four years, which is 161 of those police officers. But then when we look at the data as to who has had their firearms suspended or seized once they are subjected to an ADVO, there's quite a limited number of those. I have told you this before; my office gets regular correspondence from victim-survivors of police perpetrators of domestic and family violence who complain about these officers using their position to continue their abuse against their victim-survivors, not just with the use of firearms but also with the abuse of systems that they have access to, so computing systems and obviously the social credit that they have with their officers as well. What are you doing—

KAREN WEBB: We often talk about this. You and I have spoken about this nearly every estimates, or I'm sure every estimates. I would say to you, if you have particular matters that are of concern to you, can you write to me?

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: Yes, and I have done and will do.

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: I think it's important to note, though, that these matters that you specifically refer to go through the Office of the General Counsel, and then they're briefed by the Crown Solicitor's Office in addition to that on those matters relating to police prosecutors. The commands themselves don't make those decisions locally, and the Office of the General Counsel is obviously centrally led. I think it's important that we put that on record as well.

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: This is not just me saying it; it's also the Auditor-General and the LECC. They've handed down reports that have identified very clearly where the police are failing when it comes to their response to domestic and family violence in particular. Given that, as Minister, you have failed to implement or require the Police Force to implement those recommendations, and given that at every estimates I come and tell you about all of these police officers who have been found guilty of these things themselves and are sitting within the Police Force, why are you not taking it more seriously?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: I reject your assertion that those recommendations haven't all been implemented.

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: Tell me which—

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: You're right to say that three haven't. However, I do want to let you know that police have updated the response to the recommendation in relation to number 11, which requires the DFV SOPs to be amended to say that officers should activate, and that has been updated. I just wanted to let you know that that is now a recommendation that is supported.

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: The one that we keep talking about is the one where it is up to the station commander—sorry, I always forget—or the command sergeant—

KAREN WEBB: The commander, who is a superintendent.

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: —to decide whether or not an investigation into one of the police officers should be moved to a different command or not. That has been recommended in both of those reports I've just referred to. They say that cannot continue, yet you've refused to do that. We've seen movement in other States, but there seems to be this real resistance within the NSW Police Force and from yourself, Minister, to address the culture in relation to responding to domestic and family violence in the NSW Police Force.

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: Because your question doesn't consider—I have advised you on this. You make the assertion that the local command is the command that is investigating. On most occasions that is not the case. It is a neighbouring command that is making the decision.

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: In 25 per cent of cases that is not the case. In 25 per cent of cases we're getting mates investigating mates at the expense of victim-survivors getting justice.

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: That's the assertion that you make.

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: It's also the assertion of the Auditor-General and the LECC. This is not just me. I have to hear these stories from these women, who are coming to me every week telling me about these things, and you won't do anything despite all of this evidence. I don't understand why there is such a closed shop and a reluctance to try to clean up the Police Force when it comes to their response to domestic and family violence.

CORRECTED

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: I think the words that you used—a "closed shop"—are offensive. I don't believe that to be the case. I believe that, as police have described to me—and I don't have the figure in front of me; you might be able to assist me here, Commissioner—they are investigated by a neighbouring PAC or, indeed, if there is further concern, then that can be centralised and it can be investigated centrally.

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: This was all considered as part of those reports.

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: I'm very aware of that.

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: Those reports still recommended that this be the course of action that the Police Force should take. In other States and Territories we have seen them take this sort of action because they're taking it seriously. Why won't you take it seriously?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: I don't accept the premise that I don't take it seriously.

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: Is taking no action taking it seriously?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: It's not that we are not taking action. I've just described to you that police have updated recommendation 11. There is action being taken, and I think it is fair that that be recognised.

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: I'm sure that update to the recommendation will make all sorts of changes.

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: It's a recommendation. You made the accusation that none of them have been—

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: I didn't say none; I said all. You then responded by saying, "The assertion that all of them haven't been implemented is wrong," when you've now told me the ones that haven't been.

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: I can't wait to go back and read that because I don't believe that's what you said.

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: We can agree that you haven't accepted all of the recommendations.

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: That is true.

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: That's what I said in the beginning. Then we turn to violent offences, where I think there are 105 charged and still employed—these are not domestic and family violence or sexual violence—and 30 who are guilty or convicted who are still employed as well. What does it tell you when there are so many police officers still working who have been found guilty of such violent sexual and other crimes? Are you not concerned? There's no concern?

KAREN WEBB: Do you want me to answer that?

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: Yes, go ahead.

KAREN WEBB: As the Minister tried to explain before, those matters are referred through our processes for consideration of that officer's employment. That is a normal process that happens. In most of those cases, serious matters—since I've been commissioner—there is a direct referral to me for their consideration. I still have to follow due process in terms of employment under section 181D of the Police Act. The officer has to be given an opportunity to show cause and then has an appeal right to the Industrial Relations Commission. All of those avenues are explored and action is taken. Whatever the decision of the Industrial Relations Commission, that is the decision of the keeper at that time, and I can't change that decision. But, certainly, where there are serious matters, whether it's domestic violence or other matters, they are considered through our processes—through a professional standards-led internal review panel, and then they come to me for consideration. We follow those processes.

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: They're clearly not working.

The Hon. SCOTT BARRETT: Minister, do you think the people of regional New South Wales feel safer than they did two years ago?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: I think the issue around youth crime is something that is front and centre of people's minds. I think that's a real fear. I've been out and listened to people and spoken to community, and they are concerned about youth crime.

The Hon. SCOTT BARRETT: Are they telling you that it's better or worse than it has been in the past?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: They're telling me that they're concerned about it. If they're concerned about it, I'm concerned about it. I don't know if I can put a two-year date on it. Youth crime didn't start on 23 March 2023; I can tell you that for sure. These people will tell you that for sure because that's what they've told me. But

CORRECTED

in relation to that, the Government has been very active in putting in place legislative change. Certainly from a policing perspective, the work that police do out in the community is significant. We have invested further resources into the likes of PCYCs, where you can put in place measures to keep young people out of the justice system, encourage them to have a relationship with the local police and have a brighter focus on being in their community.

The YAMs, or youth action meetings, that take place in many of our areas are really making a difference for diversion. They're diverting young, vulnerable people who are susceptible to going into the criminal justice system into other activities, and they're also being looked at and observed by other agencies, like Health and Education and the like. The police are being very active in this space, and they are doing a lot of work in regional areas. They have partnered with other players—like the NRL, for instance—to also bring some other initiatives. I think we have to be innovative and provide initiatives that will encourage better behaviour.

The Hon. SCOTT BARRETT: You talk about youth crime. Do you think it's worse than it was when you took over as Minister?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: As I say, it's not new.

The Hon. SCOTT BARRETT: I've never implied that it is, to be clear.

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: No, I'm just making the point that it's not new. Youth crime was certainly in the landscape when I first became—

The Hon. SCOTT BARRETT: Yes. I'm asking about the time. Since the time that you've had the most knowledge and insight into this, have you seen youth crime improve or get worse?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: I think we need to give our measures time to take effect. I think that's important. More time will tell if they have been successful or not. But in relation to police's activity, I have to say that I think they are really pulling their weight. They are certainly pulling their weight when it comes to youth crime.

The Hon. SCOTT BARRETT: Again, Minister, I haven't asked about or implied otherwise about that. I'm just wondering about the trends in regional areas now.

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: That's what I'm saying to you. The trends—

The Hon. SCOTT BARRETT: The numbers are showing us that youth crime is getting worse. Do you agree with that?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: Certainly people in the community are very concerned about that, and I accept that.

The Hon. SCOTT BARRETT: Minister, the Deputy Mayor of Ballina shire, Damian Loone—himself a retired police officer—has said that offending across the Northern Rivers is rife, with weak legislation combined with a lack of serious consequences for offenders who breach bail. He points to the State's Young Offenders Act in particular that needs a hard look. What changes can we expect to see to the Young Offenders Act to address these concerns?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: I won't be announcing any legislative changes here today. That is something I would consult with my Cabinet colleagues on. But we have made changes in relation to bail. I note that was one of the other issues that the former mayor has raised.

The Hon. SCOTT BARRETT: Deputy mayor.

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: My apologies, the deputy mayor. I think that we need to see if they work. Of course, as has been noted here today, we've already seen the increase in the number of arrests and not let out on bail—keep on remand—so we do know that there is some movement on that. We'll continue to observe that.

The Hon. SCOTT BARRETT: One of the measures that I presume you were alluding to are some of the diversionary programs in Moree. What evaluation is happening of those programs?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: We don't evaluate that at police. They are not police programs—just so you know—except for, obviously, the PCYC. The youth command works closely with the PCYC. We get figures on how many interactions they have and how many times they go to school to do those education programs. I don't have the number in front of me, but it was in the vicinity of more than 10½ thousand kids.

The Hon. SCOTT BARRETT: In Moree?

CORRECTED

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: No, just generally. But, in Moree, they also have the programs there, the Fit for Life program and others. But police—

The Hon. SCOTT BARRETT: Could you provide some of those?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: —don't evaluate the diversionary programs that you're referring to.

The Hon. SCOTT BARRETT: You said you have those figures. Are you able to provide some of them for us on notice?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: I might not have them direct—would we have those direct from Moree?

PAUL PISANOS: Yes.

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: Yes. Can I just be very clear, though? That's what police do with the PCYC.

The Hon. SCOTT BARRETT: I'm just interested in how we evaluate the efforts and resources going into that. Minister, are you concerned that there's still no concrete timing details around the bail accommodation in Moree?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: My understanding is that is afoot. Again, this is not something that the police have responsibility for.

The Hon. SCOTT BARRETT: It must make it harder to place these young offenders in safe homes without that facility.

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: Again, police arrest. They are doing a good job in arresting young offenders. In fact, there was one occasion last year—I can't give you the exact date, but in that week three serious events took place with, I think, as many as 11 youth. Police arrested every single one of them within days—if not the next day or, in fact, in some instances, on that day. Police are doing a good job. They are doing their job.

The Hon. SCOTT BARRETT: I've never said otherwise, Minister. Back to the bail accommodation, I'm led to believe similar facilities in Dubbo have only been used on seven occasions in 2024. Is that an effective use of this asset?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: Again, police don't—we don't have carriage of the bail accommodation.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: Minister, you focused on diversions and prevention, and I think we all want that. In fact, Jack's law, which was introduced, was to reduce knives and therefore knife crime in the community. Last Saturday, you'd be aware, two teenage boys were stabbed outside a fast-food restaurant in Dubbo. Because that happened near a shopping precinct, police can now decide to conduct a wandering operation in Dubbo if they choose. But if that same stabbing had occurred a couple of blocks down that same street in a residential area, Jack's law would not be triggered. Doesn't this indicate that the parameters around this new law actually restrict the ability of police to provide for a safer community?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: Jack's law, or the changes to the legislation, gave police yet another tool in their toolbox. But police in New South Wales are already confiscating an extraordinary number of knives. In fact, they confiscated between April 2023 and December 2024, which is the most recent data I have—

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: Minister, we agree that police are doing an amazing job but we're looking at how they can be helped to do a better job for the whole community. Is the way this legislation drafted making it difficult, because it's not letting police use their intelligence and go, "We should have this operation here or there"? They're having to wait to respond, after the fact and only if the stabbing occurred in a certain type of area. Doesn't that make it more difficult for police to do the excellent work they are doing with confiscation of knives, anywhere in our community?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: Police use their intelligence every day, all day. As I said, between April 2023 and December 2024 police seized 7,838 knives in public places. With or without that extra tool that they have in their toolbox known as Jack's law, police are already doing that. They have powers to do that, and they are doing that.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: So are you suggesting that we didn't need Jack's law?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: No, not at all. I think that Jack's law is great because it gives us designated areas, which are also very important, like on our transport hubs.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: Designated reactive areas. It doesn't allow police to be proactive, does it, Minister?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: They are proactive, and that's why—7,838 knives from public places.

CORRECTED

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: Minister, Jack's law only operates after a stabbing and in the same area in which a stabbing has occurred, provided it occurred in an area recognised by the legislation. Shouldn't police be able to proactively police? Doesn't that help us have a safer community and actually make police safer by allowing them to proactively address issues?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: This might come as a surprise to you, but they can already, Ms Carter.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: Under what law, Minister?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: They already have the powers to do that. The LEPR laws allow them to do that.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: So police can wand anywhere at any time?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: They can confiscate knives. If they think that somebody has a knife on them, they can absolutely confiscate the knife.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: Can police wand anywhere at any time?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: They have wands already. They already had them.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: Can police use those wands anywhere at any time?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: I might just check if that—because I don't want to mislead you. They already had wands and they have used wands in the past.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: Can they use them anywhere at any time, Minister, was the question.

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: Can I ask that question?

PETER THURTELL: Would you like me to answer?

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: Yes. Can you wand anywhere at any time?

PETER THURTELL: It's more complicated than just saying yes or no. We can search somebody for a knife if we have reasonable cause that they may be in possession of a knife or something otherwise dangerous at the time.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: How does that differ from the permissions under Jack's law?

PETER THURTELL: Yes, you were right before, a public place—there doesn't necessarily have to be a stabbing. It can be a violent offence, and a stabbing is obviously included in that. But that doesn't limit our ability to search somebody in a residential area where a violent offence has occurred if we have reasonable cause to believe that the person we're actually searching may be in possession of a knife or may be directly related to the offence et cetera, and—

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: Do you need reasonable cause under Jack's law?

PETER THURTELL: No—

The Hon. EMILY SUVAAL: Point of order: The honourable member is asking one of our wonderful public servants about a legal interpretation of an Act. I wonder whether, under procedural fairness resolutions of the House, that should be allowed to be asked.

The Hon. ROD ROBERTS: To the point of order: She's asking the Deputy Commissioner of Police, the second highest ranking law enforcement officer in this State, his position in relation to interpreting law. If Mr Thurtell can't interpret law and how it's enacted, he should not be in his role. I don't suggest that he doesn't interpret it correctly; I place no dispersions upon him and his integrity or his ability. The member's asking a question about a legal position which the police are to enforce at law. I'm sure he's more than capable of answering it.

The Hon. EMILY SUVAAL: I stand by my earlier comments, Chair.

The CHAIR: Proceed with the question.

PETER THURTELL: I think your question was can we scan anybody anywhere anytime. The short answer is no. We don't have power to do that, but that doesn't preclude us from using other powers.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: Minister, how many wands are there in New South Wales?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: There are 120.

CORRECTED

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: How many police officers did we say there were in New South Wales?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: Sixteen thousand plus.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: Is there a plan to purchase more wands?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: Police have advised me that they believe that they have enough at this time. We don't have 16,000 people—

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: So 120 wands for 16,000 police.

The Hon. SCOTT BARRETT: Minister, the questions I asked earlier about the trends in relation to regional crime—you didn't seem to be across the stats there. How do you evaluate the impacts of laws and resourcing if you're not across the trends of specific rural crimes in different areas?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: I don't agree with the assertion of your question.

The Hon. SCOTT BARRETT: So you are across those numbers?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: There has been a lot of attention and legislative change. Certainly in relation to police, police are doing an awful lot in actual fact when it comes to—

The Hon. SCOTT BARRETT: Minister, I'm not asking about the activity of the police. I'm asking about the stats around regional crime. Are you across them or not?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: What do you want me to know? Ask me a specific question.

The Hon. SCOTT BARRETT: Are break and enters up or down for last two years?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: Whereabouts?

The Hon. SCOTT BARRETT: In regional New South Wales.

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: Where, though? It's different—

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: Minister—

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: Hold on, it's different everywhere. Where? Which suburb? Where?

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: I will ask a specific question, Minister. What has happened to the rate of sexual assault in Moree over the last two years?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: Gone up.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: By how much?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: I can't give you the exact percentage, but it's gone up across the State.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: It's enormous. It's gone up 112 per cent—sexual assault in Moree over the last two years.

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: Yes. It's something that keeps me awake at night, quite frankly.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: Yet, interestingly, all the legislative changes that you've introduced have focused on knife crime, serious break and enter, and motor vehicle theft.

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: They are also up, as you very well know.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: I agree. But is part of the problem perhaps that we're sending the wrong signals with some of the legislative changes? Is sexual assault a lesser crime than motor vehicle theft?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: Of course it's not. Absolutely not. Let me say this to you: These are community and deep social problems, particularly in the community that you have just referenced. These are matters that we need to look at as a whole of community. You can't point the finger at the police for this.

The Hon. SCOTT BARRETT: No-one has. Not once have we done that.

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: I'm just making sure. I'm the police Minister, and the police respond as they are required to. These are issues that need a whole-of-community response. They need Education, Health, community justice, juvenile justice—everybody looking at it. I agree with you that we absolutely need to look at the sexual assault stats going up.

CORRECTED

The Hon. SCOTT BARRETT: Minister, we're hearing about community groups starting to do their own patrols, talking about "redemption visits" and this sort of stuff. How concerned are you that people are feeling and seeing, in their view, inaction on this issue and taking matters into their own hands?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: Police will say, "Do not do that. That's very dangerous." I was at a community forum on Sunday on the Central Coast, and people asked that explicit question. The superintendent there made it very clear that people should not be taking matters into their own hands. I have no doubt that every person sitting here will give you that advice too.

The Hon. SCOTT BARRETT: Can we give them the advice that things are going to get better soon?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: We need more boots on the ground. I'll go back to your very first question. We need more boots on the ground. That is what the police and I are trying to achieve by providing these new incentives to join the Police Force, make it attractive and retain people. That's critically important. We don't want to lose experienced cops, particularly in regional areas. They're the best of the best. We need new ones, but we also need to keep our experienced, trained police officers. That is the focus. I hope they'll be coming your way soon. Where do you live, by the way? I don't know where you live.

The Hon. SCOTT BARRETT: Minister, what can you tell us about the economic cost of crime in regional communities?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: It's not just the economic cost, though. This is it.

The Hon. SCOTT BARRETT: I'm aware of that. But what about the economic costs?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: I don't know that the police have the economic—we don't keep the economic evaluation of communities. It's not just about the economic cost; it's so much more than that. It's about the cost to each individual family. I don't know how you put a price on losing a family member, for instance. I don't know how you put a price on that. Can you? I suspect not. It is about the whole community being disrupted, the whole community feeling the loss of an individual and the whole community feeling frightened. It's about people leaving the community and not wanting to stay in a community. I know that's happening, particularly in our remote areas. I don't know how you put an economic dollar figure on that. I'd be interested to know if you could tell me what you think it is.

The Hon. SCOTT BARRETT: I'm not the Minister.

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: I'm not the Minister for economics either. I am the Minister who is absolutely determined to get more boots on the ground in the New South Wales police, meet our authorised strength and get people out into the areas that you're concerned about. I agree with you.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: Minister, can we talk about knife crime enforcement and the laws that you introduced—93IB and 93IC of the Crimes Act—designed to send a very strong message about custody of knives? In two-thirds of referrals from police to the DPP for prosecution, the DPP elected not to proceed. Have you discussed this issue with the Attorney General?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: That's a matter for the DPP.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: It's a matter for police as well, isn't it? If in two-thirds of matters—

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: It hasn't been raised with me. If it was raised with me, I would have.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: Commissioner, we're talking about 93IB and 93IC and the fact that in two-thirds of referrals from police to the DPP, the DPP has elected not to proceed. Are you concerned about this?

KAREN WEBB: What I'm more concerned about was the time taken for the decision to be reached, but they have got a very big workload. That's the advice, and we work with the advice.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: Does this indicate a need to revisit these laws? If in two-thirds the prosecutions aren't proceeding, are we actually sending the message that this legislation was designed to send about the seriousness of knife crime?

KAREN WEBB: Sorry, I missed the first question.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: The Government proposes to send a message about knife crime. The laws are structured in such a way that they can't be run in the Local Court; they have to be run by indictment, which means the DPP. The DPP is saying no to two-thirds of the matters sent to them by police. The police are arresting, but if the prosecutions aren't being made, then the higher sentences aren't being awarded. Is this legislation faulty because it's not sending the message that the Government hoped it would send?

CORRECTED

KAREN WEBB: I'll have to take that on notice.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: Point of order: I understand that there are people who aren't media taking photographs in the room. I wonder if you could direct the staffers that it's inappropriate for them to be taking photographs in this room.

The CHAIR: Who is taking photos?

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: I received a message that staffers were taking photographs in the room.

The CHAIR: Staffers can't take photographs in the room. There are plenty of opportunities. Please proceed.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: Minister, why are you not willing to explain to the Committee why you didn't think it was appropriate at the time you most became aware that the Dural event was not a terrorist event—why were you not compelled to communicate to all of New South Wales to try to allay the fears that you and the Premier and everybody else had drummed up that this was a terrorist offence?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: As I've already said, in terms of public-facing communication, I took that advice from the police.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: Why are you still avoiding any measure of honesty and accountability to this Committee about when you were first properly made aware—when you felt the sense of relief that it was not a terrorist offence.

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: I reject the premise of that question saying my honesty and my integrity is being questioned there. I will say it again. The information that I received at confidential briefings that were at a very high level, I will not be sharing—

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: Are you aware that—

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: I will not be sharing that information with you now.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: Are you aware that even the Prime Minister—

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: I will not be sharing it with anyone else. I haven't done it in the past, and I won't.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: Are you aware that, in the last 50 minutes, even the Prime Minister has stood up and said he's been aware for some time? Why can you not do that, too?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: Because I'm not going to.

The CHAIR: Quickly, on regional crime—I know you had some questions from the Opposition earlier. You can't blame locals for feeling like nothing is happening in terms of regional crime because there is a tide going through many country towns of issues. I think it stands to reason that no matter how many cops you put on the beat, even in the smallest of towns, it won't necessarily solve the problem. Would you agree with that?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: I think you're right. I think it's more than just policing. You can't arrest your way out of it. So, yes, you have—

The CHAIR: What do you think the problem is then?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: It's more, isn't it, than just policing. It's, again, a whole-of-community thing. It goes, similarly, to the point that I made to Ms Carter in terms of sexual assaults. We need to ensure that—why are these kids out in the middle of the night? Why aren't they at home? Why aren't they at school? All of those questions need to be answered, and I think it's incumbent upon all of us in the Parliament as community leaders to look at ways that we can address this. I tell you what, not just from a policing perspective, but as a person in here who cares—I know we all do, that's why we're here. I say that to every one of you, if you've got ideas, share them. Certainly share them with me, because I'm open to anything. I don't want to see young kids locked up. I don't want to see young kids losing their lives. I don't want to see young kids terrorising community. It's horrible.

The CHAIR: All right. Thank you.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: Do we get a minute?

The Hon. EMILY SUVAAL: We're in Government time now, sorry.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: I think we've got one minute 30 seconds of questions, and then it's Government time.

CORRECTED

The Hon. EMILY SUVAAL: Chair, it's 12.45 p.m. My understanding is that the resolution—

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: But we started late because the Minister provided us with—

The CHAIR: We did start late. I'll allow the Opposition one minute and 30 seconds worth of questioning.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: Minister, I have one final question. Do you stand by the view that you've expressed publicly that you have never heard of a more stupid thing than a Minister briefing members of Parliament about a matter of grave public importance?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: To be asked to bring to the caucus police to talk about a covert operation that is still an active investigation, and there are people before the courts—absolutely that is not going to happen. Here I stand by it. Now can I do my clean-up?

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: Minister, were you asked to provide covert information, or were you asked to provide what was already on the public record and asked to provide more information to members of Parliament about a matter of significant public importance?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: Police will not be coming to the caucus meeting to give a briefing on a matter that is, as I've just described—

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: But as Police Minister, you could have provided that briefing to your parliamentary colleagues, could you not?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: I will not be giving a briefing on a matter that is still an active investigation that has been described to us today. There are people who are part of that investigation that are before the courts.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: Minister, most of it's in the newspaper.

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: Is it still an active investigation, Mr Hudson?

DAVID HUDSON: Minister, the caravan job is still an active investigation. There are other components of Pearl, which is a different investigation, that are before the courts.

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: Thank you, Mr Hudson.

The CHAIR: Thank you. We're in Government time but you can make a statement.

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: Yes. Mr Barrett, you asked how much money and how many positions are allocated to the Rural Crime Prevention Team. I don't have a total budget. However, the total number of Rural Crime Prevention Team officers is 63 specialist officers in 28 locations targeting rural crime and increasing community confidence in regional New South Wales. Mr Roberts asked what the cost is to fund the pay for student police officers. I'm advised that, since March 2024, student police officers studying at the academy are employed on a temporary administrative employee fixed-term contract, and receive a salary of \$1,360 per week, plus superannuation and award-based allowances over the 16-week study period. Mr Smith will be able to provide you with the total dollar figure today, in his capacity as deputy commissioner responsible for corporate. Back to you, Mr Barrett, you asked how many engagements we have with young people in Moree. I'm advised, I don't have the specific numbers at hand. Mr Pisanos has said that he will provide what he can to you. Thank you.

The CHAIR: Thank you. Are there any Government questions?

The Hon. EMILY SUVAAL: No Government questions, Chair.

The CHAIR: Okay. Thank you very much, Minister. You're released, Minister. We will be back at two o'clock.

(The Minister withdrew.)

(Luncheon adjournment)

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: Welcome back. We're now starting the session with questions from the crossbench. I'll hand over to you, Mr Roberts.

The Hon. ROD ROBERTS: Mr Smith, I'll start with you. That document that I produced, have you got a copy of it?

DEAN SMITH: You gave us a copy. I've got a copy.

CORRECTED

The Hon. ROD ROBERTS: The Minister in her answer said something along the lines of—she's entitled to answer however she wants—"That's wrong. It's nothing." She waved it away. That was, at the time, an official police document. Do you agree?

DEAN SMITH: It would appear to be a screenshot from a dashboard.

The Hon. ROD ROBERTS: Yes, that's what it is. What does it represent? What was it intended to represent at that particular point in time? And why was it done?

DEAN SMITH: It's intended to represent where we sit as an organisation in relation to our vacancies, our ERE spend, and to know exactly where positions may or may not be across our organisation. It is done so it gives us an idea about, one, the level of vacancies we have; two, the level of underspend that we have that's aligned to the employee-related expenses within our budget position as an organisation.

The Hon. ROD ROBERTS: Perhaps this is hypothetical, but go with me for a little bit, and if you don't want to answer a hypothetical question, you're entitled not to. Just play with me here a bit. If for some reason today 2,000 people turned up at recruiting headquarters, all passed every single test that they could possibly do, and the NSW Police Force had the physical capability—which I know they don't—of training those 2,000 people now to fill every single vacancy that we have, we couldn't do it, could we, because we don't have the money to do so?

DEAN SMITH: I don't agree with that hypothetical proposition on a number of fronts. I'm happy to answer it, because there is a lot of context to that. One, if 2,000 recruits turned up we would probably have around about 18 months to be able to square away our business to make sure that we were appropriately funded. I think both the Minister and Government and Treasury have made it clear that we are funded for an envelope of 18,374 people. If and when—and "when" is not an "if"—we get to that point, we will be making sure, which we do fiscally in terms of our budget submissions each year, to look at what are the funding envelopes we need to do business. That's exactly what we would do. When we are in that position, we will always fund our resources to the authorised strengths that we would have.

The Hon. ROD ROBERTS: Of course you would. That's what one would expect the New South Wales police want to do. I'm sure that all of you, as the executive, want to see 18,374 positions all filled.

DEAN SMITH: Correct.

The Hon. ROD ROBERTS: There's no argument there. I'm the first one to try and help you in any way, shape or form that I can. But you don't have the money, do you? In reality, it's not there, which is not your fault. But you're not getting the budget allocation you need from Treasury to be able to fund 18,374 positions today, at today's award rate. You don't have that money, do you?

DEAN SMITH: Mr Roberts, to answer that question, it is a fact that we operate in a budget environment where we are constantly working with Treasury around how we fund. "Irresponsible" might be the wrong word to use here. However, noting that where we are in terms of ERE, and noting where we are in terms of our current budget position, the responsible thing is to manage our budget within what we are allocated. If we have vacancies then we look to opportunities to be able to do things, fund things, whether they are people-related or otherwise, within our budget envelope. We are in the midst of a budget cycle now where we are putting up for money to do a lot of things. Whether that be in the capital space, the people space, the technology space, the health, safety and wellbeing space, we are constantly looking at that environment. That's the way we operate. Technically, if that was to happen tomorrow we are funded for 18,374 positions.

The Hon. ROD ROBERTS: But at the old award rate and not being able to pay for student police officers.

DEAN SMITH: That is because we have an underspend in ERE.

The Hon. ROD ROBERTS: I know, but you just said, "If we all filled up tomorrow we're funded for 18,000."

DEAN SMITH: We would be—

The Hon. ROD ROBERTS: You are not funded for 18,000 if you want to pay student police officers, if you want to quarantine positions for admin positions, and if you want to pay the award salary increase. You don't have those funds, do you? It's a simple proposition.

DEAN SMITH: The way that you have put it to us, that is correct. However, that's not the environment we are in.

CORRECTED

The Hon. ROD ROBERTS: I know what you're trying to do. All strength to you, but it's not going to work. This is not sustainable, is it? What you're doing at the moment is not sustainable if you had 18,374 coppers—

DEAN SMITH: We wouldn't be doing what we are doing if we did have that number.

The Hon. ROD ROBERTS: Because you wouldn't have the money to do it, would you?

DEAN SMITH: I can't answer that question, because that is a hypothetical. I don't know what would be allocated to us out of the budget processes which we go through every single year.

The Hon. ROD ROBERTS: Somebody from the secretariat, if you don't mind? I've got another document I want to circulate. I'll give you time to absorb it, although you're a signatory to it and you must know all about it—as would every member of the CET know about it. What we have there—you tell me what we have. What is this document, Deputy Commissioner? What does it say, and what does it represent?

DEAN SMITH: The issue, which is outlined, is an update on the status of an administration review and the organisational change within NSW Police Force.

The Hon. ROD ROBERTS: It puts forward a number of options, doesn't it, in terms of funding going forward for various positions?

DEAN SMITH: It does.

The Hon. ROD ROBERTS: Let's go to page 2. It talks about authorised police positions, officer head count, vacant positions et cetera. Let's go to point 2 of option 3. What does that say?

DEAN SMITH: Do you want me to read that out, Mr Roberts?

The Hon. ROD ROBERTS: No. What does it mean?

The Hon. EMILY SUVAAL: Point of order: Just on a point of procedural fairness, as I might have raised earlier, the document has just been put in front of all of us. It is four pages in length. I certainly haven't managed to familiarise myself with it, nor would I expect our witnesses perhaps have, particularly in the scheme of things, in terms of the volume of the work. Perhaps it might be useful to give the witness some time to have a look and for us to also consider as a Committee how we proceed with it.

The Hon. ROD ROBERTS: To the point of order—

The Hon. EMILY SUVAAL: Five pages—I stand corrected.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: I've got a feeling Mr Roberts is going to make the same submission on the point of order, and that is it's a document that it's very likely the witness is already very familiar with, and of course—

The Hon. ROD ROBERTS: He signed it. Go to the last page.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: —he can take anything on notice. His signature is on there.

The Hon. EMILY SUVAAL: Further to the point of order: We all sign documents, and probably do so every day. In terms of the manner and the number of them, I just think in terms of procedural fairness the witness ought to be given some time to consider what's been put in front of him.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: I absolutely take the point of order on board and I urge and ask the witness, if you are feeling any pressure, or any desire to require some more time, that is the procedural fairness resolution. You can take absolute comfort in requesting the Committee to give you more time and we would do so. If you're happy to proceed, then—

DEAN SMITH: I'm happy to answer the question.

The Hon. ROD ROBERTS: Point 2 under option 3—we know what it says. We can all read. What does it mean in practical terms for the New South Wales police?

DEAN SMITH: In practical terms, it means that there is a number of officers that need to be recruited. If we recruited 1,100 per year then in terms of the funding envelope we would need to maintain the level of vacancies in those spaces. That is what it talks about in terms of maintaining the authorised police vacancies to be able to pay for—and these are the words which are written there, "maintained to pay for both schemes". But it is a point in time. It is an option and a paragraph within an options paper document.

The Hon. ROD ROBERTS: Was option 3 the option chosen by the CET?

DEAN SMITH: Yes, it was.

CORRECTED

The Hon. ROD ROBERTS: My time has expired. We'll come back to this.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: Commissioner Webb, did you or any of your officers request of the New South Wales Government—or the Premier or through the police Minister—that you required any new powers under the law enforcement police powers Act in the last six months?

KAREN WEBB: I'm not sure that we specifically asked for it. As has been pointed out and spoken about this morning, in terms of the work that has been done extensively in our organisation in response to the reported hate crime and protests and a number of other things, we've just responded and briefed accordingly. I certainly can't recall asking for anything specifically. Mr Hudson, is there anything we asked for?

DAVID HUDSON: In relation to the antisemitism and hate crime things, we were consulted and asked for consultation, but didn't push—

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: In particular, did you request any extra powers in relation to being able to control or manage gatherings, assemblies or protests?

DAVID HUDSON: Not that I'm aware of, but Mr Thurtell manages protests.

PETER THURTELL: As has already been indicated, we did respond to some legislative proposals, I suppose you could call it, and how we felt about those and what additional information we could add to them. But I don't recall asking for any specific powers.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: So any of those law reform initiatives that the New South Wales Parliament has established in the last couple of sitting weeks, during this year—none of those were specifically initiated or asked for by any of you as the senior officers?

DAVID HUDSON: In relation to section 93Z of the Crimes Act, I think it has been problematic since it was created. The Law Reform Commission did a review and said it was unworkable, more or less, so they have modified that with a further subsection. Whether that's us asking for that or—but we were aware of that, and we have flagged previously that it's hard to prosecute.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: Commissioner, can I just ask you about the use of tasers? I've noticed that there has been an 18.2 per cent five-year trend increase in police deploying tasers. October 2023-24 was the highest level of taser deployment in the last five years. There were 1,913 incidents in October 2023-24, with tasers discharged in 331 cases. Some 26.8 per cent of incidences have been against First Nations people; a 37.9 per cent increase in the five-year trend of taser deployments against First Nations women; a 52 per cent increase in the five-year trend for First Nations young women; and a 36.8 per cent increase in the five-year trend for First Nations young people. Does this concern you in terms of the increase of 36.8 per cent over five years for First Nations young people?

KAREN WEBB: I don't have that data in front of me, but I accept what you say. Taser is a tactical option available to officers in a range of tactical options that they carry, including OC spray, batons, taser and their firearm. Certainly our policy around the use of taser carries with it a policy that says the taser use needs to be reviewed by a panel consisting of the assistant commissioner. I've sat on those panels myself over time, where the footage is reviewed and the event is reviewed. They are scrutinised extensively. If there's a point around whether it's—it's not targeted towards a particular group, but I accept that you say that it is a rise against First Nations people.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: It was a 36.8 per cent increase over five years for First Nations young people, and there was a 122 per cent increase from October 2022-23 to 2023-24. That's a 122 per cent increase. Had something changed in policing and in relation to taser use during that period, that you're aware of?

KAREN WEBB: Mr Hudson was just reminding me we had COVID, so there were not as many people around, but certainly—as I said, they're reviewed at the region commander/assistant commissioner level. So I'm confident that each matter is reviewed—every single taser usage—whether it's a drive fire or it's just a misfire or actual deploy. Generally, I think our crime environment is a more violent environment, and I don't shy away from that. There has been discussion here this morning about what we see in youth crime, regional crime—any crime. That's what I see. I see that my officers—our officers—are confronted and are in more risky situations every day, whether it's drug related or whatever it is. I don't know the cause of it, but I do see a change in our society.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: When you say a change in our society, do you have a period of time in your mind's eye when you're talking about this trend or this change? Over what period of time are you—

KAREN WEBB: We've all been around this table a long time. Certainly, in our 35-plus years each, I've noticed—and I'm sure the deputies can speak for themselves, but I've certainly seen a change from my early days on the front line. For example, we did a piece of work, I think last year or maybe even the year before, on a review

CORRECTED

of Aboriginal representation by police, whether as victims of crime or whether as offenders, both as young people and as adults. There are four reports that came forward and one integrated report that talked about what we're seeing in terms of the people we're seeing coming forward younger. They're starting to commit more violent crime younger, and people often ask, "How do we fix it?", or, "When do we see these people first come to the attention of police?" They often first come to the attention of police as babies or as children at risk, and then there's antisocial behaviour, and then there's crime. There's a well-trodden path. From my own experience—I don't have anything empirical, and there's probably something in the research journals and our own evidence—certainly society is more risky.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: On that, particularly young people and what we were talking about earlier, do you think locking up more First Nations kids at the moment, refusing bail—are you seeing that that's reducing crime?

KAREN WEBB: It's a bit of a seesaw, to be honest. It goes up and down, and it depends whether we see some repeat offenders in custody or not, really. We see a spike in crime when some of our repeat offenders are not in custody. Our job in protecting the community is to protect victims of crime. Sitting with victims of crime who are mid-eighties, who have had their house broken in at three o'clock in the morning and hearing their story and how fearful they are is terrible. So I'll make no apology for all the hard work that the police are doing to protect their communities.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: Everybody agrees in terms of trying to protect communities. I think what we as a Parliament have been trying to grapple with, and specifically in the upper House, is—and I take on board what the Minister was saying earlier; she's an open door for ideas. We are just very concerned and are trying to examine whether the current response settings that we have right now are actually going to be effective if the ultimate goal is protecting society and keeping communities safer.

KAREN WEBB: There has to be a circuit breaker. Certainly as police officers with a 24/7 responsibility in communities, we use the levers that are available to us. If we investigate a crime and we identify an offender, then they'll get charged.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: When you say you're not sure what's causing this spike, surely your frontline officers have some pretty good ideas. We're talking about those criminogenic inputs, whether it's poverty, homelessness, substance abuse or domestic and family violence.

KAREN WEBB: I think it's all of those things. I've used this term here before and I'll continue to use it—police officers and police are the ambulance at the bottom of the cliff when it comes to these sorts of issues, unfortunately.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: Are your officers satisfied at this point in time that the main remedy they have is to arrest, get refusal of bail and kids get locked up?

KAREN WEBB: Certainly the decision around diversions—no longer an option for many of these kids—is always an option to be considered. But if the option around diversions had been exhausted then there aren't many other tools left, and then what else is available in communities is sort of outside of my purview. But it's a job that we have to do. No-one wants to see kids locked up. But equally, I don't like seeing people, particularly elderly people, broken into and bashed in their homes.

The Hon. SCOTT BARRETT: Commissioner, thank you for coming along. You talked about some of the changes you've seen over time. Are we seeing a worsening in regional crime?

KAREN WEBB: I grew up in a country town, and I grew up in a time when you could leave your house unlocked and your car unlocked. Society has changed. But I do worry for our society that we're seeing a younger generation start to commit crime at an earlier age, so 10 and above. In my days as a general duties officer and a younger detective in a PAC, they were 16-year-olds. They started off with shoplifting and then they'd escalate from there. When I was a commander at Holroyd, it was 14-year-olds starting off with a high school riot with machetes. Now we're seeing 10-, 11-, 12-year-olds breaking into homes with weapons, stealing cars and bashing people. It's a slippery slope.

The Hon. SCOTT BARRETT: So it is the amount of crime as well as the severity of crime?

KAREN WEBB: I think, statistically—and I've got it here—BOCSAR tells me over 10 years it's dropping. But that doesn't change the fear in communities when I've got communities that are concerned and live in fear. The couple I talked about, who I saw on the TV last night—and they're both alive, thank God—now sleep during the day so they can be awake at night.

CORRECTED

The Hon. SCOTT BARRETT: Commissioner, are you concerned about the role social media is playing in that?

KAREN WEBB: I am.

The Hon. SCOTT BARRETT: Are we doing enough on that front?

KAREN WEBB: We've got post and boast, and all sorts of things. I know that the officers out there—and I want to pat the officers on the back because they're working very hard in all communities, whether it's Operation Mongoose, whether it's a strike force—are going back through footage and back capturing, and if they get the phone, they can retrospectively investigate matters. It's all after the fact, unfortunately. What can we do that is more contemporary in the prevention-disruption space? We've got kids that are stealing cars in one town and travelling almost halfway across the State to commit another crime.

The Hon. SCOTT BARRETT: You mentioned Operation Mongoose. It's a term I've picked up on in some of the reports. Is that a term that we're using now to describe—

KAREN WEBB: It's an operation being run in regional New South Wales to tackle youth crime. It's been running for about 18 months.

The Hon. SCOTT BARRETT: I just thought I picked up in one of the reports—it was talking about "Mongoose crimes".

KAREN WEBB: It's a term that we use. We call them "Mongoose offenders" et cetera.

The Hon. SCOTT BARRETT: How many new recruits were sworn into the NSW Police Force in the last calendar year?

KAREN WEBB: I'll refer to Mr Smith to get the exact numbers, but the numbers are growing. I think the Minister mentioned this morning that the numbers anticipated for this calendar year are 1,000 officers.

The Hon. SCOTT BARRETT: Possibly in this tranche as well, how many police officers left in that calendar year?

KAREN WEBB: I'll get that number for you too.

The Hon. SCOTT BARRETT: Are there specific departments within the NSW Police Force that are feeling the more acute shortages than others?

KAREN WEBB: We often, as an executive, review the operational capacity, the organisational capacity across the organisation. Whether it's frontline or some of the specialist units, it's currently somewhere around 75 to 80 per cent, generally. There are commands—and I know you raised some—that might be in the mid-60s, for example. When we're looking at placing new recruits into areas, we consider all of those things—where they go based on the current operational capacity.

The Hon. SCOTT BARRETT: I'll come to vigilantism now. How concerned are you about this rising movement towards vigilantes?

KAREN WEBB: I can understand communities' frustration, but usually no good comes of it and it puts themselves at risk. They're not trained. They're not equipped. As I said, we see too many young people carrying knives and other implements. That puts those people at risk.

The Hon. SCOTT BARRETT: Do you think there's a good understanding in the community about what a citizen's arrest is and what their roles and responsibilities are?

KAREN WEBB: They might see the odd one on TV or in a movie. It doesn't always end well, unfortunately.

The Hon. SCOTT BARRETT: Do you have a message to people talking on that front?

KAREN WEBB: I would say don't. They need to tactically withdraw and call the police.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: Commissioner, in relation to social media, do police have the ability to reach out to social media and ask them to pull certain pages down?

KAREN WEBB: We do. I understand that we have a relationship with the big media platforms, whether they agree to or not. We also work with the eSafety Commissioner to try and manage the content. That's not always possible. We often use social media platforms in the investigative space rather than the prevention and disruption space.

CORRECTED

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: For example, I understand that in the northern suburbs of Sydney there's a Facebook page with a fairly offensive title where very young people really are stealing cars and posting pictures, and essentially taunting the police to come and get them. Is it possible to go to the social media platforms and have that shut down?

KAREN WEBB: In the regional areas we've got Operation Mongoose. In the city we've got Strike Force Sweetenham, which has a similar mandate. I've met with those investigators and seen the work that they've done. They do work with the social media companies to take content down but also disrupt and investigate matters that they come across.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: What's the typical time frame if you wanted something taken down?

KAREN WEBB: I'd have to take that on notice. That might just depend on the provider and whether they're in country or not.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: Do the providers ever proactively reach out to you and let you know about certain pages?

KAREN WEBB: I'm not aware of that. I wouldn't like to say yes or no. Most of those big companies now have former law enforcement officers working with them, and I think that helps the relationship. I don't know about in terms of pre-emptively calling us.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: Are you satisfied that you have sufficient powers or is that an area that you would like to have greater powers or greater resources?

KAREN WEBB: I think there was a summit some time ago. As I said, I've met with the eSafety Commissioner a couple of times. It's a Commonwealth space. I think it's a difficult jurisdiction. We do what we can with what we've got, I guess is my point, with our laws.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: I acknowledge it's a difficult jurisdiction, but it's increasingly important, especially in terms of forming social mores. I wondered if there's more that we can or should do in that space.

KAREN WEBB: I think there's always more, but it's probably in that Commonwealth space.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: I think you flagged in answers to questions that we're currently below strength, and that you look carefully at where recruits go and whatever. Are there, for example, some country towns where you think, "Well, they'll have to operate without a police force for a certain period of time"?

KAREN WEBB: I'll hand to my regional deputy in a moment. There will be small country towns that are part of a bigger command district. Some of our districts might have 22 police stations. Some of them might be a one-person unit station out in, I don't know—in Boorowa there's two, for example, but it could be one. If that officer is on holiday or sick or something else, the deployment might come from Young or somewhere else. We deploy around some of those issues, so it would be a sore tooth that it's not perfect all the time but the community would always have a response from somewhere.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: So Young to Boorowa, what's the response time?

KAREN WEBB: Half an hour.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: Half an hour?

KAREN WEBB: Well, half an hour just normal driving.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: Would there be situations where there would be a longer response time if a station was unmanned because of holidays or some other reason?

KAREN WEBB: It just depends where the other cars were and what else they were responding to and, as you'd appreciate, we would prioritise and triage jobs depending on the type of job.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: How many police would be available to respond from Young?

KAREN WEBB: It's part of the Hume command, so I'd have to take that on notice.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: The question goes to, are we sure there is going to be sufficient capacity in Young to be able to also respond to Boorowa?

KAREN WEBB: They're decisions that are made by the local command and the district inspector to make sure that there's a response available and whether they recall people. Often in those country towns, there's a call-out process. It's the same for a lock-up keeper.

CORRECTED

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: Some of the Facebook vigilantism, for want of a better expression, seems to come from a fear that there is an insufficient police response time. To what extent are understaffed country police stations leading people to believe that they have to take their personal safety into their own hands?

KAREN WEBB: As I said, certainly I wouldn't encourage that.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: None of us would. I agree.

KAREN WEBB: No. To the point we talked about briefly this morning around trying to—we have a couple of projects through the Executive about freeing up our police from non-police duties, such as prisoner transport, managing those in custody, mental health, all those sorts of things to free up police to do police things. They're our priority, as a set, for this year.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: Just on mental health, are you aware of any work that has been done flowing from the upper House inquiry into mental health that made recommendations around PACER and other types of operations? Are you aware of any movement in terms of—

KAREN WEBB: Certainly I'm aware of the upper House inquiry as well as our own review that was done under Mr Hudson's leadership. We have a joint arrangement or working party with NSW Health about working towards a better model, so that project is still ongoing.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: Is there a timeline on that project?

KAREN WEBB: I'll defer to Mr Hudson on that.

DAVID HUDSON: I think there's general agreement about a pathway forward, but the timelines haven't been established. An updated MOU is out for circulation between Health and the police, and hopefully that's signed off by midyear, which will free up police time at emergency departments and a lot of other things.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: Is that affected at all by the resignation of staff psychiatrists from NSW Health?

DAVID HUDSON: It hasn't at this stage, no.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: Just a couple of questions, Commissioner—and perhaps you could direct me as to who would be best able to answer these—about police buildings. We're the First State, so a number of police stations have been used for quite a long time. I understand, for example, maintenance perhaps isn't as it should be to provide good working conditions for police. I've received reports, for example, that the former courthouse at Glebe, which was being used by police, needed to be abandoned when water was pouring from electrical fittings and fixtures. There's apparently also asbestos and black mould in the building. Is there enough money in the maintenance budget to make sure that all of these police buildings are at the standard that we would expect them to be to provide proper working conditions for police?

KAREN WEBB: I take your question, and to that, we have over 500 police premises around the State. As you point out, we've been operating as a police force for over 165 years, so some of our buildings are probably around that age. Some of them are newer. But I'll hand to Mr Smith, who looks after the infrastructure and assets command.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: Have we got enough money in the budget to make sure that we're doing appropriate maintenance on all the police buildings?

DEAN SMITH: We prioritise our spend both in a capital and minor capital approach in that space. Our minor capital budget at the moment is fully expended and is expended each and every year.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: Can I just stop you there. So the budget goes through to 30 June, does it?

DEAN SMITH: Yes, financial year budgets.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: We're now at the start of March, so there's no more money for minor capital?

DEAN SMITH: No, we allocate a program in advance, so we forecast where those spends are and how that is being expended. I think in relation to Glebe—

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: Just so I can dig down into the details, you have a forecast program of action.

DEAN SMITH: Correct.

CORRECTED

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: What happens if a tree goes through the police station at Ryde?

DEAN SMITH: We fix it.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: From what budget?

DEAN SMITH: Whether that's from organisational-wide budget, whether that's from reallocation of funds that haven't been spent in the maintenance cycle. We forecast, we bring forward, so it's not a fixed—we have a program and then when things happen, we fix what we need to fix and we make sure that that's done. Glebe, as an example, we spent \$1.6 million to rectify the roof, the mould and other issues, and we're constantly doing that across a program of works.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: So \$1.6 million on Glebe. I understand that the total maintenance budget is \$12.4 million. So if you have 500 sites and \$1.6 million goes on Glebe, that's almost a sixth on one police station.

DEAN SMITH: No, there are two buckets of money. You are talking about a capital expenditure program, and Glebe fell into a capital expenditure program of money. And then the maintenance—

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: And how much is in the capex budget?

DEAN SMITH: It depends each year. It's usually around about \$200 million, depending upon the program of works that is in place, and that's generally programmed over a number of years. The maintenance budget is just that; it's a maintenance budget for things that happen and they're allocated as they need be to be fixed.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: Are you confident that everything is being maintained so that police have appropriate working conditions?

DEAN SMITH: We address safety issues. We address the issues that we need to. Is it perfect in terms of—would we always ask for more money? Yes, we do. Would we always accept more money? Yes, we would. The program of works is extensive. It is mapped out over a decade in terms of what our capital works is to build and maintain police stations. We have specific programs of work, and we're never underspent in the property space.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: I understand that New South Wales police infrastructure and asset command has commissioned a condition assessment report. Is that right?

DEAN SMITH: Yes, but I'd have to take the detail of that on notice. I'm not aware of the detail.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: I believe it's due at the end of March. Is that right? I'm happy for you to take it on notice.

DEAN SMITH: I am. We normally would across a cycle of maintenance programs, and that would inform decisions as to where we go and what we do.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: How is that report made public?

DEAN SMITH: I'd have to have a look at that. Whether it's in the annual report, I can't remember if that is in it, but I'll take it on notice.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: I wonder if you could undertake to provide us with a copy of that report when it's finished?

DEAN SMITH: Yes, that's fine.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: That'd be great. Commissioner Barnes, if I could go to you, perhaps. I understand that the NSW Crime Commission is doing work into the confiscation of the proceeds of crime acquired by Mr Eddie Obeid and his family. We had understood from the Minister that that would be completed by now. I wonder if you could update us on what's happening with that.

MICHAEL BARNES: As you'd appreciate, it has been a very intensive investigation. It's relating to activity that occurred more than 10 years ago. Banks don't keep records back that far, and the defendant, or potential defendant in the matter, also had no interest in preserving a record. It's also the case that the defendant had a complex discretionary trust or a number of discretionary trusts that have created very significant difficulties in our tracing and reconstructing the accounts.

On top of that, we're faced with a number of legal barriers, applications for a stay in view of the time and the challenges the defendant would face in responding to an application; difficulties with admissibility of evidence; and then locating property that would give us sufficiently positive prospects of recovering such as would

CORRECTED

warrant the initiating of proceedings and the considerable exposure to adverse costs orders. Overcoming all of those difficulties, or properly assessing the scope of all those challenges, has taken a considerable period of time. We've outsourced some of the very high level forensic accounting that was necessary, and we've applied our own resources to the assessment of the legal questions. We're nearing the end of that investigation, and we will produce a report in the near future.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: When you say "nearing", how close are we to that report being available?

MICHAEL BARNES: I've seen a draft, but it has gone back for further work.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: So you can't give us any sort of time frame? I understand this has been going on since 2021.

MICHAEL BARNES: That's when we first announced we would undertake the work, but it didn't start immediately.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: So, April?

MICHAEL BARNES: Certainly before the end of this financial year.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: Commissioner Webb, the Vice-Chancellor of the University of Sydney has given evidence that the NSW Police Force offered to clear the encampment from the University of Sydney grounds. Can you tell us when that offer was made?

KAREN WEBB: I will ask Mr Thurtell to comment on that, but it was certainly more at that local level.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: Excellent. I'm really trying to get an idea of the timeline.

PETER THURTELL: You're talking about the PAG protest activity—is that what you're talking about?

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: The encampment at the university, yes.

PETER THURTELL: I don't know what the vice-chancellor said, and I stand to be corrected on this, but I don't think we have ever offered to clear the ground for any reason.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: He gave evidence—

PETER THURTELL: In fact, I know when we had the initial conversations with them, we indicated to the university that it was a matter for them to tell the students that they had to vacate et cetera, and that we wouldn't be getting involved unless absolutely necessary. As I said, I stand to be corrected, but we have never offered to clear anything.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: What circumstances would constitute "absolutely necessary"?

PETER THURTELL: As a last resort, I think once they had expired all their own civil means of doing it—utilised their own personnel, expelled students and all that sort of stuff—would we get involved. The university initially allowed the protest to start, and then the fact that it got out of control didn't become our problem.

The Hon. ROD ROBERTS: I will go back to where we left off, Mr Smith. We finally agree that there are positions being quarantined, as per this paper that we've talked about and the reasons behind that. I'm going to read it to you. I can provide you with a copy; this is not a trick at all. There will be a question at the end of it. I asked a question of the Leader of the Government in the upper House in question time on 18 February, just two weeks ago. I asked:

Is it still this Government's policy, platform and, indeed, desire to fill the deficit in all outstanding sworn positions to full authorised strength as soon as possible?

The Leader of the Government replied, inter alia, but this is the crunch of it:

Of course, the Government's desire is to have police officers in every position we have vacant.

...

The policy is we want police officers we can get in every vacancy. That is pretty obvious. That is what we want.

...

But the policy is pretty clear: We want as many people in the positions as we can get.

That's her statement; it's not attributed to you. Taking into account what we know from this in yellow, that's not going to be achieved at this point in time, is it? The Government's policy and desire to fill every single position is contrary to what is actually taking place at the moment.

CORRECTED

DEAN SMITH: I think there needs to be some context provided to that, Mr Roberts. I think, to that statement, we're not at odds in terms of wanting to fill every position. However, at the moment, that is not where we are currently at. We need to operate our business within our budget, and we are putting in place mechanisms to be able to do that. As I answered before, as soon as our forecast, our recruitment and other things—we will be putting up business cases and budget submissions to ensure that we can and will fund our positions. We have to be able to manage our budget and run our business in a way that is appropriate and fit for purpose at a point in time, and that is what we are attempting to do.

The Hon. ROD ROBERTS: So you're running your budget at the moment in a way that's fit for purpose—I can't remember your exact words—at this point in time by not filling positions. Correct?

DEAN SMITH: No, we're not filling positions because we forecast the recruitment numbers to fill positions. That's what we do. We know the numbers that we are getting in via a number of processes. We know the number we'll get at the academy. We know what those class sizes will be. We know and have forecast what attrition rates look like. We know what is coming in from professional mobility; we know what comes in from rejoiners. There is a balance sheet of pluses and minuses around what all of that looks like. Our position is and will be to always make sure that we can fund our authorised positions.

The Hon. ROD ROBERTS: Paragraph (2) of option 3 states:

If we recruit 1,100 police officers per year, we must maintain 390 x Vacant Authorised Police Positions to pay for Paid Student Police Officers.

We must also maintain 350 x Vacant Authorised Police Positions to pay for EPSS.

I'd argue it's for the wages, but anyway—

In total, a minimum of 740 x Vacant Authorised Police Positions ... must be maintained to pay for both schemes.

Later on, the acting chief financial officer says it's not 740 but, in fact, 812. But that's what's happening. Do you agree?

DEAN SMITH: At a point in time, in that document, yes.

The Hon. ROD ROBERTS: At this point in time, now—

DEAN SMITH: No, because that position has changed.

The Hon. ROD ROBERTS: —we are quarantining positions and not filling positions because we can't afford to.

DEAN SMITH: I don't agree with that proposition, Mr Roberts.

The Hon. ROD ROBERTS: While we're talking about recruiting, at his budget estimates hearing, in response to a question from the Hon. Mark Banasiak about recruiting, Premier Minns said, "I believe we are now net positive in terms of recruits and retirements, which is a good sign." That's what he said. I can't ask you to possibly imagine where he would have got that from, but that statement is not correct, is it? We're not in a net positive position at all, are we?

DEAN SMITH: I don't know what the context of the question was. Are we talking about the forecast of those that we will recruit this year to the forecast of those that will leave this year? Is that what you're asking me?

The Hon. ROD ROBERTS: Again, there's no trick to it. I'm just trying to shorten it up. Banasiak said, "Sorry to interrupt, Premier. The recruits that are coming through, are they enough to deal with the ones that are going out the back door?" The Premier replied, "I believe we are now net positive in terms of recruits and retirements, which is a good sign." We're not in net positive terms, are we?

DEAN SMITH: For 2024, we'll be close. Historically, no.

The Hon. ROD ROBERTS: No, we're not talking historically. What's the forward forecast for the end of 2026?

DEAN SMITH: In terms of numbers, we're still building classes. But in terms of 2025, we have 330 or 340 down at the academy now, we have just under 400 online in session one, and then we are building a class that will be positive 400 in terms of what we have. We have over 1,000 applications that are currently in process at various stages, so we are forecasting around 1,100 to hopefully 1,200 recruits this year.

The Hon. ROD ROBERTS: What's the separation forecast?

CORRECTED

DEAN SMITH: The separation forecast, depending upon a number of factors, will either be just above or just on that, depending upon a number of factors.

The Hon. ROD ROBERTS: This document that we've been referring to at paragraph (4) states:

Based on the current trajectory of trends (see Dark Blue line in the chart below) Vacant Authorised Police Positions will continue to increase given the projected recruitment and separations.

The projection is 1,100 recruits a year, losing 1,400 in separations.

By 2026, it is forecasted to be above 3,000 Vacant Authorised Police Positions.

This is an internal police document; this is not Roberts speculating.

DEAN SMITH: No, I'm not arguing. It is a forecast. There are a number of factors that need to be taken into consideration.

The Hon. ROD ROBERTS: That's the forecast. That's the New South Wales police modelling going forward. Have you told the Minister that this is the forecast going forward—that we're going to end up with about 3,000 vacancies at the end of 2026?

DEAN SMITH: Specifically in relation to this paper?

The Hon. ROD ROBERTS: No, in general.

DEAN SMITH: I don't know.

The Hon. ROD ROBERTS: Does the Minister know that our trajectory is going backwards?

DEAN SMITH: The Minister has been briefed on our forecast.

The Hon. ROD ROBERTS: That's all I needed to know. She's been briefed that the forecast is going to be 3,000. So when Mr Minns says that we're at net positive terms, no-one knows, and you wouldn't know either. Nobody would be expected to know where he has plucked that from, but that's not factual. I'll leave that as a statement rather than a question. Going back to the quarantining of positions that we agree is happening, has the Minister been informed about that?

DEAN SMITH: I'm not aware of that. In terms of this paper itself? Not to my knowledge.

The Hon. ROD ROBERTS: No, not this paper. Does the Minister know that the NSW Police Force is quarantining positions at the moment to offset various other things?

DEAN SMITH: The word "quarantining"—

The Hon. ROD ROBERTS: Or "repurposing". Use whatever name you like. I don't care.

DEAN SMITH: We are utilising our employer-related expenses and underspends in that space to fund that, and the Minister is aware of that environment for us.

The Hon. ROD ROBERTS: So the Minister knows?

DEAN SMITH: The Minister is aware of what that looks like in terms of our funding environment.

The Hon. ROD ROBERTS: So when she said this document's all wrong earlier today—again, you can't comment on what she was thinking but, again, it's a statement from me that she brushed it off because she was snookered, for want of a better word. It is in fact correct, isn't it? We've agreed to this already.

DEAN SMITH: I can't answer—is that a statement about the Minister's position?

The Hon. ROD ROBERTS: It's a statement. I said you can't answer it.

DEAN SMITH: I'm not answering a statement, Mr Roberts.

The Hon. ROD ROBERTS: I didn't ask you that. You don't answer statements; you answer questions. I said I'm making a statement.

DEAN SMITH: I know that. That's why I remained silent, and I didn't answer.

The Hon. ROD ROBERTS: Good. In this same yellow document, the acting chief financial officer says, inter alia:

Quarantining of vacant authorised police (sworn) positions to support ongoing operational admin needs is not good practice and should not be embedded into an annual review type process going forward.

CORRECTED

So we have a very senior public servant, the chief financial officer of the New South Wales police in the FABS branch, or whatever it is they call it, saying this is not good practice, but the CET has chosen to adopt that anyway, contrary to his advice. Is that correct?

DEAN SMITH: It's a considered position on a temporary basis for the work environment that we currently face. We acknowledge all the comments that are there. The decisions that are made are made in the Commissioner's Executive Team meetings.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: Commissioner, can I ask you briefly to turn your mind back to late last year and before New Year's. Did you, your office or any of your officers speak with the Premier or the Premier's office about the potential RTBU—the Rail, Tram and Bus Union—industrial action over New Year's Eve?

KAREN WEBB: I just can't remember. I spoke to the Premier at some point. I was out at Penrith water park for some thing. I think it was more the Premier's Department around a meeting with the public servants, not ministerial level.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: There would have been some discussion about that potential industrial action and what the Premier's Department wanted the police to do. Could you give us some context?

KAREN WEBB: My recollection—and I'll have to go back if you want more detail. Certainly, as an agency critical to the planning for New Year's Eve, what would normally happen for us in any major event—every New Year's Eve, every Australia Day, every Vivid—is around a risk assessment, around the known risks to an environment. This year, or late last year, the risk was a possible rail strike and what that would mean, should that eventuate on New Year's Eve, in terms of a policing response. I was part of those discussions about what are some of the concerns we have in terms of risk to public safety if that were to eventuate.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: In relation to the Newcastle people's blockade of the world's largest coal port, going back to that event, do you recall or did any of your officers have any conversations with the harbourmaster that might have been him suggesting to police that it wasn't safe for ships to be coming in or out of the harbour?

KAREN WEBB: I don't have any personal knowledge of that. I'll default to my deputy regional, who may or may not, given that the region commander was dealing directly on those issues.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: Deputy Commissioner, do you have any knowledge about any conversations that may have been happening with the harbourmaster and the harbourmaster suggesting that allowing ships coming in and out in the circumstances was not a good idea or was unsafe?

PAUL PISANOS: To be honest, I can't be 100 per cent certain. There may very well have been. I would suggest, if that was the case, it probably would have formed part of the proceedings of the Supreme Court in regard to the objections. The objection, as you know, was taken on public safety grounds in terms of the operation of the shipping lane itself.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: Sorry, I'm not meaning to cut you off, but I'm referring to post those proceedings and when the event actually was taking place—was there any communications? I'm happy if you want to take this on notice and provide any detail back to the Committee. I'm very interested, and I think the Committee should be informed, about whether there was any communication from the harbourmaster to the police—whether it be on the ground or the senior officers—of the harbourmaster suggesting that he thought it was too unsafe for ships to be going in or out of the coal port during the people's blockade of that coal port.

PAUL PISANOS: I'm comfortable to say there were ongoing discussions and I was being briefed on it, but I can't say specifically. I'd have to take that on notice. There were live and enduring conversations that were going on. That was the focus of the risk—was activation of the shipping lane and the movements within the shipping lane. So it would have been, definitely, a point of ongoing discussion. I'll take the specifics on notice.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: I'm particularly interested if the police on the ground did any well-intentioned but pushback on the harbourmaster of his views about whether it was safe or unsafe in the circumstances.

PAUL PISANOS: I'll take it on notice.

Ms CATE FAEHRMANN: I just want to go back to the data that we were talking about earlier in the day in relation to the Early Drug Diversion Initiative. Firstly, is there updated data from—I think we went to 31 October, in terms of the data my officers obtained. Have we got anything more current? Nothing has been provided to you in that time? I'm after the total number of diversions and the total number of charges.

PETER THURTELL: Between 1 March 2024 and 31 December 2024, there were 9,686 legal actions for drug possession and/or use of drugs, excluding cannabis. Of those, 827 were dealt with by criminal

CORRECTED

infringement notices, and the 9,686 legal actions related to 5,656 persons of interest, which means that, as far as I'm aware, a total of 15 per cent were diverted by EDDI.

Ms CATE FAEHRMANN: You've just said 9,686. That's total.

PETER THURTELL: That's 1 March to 31 December—yes.

Ms CATE FAEHRMANN: Yes, and you've just said that doesn't take into consideration cannabis.

PETER THURTELL: Cannabis, correct.

Ms CATE FAEHRMANN: The data that I have that was obtained—this one was a GIPAA, I think, up until 31 October. It includes cannabis. It's got 4,412 total diversion and charges. Actually, let's just do the charges, because that in itself is significant—4,369 charges. The data that you've given me is the first time I've heard of the data being provided without cannabis. The data I've obtained via my office generally has cannabis contained in there. The data that this particular GIPAA asked had cannabis. So is there a separate cannabis charge?

PETER THURTELL: In the same period 2,141 cannabis cautions were issued.

Ms CATE FAEHRMANN: That just doesn't seem to correlate with the GIPAA data that—in fact, this is from the organisation Unharm, but it reflects the data that my office also obtained. This is across the State. I'll get you to table, if you could—because I'll be asking for it in supplementary questions anyway, so we could save you time—that information at the end. That would be good.

PETER THURTELL: It's got my scribble all over it.

Ms CATE FAEHRMANN: You can provide the detail on notice. I don't need the exact—

PETER THURTELL: It's Cabinet in confidence, I'm told.

Ms CATE FAEHRMANN: Sorry?

PETER THURTELL: I'm told it is Cabinet in confidence.

Ms CATE FAEHRMANN: That data is Cabinet in confidence?

PETER THURTELL: These documents.

KAREN WEBB: Not the data, just the information.

Ms CATE FAEHRMANN: Because they're briefing—yes. So the data, that would be good. We still need to work out the discrepancy within that. We'll possibly come back to that at a later date. Going back to the discrepancies between the local area commands and what is going on in terms of training different officers on EDDI and the availability of diversion within those LACs—I used the examples of Auburn and Bankstown earlier. Another example that I have is Campbelltown. Out of 208 total diversion arrests, one was diverted. The other 207 were charged. What's going on between the LACs, Commissioner? That's extremely stark.

KAREN WEBB: For a start, Auburn takes in the entertainment precinct at Homebush, so that may account for the events held at Homebush that are more friendly to an EDDI or a CIN. People are ineligible for an EDDI if they've got drug supply, importation or manufacture detected for more than one type of drug currently, excluding cannabis; have received more than two fines for EDDI previously; or have prior convictions for serious drug offences, other offences relating to cannabis or drug-driving offences. There have been other offences detected at the time that would exclude someone being eligible for an EDDI.

DAVID HUDSON: They could also be charged with another offence. You don't charge with an offence and then give them a CIN for a drug matter. You'd charge them with both.

Ms CATE FAEHRMANN: Is all of that captured in terms of looking at the reasons why this is failing? The Minister said that there are problems. I think every police representative that spoke at the drug summits that I was at in Lismore and Sydney also suggested that this needs to be reformed. Is the data collected to the level that you know what is going on beyond—

KAREN WEBB: It might take some work to delineate. We know that from 1 March last year to 31 December that the EDDI rate is 15 per cent. It's up from the year before, which was seven.

Ms CATE FAEHRMANN: What was that first date, sorry?

KAREN WEBB: From 1 March 2024 to 31 December.

Ms CATE FAEHRMANN: It's only been in place for that long.

CORRECTED

KAREN WEBB: I mean previous diversion programs. It's consumed at 15 per cent in that period. It may not be possible to draw out if people are charged for something else and the drug is part of that. I'd have to take that away.

DAVID HUDSON: We can also issue a CIN, but that doesn't mean that they go into a diversion program. They have the option of paying a fine and going to court. Only a percentage of that 15 per cent of CINs will go to diversion.

KAREN WEBB: In fact, of the 827 CINs dealt with under EDDI, 88 people issued an EDDI have completed the health intervention. The rest have elected to be dealt with the normal way, under a fine or something.

Ms CATE FAEHRMANN: The issue with the \$400 fine, Deputy Commissioner Hudson, is that people can waive the \$400 fine not going to court but having a one-hour phone call with a counsellor. I think a fair few people would probably take that.

DAVID HUDSON: Apparently they're not.

KAREN WEBB: Eighty-eight people have done it.

Ms CATE FAEHRMANN: Exactly.

KAREN WEBB: I don't know why, though.

Ms CATE FAEHRMANN: There's a huge issue there. I'll come back to that because there's a bit to unpick from that response.

The Hon. SCOTT BARRETT: Commissioner, can we go back to police transfers?

KAREN WEBB: Transfers?

The Hon. SCOTT BARRETT: Sorry, prisoner transfers. Who holds the responsibility for transferring prisoners between court and jail?

KAREN WEBB: It depends whether they're police bail refused or court bail refused. This is not a new issue, as you pointed out this morning. We have been fighting this fight for a long time. In fact, I met with the former corrections commissioner on a couple of occasions to say we needed their assistance to do more in that space, particularly where they are court bail refused. They are actually prisoners. The response I got at that time was, "We don't have the resources. We can't help you."

The Hon. SCOTT BARRETT: When was that?

KAREN WEBB: When the previous commissioner was around, early in my commissionership. It was probably 2022 or 2023. I'm pleased with the meeting I had with the acting commissioner a week or so ago. Their attitude and response is much more positive. I have a meeting scheduled with the new commissioner for 31 March. I'm hoping for a better outcome.

The Hon. SCOTT BARRETT: Was it purely just a lack of resources that the previous commissioner put this down to?

KAREN WEBB: I believe so. Equally, that's not my problem. I need to get police back on the road and not to be transporting prisoners around. That's why this has become an issue or priority for me for this year. The union and I agree that this is an issue and that we need to work together on this.

The Hon. SCOTT BARRETT: You sort of committed to doing something about this at the association conference last year. I'm looking to see something.

KAREN WEBB: I had asked for the data in November and learnt that data wasn't readily available, which is why we made the changes to our CAD system so that we could capture the data. Now we can move forward with much more rigour in our debate with corrections and others about how we manage this moving forward.

The Hon. SCOTT BARRETT: In the parliamentary inquiry into regional safety, we have heard examples of this—for instance, people going from Gunnedah to Grafton. That's five hours.

KAREN WEBB: It's ridiculous.

The Hon. SCOTT BARRETT: That has to be an overnight stop with two people and a car, right?

KAREN WEBB: Yes. It's crazy.

The Hon. SCOTT BARRETT: That's having a huge impact on our regional—

CORRECTED

KAREN WEBB: I went out to Nyngan. Nyngan Police Station, built in the mid-1970s, sits next to a court. Nyngan Police Station doesn't have an AVL, but the court next door does. They can't access the court after hours and it only sits once a fortnight or whatever it is. I went out to Condobolin, and they have got access to the court basically 24/7. I've met with my counterpart, the secretary at DCJ, and said that we just need to have access to the AVL. I don't care where it is. I can't have police crisscrossing the country with prisoners when I've got an AVL sitting in a room next door.

The Hon. SCOTT BARRETT: It sounds like, as well as the resourcing, there are some administrative changes that could happen to make this easier as well.

KAREN WEBB: Yes.

The Hon. SCOTT BARRETT: On the Rural Crime Prevention Team, I talked earlier about the stats that have come out talking about a 33 per cent drop in the rates of stock theft across the State. Does that sound correct or do you agree with *The Land* article suggesting that there's a severe amount of under-reporting?

PAUL PISANOS: The information that I've got through the RCI inspector is that under-reporting is an international problem with rural crime right across the world. The things that we are doing to encourage and promote the reporting of rural crime includes through agricultural shows. I think there have been upwards of five agricultural shows in the past six to 12 months where Cameron Whiteside and the team have presented in regard to stock loss prevention and promoting reporting. I think one of the big things, particularly in the Western Region, where we're doing our safe storage inspections on firearms, is that we promote that reporting of rural crime and encourage remote and regional landholders to report things—not just stock theft but theft of diesel and equipment, trespass and other things that impact their business.

On the Rural Crime Prevention Team, we've spoken about 63. He's carrying a couple of vacancies. There's active recruitment activity in place to keep that team at its full operational capacity. It's probably one of the largest full-time teams running that's doing this type of work in the world, as you know. It's got a significantly high profile internationally, which is a great thing, and is actively working around the crime prevention space in regards to funding. The actual corporate hub, which is based in the Western Region, at Dubbo, was funded to run the intelligence and coordination team. The separate rural crime investigators come under the strength and the funding model for the police districts they work within. It's a combined, shared funding model.

The Hon. SCOTT BARRETT: Are those 63 just working in this team or are they in other policing roles as well?

PAUL PISANOS: They're effectively universal investigators but, largely, they're all carrying rural crime cases. That is their focus and specialist responsibility. Effectively, they're like another type of specialist investigator; however, they have been working with us where the need is. They do work in homicide strike forces that may occur in regional. They've been assisting—you've alluded to, as did the commissioner—with Mongoose. They've been assisting in regard to some of our high-risk offender arrests and investigations. They're active participants in that space because it is regional crime. Yes, they all carry that specialist responsibility in terms of follow-up, investigating particularly at the moment firearms theft. They really inject themselves into that space in the western region particularly.

The Hon. SCOTT BARRETT: Are they all authorised under POCTAA, the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act?

PAUL PISANOS: No. That's not our responsibility. They can assist in investigations, if asked, but that's not a police core responsibility.

The Hon. SCOTT BARRETT: Sorry, police are one of the agencies authorised—

PAUL PISANOS: We are, but that's not our—they can assist, and have assisted, but that's not their core role. That's certainly available to assist, as required, as they can, with abalone theft on the South Coast, and theft of oysters and other things that do relate to regional, remote and coastal crime.

The Hon. SCOTT BARRETT: What are the main crimes? Poddy-dodging? Fuel?

PAUL PISANOS: Yes, stock theft, trespass, firearms theft. They'd probably be the top three.

KAREN WEBB: Does *The Land* article allude to a reason for a drop in reporting?

The Hon. SCOTT BARRETT: They just talk about under-reporting. They said it'd actually be a good thing if there was an increase in numbers because more people would be reporting.

KAREN WEBB: I'm just waiting for the answer, but you can report crime online on our community portal. I don't know whether that's utilised enough in country areas. It's certainly an option.

CORRECTED

PAUL PISANOS: We're definitely promoting it actively through that team. All of our police that work in regional New South Wales, they're acutely aware outside of this specialised team of the need to support and encourage the reporting of crime that impacts on regional and remote communities. It's part of working out, as you know, in those areas, that you need to encourage the reporting of crime across the board, whether that's domestic and family violence or theft of property or trespass or whatever it might be.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: Mr Smith, just a follow-up question for you in relation to buildings. You said you've got the plan of capital works. The demountable in the backyard of Gladesville Police Station, where offenders are currently charged, was described as a "temporary fix" over two years ago. When will a proper building be built there?

DEAN SMITH: I'll have to take that on notice. In terms of that level of detail around that body of work, I'll take that on notice, if that's okay.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: Thank you. Given the changes in the Ryde Police Area Command—making it now one of the busiest locations, with police working across three different police stations—when can we expect a new purpose-built facility on the current Eastwood Police Station site?

DEAN SMITH: That was subject to a previous business case. However, that is not currently programmed or funded in the cycle for this year or next year. We'll continue to look at those business cases as we do each and every year in terms of those police stations that are in the program.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: You would be aware that police officers are actually forced to breach the commissioner's own directions every day by walking unarmed through public areas due to the poor design, where change rooms are located outside of the secure area of the station, where arms and appointments are kept. That didn't make the business case for a new police station?

DEAN SMITH: I'd have to take that component on notice. I'm not aware of the details of the business case.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: If you could take it on a notice and perhaps also provide details of which police stations were funded ahead of this police station. I also understand that mould and rodent infestation and numerous electrical issues are logged by officers, yet it won't get funding for at least two years?

KAREN WEBB: As you can imagine, ma'am, they're not decisions that we make but, to the deputy's point, we have put up a business case for Ryde. We continue to prosecute that case for them.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: I'm sorry, who's the decision-maker then?

KAREN WEBB: We fund within our funding envelope but, ultimately, they're decisions that are made in the funding decisions out of budgets and Treasury.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: Sorry, so the business case isn't an internal business case. It's a business case that's put to the Minister, and the Minister then decides that no, this isn't appropriate at this point.

KAREN WEBB: Government, ultimately, will make a decision based on government priorities.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: Mr Thurtell, perhaps if I could ask you a couple of questions. Last time we spoke, we were talking about the procurement of the wands. Can you tell me how many wands have been procured since September 2024?

PETER THURTELL: Yes. While I'm at it, if it's okay—and I don't speak on behalf of the Minister—there is a correction needed. This morning she said the New South Wales police had 120 wands. I think she meant had purchased 120 wands. In actual fact, we have 755 wands or scanning metal detection devices, and 120 of those have been purchased in recent times and 60 more are on order for regional areas.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: When you say wands or metal detection devices—

PETER THURTELL: Same things.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: —is there any difference between those?

PETER THURTELL: No. Well, I suppose, we call them wand operations.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: They're all what we would think of your basic hand-held wand.

PETER THURTELL: Yes, a scanner.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: You had 635 as existing stock, to which you've added 120 since September 2024. Is that what I should understand?

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PETER THURTELL: Correct. No, sorry, some of those were purchased in anticipation of the legislation coming. Yes. So not since December but in—

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: Since September.

PETER THURTELL: Let's say since in the middle of last year we purchased 120 extra knowing that the legislation was coming at some point.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: I'm now very confused because, when we spoke last time, you indicated that there had been no decision made as to what wands were to be purchased, and no wands had been purchased. In fact, I believe you were about to undertake travel to the UK and the USA to look at different wand options.

PETER THURTELL: Correct.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: Did you undertake that trip?

PETER THURTELL: Yes. I didn't, but other people did.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: Then I believe a business case was to be put to the Government for wands. Was a business case put to the Government?

PETER THURTELL: No. That was in anticipation that some of the technology that we envisaged being exposed to over in the UK would require significant expenditure on our behalf and, therefore, a business case would be required. Unfortunately, the technology isn't where it needs to be in order for us to justify that purchase. In fact, I think it's fair to say that the technology that we went over to see has already been superseded in the minds of what the UK are doing. I think it's fair to say that they've now moved on beyond that, and they're looking at other technology in the future.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: What is the UK doing?

PETER THURTELL: They're looking at things like even the cameras that are set up in railway stations et cetera would have the ability to determine whether somebody has a metal device, specifically down to a knife, on their person. That's how far advanced it could and will be.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: You looked at the—I think they were called radar detection wands.

PETER THURTELL: Radar detection devices.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: You looked at those?

PETER THURTELL: Yes, they just weren't—the technology for them is not where it should be. They're the devices that I say are probably being superseded already before they've even got off the ground.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: Which wands did you purchase?

PETER THURTELL: In terms of the wands that we've purchased since, we have done that within our own existing budget.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: But which wands did you purchase?

PETER THURTELL: The brand, you mean?

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: Were they the ones from the UK? Were they the ones from the USA?

PETER THURTELL: No, the ones from Australia. Yes, ones that are already—

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: Again, I'm confused because last time I think I specifically asked whether they would be sourced from Australia. I'm sure the answer was no and that you were looking to the UK and the USA.

PETER THURTELL: Yes.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: So where are they made in Australia?

PETER THURTELL: Don't know.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: Okay. Can you take that on notice, please?

PETER THURTELL: Yes. I can go to the website and have a look.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: That would be great. You said there's plans to purchase another 60?

PETER THURTELL: Sixty.

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The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: Then plans to purchase how many more?

PETER THURTELL: As far as I'm aware, there's no plans to purchase any more until we decide that we need them for some other reason. I'm happy to keep discussing it. There are some other things that—

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: There was uncertainty last time as to which commands would be using the wands. Has that been settled?

PETER THURTELL: What I told you last time was that our police transport and public safety command would initially be responsible for the operationalisation of the legislation. That has been the case. Since the legislation came, we've conducted 34 operations.

They've all been conducted by PT and PSC.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: So that means that command travels to that particular place?

PETER THURTELL: Correct.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: What's the cost involved in having them travel to that particular place?

PETER THURTELL: I don't have that specifically.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: Can you take that on notice, please—the cost both in the dollars that it takes but also the time that it takes, so time away from where they would normally be operating.

PETER THURTELL: That's where they would normally be operating.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: All over the State?

PETER THURTELL: You've got to remember our Police Transport Command travel to regional areas and do policing of the transport line—the buses, the trains et cetera. That is their job, so to say that this is specifically an expenditure might not be completely accurate because they go to regional areas anyway.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: I understand there's been at least one operation in Moree, is that right?

PETER THURTELL: No.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: What country places have there been operations?

PETER THURTELL: Central, Liverpool, Liverpool, Parramatta, Wollongong, Wollongong, Blacktown, Blacktown, Mount Druitt, Parramatta, Newcastle, Newcastle, Campbelltown, Macarthur railway station, Dubbo, Coffs Harbour, Wagga, Nowra, Bomaderry, Albury, Gosford, Tuggerah, Westfields and Lavington Square Shopping Centre at Albury.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: How much public transport is there in Wagga?

PETER THURTELL: There's a railway station and there's an airport. There's a bus stop.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: In terms of what you would expect the Police Transport Command to be normally policing, what sort of public transport is there in Wagga that would be part of their normal beat?

PETER THURTELL: Railway station, yes.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: How often, absent a wandering operation, would you expect the Police Transport Command to be in Wagga?

PETER THURTELL: I'd have to take that on notice, but they do go to regional areas.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: I would love it if you could take it on notice and tell me how many times in the last five years the Police Transport Command have been to Wagga, absent a wandering operation. So the decision has been made operationally that it will be that command and that command only that will have the wands?

PETER THURTELL: No.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: Which other commands will have the wands?

PETER THURTELL: No, that's what I said: We are transitioning now to regions, police area commands and police districts to use the legislation. What I told you last September was we wanted to iron out any issues in terms of our standard operating procedures, in terms of our technical ability to record the operation et cetera. As recently as 5 February this year, we had to make some amendments to our COPS to accurately record

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data properly. That's now done. I'm now satisfied that we have sound SOPs, we have sound training and we have sound operating procedures. I'm also satisfied that BOCSAR can pull the data out accurately, as required.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: How many police officers have been trained?

PETER THURTELL: That, I don't have.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: Could you take that on notice, please?

PETER THURTELL: Yes.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: How long does the training take?

PETER THURTELL: It's only a few hours.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: Is that now part of standard training for all recruits at Goulburn?

PETER THURTELL: No, the training is being conducted specifically by those that are going to use the legislation. Obviously, as time goes by, more and more people will be using it, particularly when it gets to a PAC and PD level, where obviously for the proactive teams and the GD teams that are going to use it, it is mandatory that they complete the training. They'll complete the training and then they're right to use the legislation.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: What other purposes are the wands used for, other than the wandering pursuant to what we call Jack's law?

PETER THURTELL: PT and PSC actually do wand people when they've got reasonable cause to do it on the railways, et cetera, on the lines. But the wands that we've purchased, their main purpose is to use for the knife scanning legislation.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: Where are they physically located?

PETER THURTELL: There are 60 with PT and PSC.

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

PETER THURTELL: No, I can tell you. It's 60 with PT and PSC, 60 in metropolitan Sydney commands, and the 60 that we have on order—I'm not sure if they've arrived or will be soon arriving—are for the regional areas, for distribution in accordance with what the region command is using. I think it was 20 per region.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: That's 180, but I thought you said the total figure was 755.

PETER THURTELL: Correct.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: So where are the others?

PETER THURTELL: They're at the police stations. They're used for scanning people, say, in custody, for example, for knives et cetera.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: So they wouldn't ordinarily be used as part of a Jack's law operation?

PETER THURTELL: The legislation has only just come in since December, but there are better ones, so that's why we use the new ones.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: Commissioner, what's the latest update on the review you launched into the toxic culture within the NSW Police Force?

KAREN WEBB: I met with the lead review person last Thursday. Her and her team have been engaged in reviewing documents, and they will start interviewing members of the organisation in a couple of weeks time.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: Do you have a completion and report-back time for that?

KAREN WEBB: Can I just check that, Dean? It's 18 months, I think, the review period.

DEAN SMITH: It's in a number of phases, but we're looking at between 12 and 18 months, depending upon the time frame, to undertake each of those phases.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: Just briefly, Commissioner, why did the NSW Police Force—or if I'm wrong, correct me—choose not to launch a criminal investigation into the incident involving an officer filming and distributing a colleague's genitals on camera?

KAREN WEBB: I'll have to take that one on notice. I don't know which matter you're referring to.

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Ms SUE HIGGINSON: It was reported, and it was a matter—I'd have to go back now, but it was not that long ago. It was an awfully—it was a reported incident about a police officer in a vehicle, travelling at distance, and somebody—

KAREN WEBB: I'd have to take that on notice.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: Thank you. I understand that the investigation is on, but I'd be very interested to know why that wasn't investigated as a criminal matter and what you specifically are doing to deal with those forms of toxic behaviours now, not just wait until the investigation is completed.

KAREN WEBB: Sure.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: I just wanted to ask you about strip searches, specifically, at train stations. There was data from the Redfern Legal Centre that between 2016 and 2024, averaging about 100 per year, there were 900 strip searches. Does that concern you in terms of the amount of strip searches being undertaken at train stations? Why is that such a frequent occurrence?

KAREN WEBB: It would be up to the officers running those operations. Trains, of all modes of transport, carry a lot of passengers. Some of our train station operations coincide with different things and events. I can't speak to any of those specifically, but I can take some more of that on notice, if you wish.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: Thank you. Just in relation to the other matter, it was reported on 27 January this year in the ABC. Could you provide me an answer?

KAREN WEBB: Okay.

The Hon. SCOTT BARRETT: Commissioner, do the students of the academy have full-time lodging during their course?

KAREN WEBB: Yes, they do.

The Hon. SCOTT BARRETT: We're just hearing—and maybe you could check this for me and take it on notice—that every couple of weekends they are asked to leave and vacate the academy, presumably for some other activity, and are then responsible for their own lodging for a weekend or something. Does that sound correct?

DEAN SMITH: I can answer that. It is not mandatory. But in terms of the environment that we have, in terms of paying student police officers, because of that pay and because of where they are, there are FBT implications under those arrangements. What we look forward and we are working towards is to make sure it's—we can't get around that; the Tax Office is the Tax Office. We're trying to make sure that it is absolutely not mandatory to do so. Forever and a day, police officers have had the opportunity to stay or leave. We are working through that environment now to make sure that it is fair and equitable, because we do not want people to be expending unnecessary costs and implications for that. But if they stay and they have to stay, or if they come from 10 hours away and they don't, they stay for the 16 weeks. However, what we need to be mindful of is that those implications are factored in, and that's the environment that we're in. We are working towards eliminating that. I won't say it's a legacy piece, but it is a piece that we are working through to make sure that nobody is worse off, and that they remain to get paid and they are not out of pocket.

The Hon. SCOTT BARRETT: Thank you. I'm wondering if someone can talk to me about the benefits of some of their less formal interventions for reducing crime. I'm thinking that the local footy team or dance club or painting group—do we see increases or decreases of undesirable activity when we do or don't have these sorts of activities available for kids, particularly in our regional areas?

PAUL PISANOS: Speaking in a regional setting, it's difficult to actually quantify the impact that alternatives and diversionary programs actually have. It's an ongoing piece of work that we, police, do try to evaluate and put some measure against a particular intervention—a breakfast program, an art program and a football interaction or something like that—but it's very, very hard to quantify, particularly when you're dealing with serious, violent offending, as to whether it actually has an impact or not in that space. It's a very, very difficult one to quantify, but we are still trying to do some work around measuring the impact that it has and the investment that we put into it.

The Hon. SCOTT BARRETT: Is it generally believed, though, that this is a positive thing, to have these activities?

PAUL PISANOS: Absolutely. I think any non-criminal justice intervention is a good thing. Through our youth action meetings, with 20 of those around the State, we're constantly monitoring the referral data into services and the work that we do in that space. We record that, measure it and report on it. I think any non-criminal justice intervention is a good thing, whether or not it's effective in the longer term, where sometimes we are the

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only agency in play in this space, which makes what we do really important in remoter communities with the PCYC programs and the like. But it's some of the work. We're not therapists. We can't fix some of those complex problems, but we're always in the mix to try to measure the impact and social impact of the things that we are doing, to see whether they do value-add and do add to public value. Our partnerships with not only the NRL but local sporting industry, local arts-type communities and other things are highly valuable. We'll continue to push into that space where we can and where it's applicable to do so.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: Thank you. That concludes this session. We're now going to take a 15-minute break, and we'll be back at 3.45 p.m.

(Short adjournment)

The CHAIR: Welcome back. Before I hand over to my colleague Ms Abigail Boyd, I should very quickly make mention that I understand it is Deputy Commissioner Peter Thurtell's last budget estimates that he will be attending with us. On his departure in July, it will have been after an incredible 40 years with the service.

The Hon. GREG DONNELLY: Hear, hear!

PETER THURTELL: I'll watch them on TV.

The CHAIR: You'll be there on your own.

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: I want to talk about workers compensation and doing one of those rare things where I look in the budget. I didn't bring it with me, but in the annual report there was a figure of \$737,184,000 in premiums paid. It says that there's been a just over \$200,000 adjustment that was made. It must have been at the end of the 2023-24 year. Does the \$737 million include the \$200 million or does that roll over into the 2024-25 year?

KAREN WEBB: I'll have to defer to my deputy.

DEAN SMITH: If I could take that component on notice, because it depends on the cycle. There are what are called hindsight adjustments in terms of the way premiums are paid and then accounted for, and where that is. I don't want to mislead or give an answer. I would like to be sure about the timing of that and what that looks like, if that's fine, Ms Boyd.

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: That would be really good. I also understand the latest agency performance adjustment calculation came out on—I think it is 31 December now. Are you able to take on notice what that impact was as well?

DEAN SMITH: Yes, I will take that on notice.

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: That would be great. Looking at the premiums from 2015 to 2023, we've had almost a doubling in the premium being paid by the NSW Police Force into the workers comp scheme. We've also had an almost doubling of the number of claims per 100 FTE during that time. What do you put that down to, Commissioner?

KAREN WEBB: We changed the old insurance scheme to the new scheme late last year. The former scheme—PBRI, it was called—existed since 2011-2012, so quite a few years. It wasn't assisting our officers to get back to work. It wasn't in the best interests of their health, nor the organisation's, so a change was required.

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: In terms of that lift in claims per 100 FTE, going from 15.27 to 27.87 in those nine years, do you put that down primarily to return-to-work issues or were there more in terms of the reason for the original claim?

KAREN WEBB: Unfortunately, the way the scheme was structured—and I'll ask Mr Smith to speak to it in more detail—it was not favourable to officers returning to work.

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: I understand that aspect when it comes to the amount of the premiums that will go to how many officers are off at any given time and what compensation payments are going out. Obviously the return-to-work figures are important to that, but in terms of the number of injuries, that's also increased—almost double. The question is why are we having almost double the rate of injuries in that nine years in the Police Force?

KAREN WEBB: The data would show that the number of physical injuries remains generally consistent, but it's the number of psychological injuries that has gone up. There are a whole lot of factors around what might be causing that, but what I can say is that we've been putting more and more support services in to support officers. We were funded for five years for the PULSE Program, which is a whole suite of initiatives to help officers return to work, including decentralised clinicians shared across different commands et cetera and

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other services—early access to treatment and a whole range of things. We've tried to improve, and continue to improve, support for officers so we can assist them to get back to work.

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: I'm looking at the 2023-24 police annual report. It talks about the mechanism of injury. You're correct that mental stress injury has gone up almost double in that time. But then you look at things like sound and pressure. Those injuries have gone up four times, so a 400 per cent increase. Vehicle incidents and other have gone up 200 per cent. Even things like heat, electricity and other environmental factors have gone up 200 per cent. Hitting objects with a part of the body has gone up 150 per cent. You can see where I'm going. Being hit by moving objects has gone up 150 per cent. That's quite a rise in even the non-physical injuries in nine years. What would you ascribe that to?

KAREN WEBB: I'm not sure that I've got a definitive answer, but through our injury management system injuries are reported. Obviously all matters reported are then investigated. So there's a diagnosis, if you like. Then trends are drawn out and treatments or processes are put in place to help. We've got, for example, what we call our RECON unit that helps officers in terms of both returning to work but also about how to—I'm trying to think of the name—go about your duties so you reduce your liability to impact, to injury et cetera. We're trying to put a lot of initiatives in place to reduce exposure to injury where we've seen particular trends, for example, as well as WHS policies around performing your duties and how to reduce risk in that space.

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: The Treasurer said in estimates this round about the desire of the Government to move towards focusing more on prevention and less on the once someone has made a claim part of things. I'll hold my comments on where I think that's going. But if we come back to that prevention point, it's a steady increase year after year. I take your point that policies are being put in place, but clearly it is still increasing. I haven't seen the 2024-25 figures, but given the drastic increase—even between 2022-23 and 2023-24 we've got a rise of 19.68—almost 20—claims per every 100 full-time police officers, going up to 27.87 last year. That is a huge increase in just that year. What has changed in response to that? What's new that's going to reduce that incidence?

KAREN WEBB: As I said, we changed our insurance product to an in-house insurance product.

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: That's for after the claim. What about for actually preventing it?

KAREN WEBB: Yes, but what goes with that and the establishment of the Health, Safety and Wellbeing Command, as a standalone command, is about preventing. We always try to prevent injuries before they occur, so there are many, many initiatives to help officers in that regard. In fact, I think officers today are fitter and healthier than I've ever seen them, but it's also a contact sport.

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: But it was always a contact sport. It was a contact sport in 2015.

KAREN WEBB: I'll pass it over to Mr Smith, but you weren't here earlier when I was saying that I think the operating environment has changed also. Society is different now.

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: But even something like vehicle incidents has increased 200 per cent since 2019. In the last four years it has increased—vehicle incidents. I find that quite extraordinary as well, given the increases in technology. Are there more car chases? Why are we getting more injured police officers?

DEAN SMITH: There are a number of additional factors. As an organisation, I think we have certainly matured around the fact of our reporting incidents and incidence of injury. That is a positive thing. When we are looking at our obligations to provide a safe workplace, we are always looking at when people report and why they report. Some of those increases might be notifications only—no time lost.

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: These are claims.

DEAN SMITH: Then for those that progress to claim, again, where they sit, how they're reported and how they're managed is what we are focusing on. You talk about the prevention space. Obviously with the PULSE Program, we have the mental health conditions that are embedded, and we are trying to remove the stigma about—

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: Sorry, just in the time I've got left, though, just look at the premiums paid. They have doubled since 2015. That indicates that it's not just rates of claims; it's also time off and the amount being paid out. Perhaps you can take it on notice—I'm looking for what is being done from a prevention perspective in response to this. If you have any thoughts about whether this is to do with under-resourcing or any of those things, I'd really welcome hearing that on notice as well.

The Hon. ROD ROBERTS: Mr Hudson, let's go back to Dural and the caravan and stuff like that. Correct me if I'm wrong here; we're trying to record stuff as we go. I think you said around about 21 January you informed the Premier that you had a suspicion—a suspicion only—that maybe it wasn't a terror plot with the caravan. Is that correct?

CORRECTED

DAVID HUDSON: I think the words I used were that there may have been alternatives to a terrorist incident.

The Hon. ROD ROBERTS: Good, okay. We're not into semantics here. When, as the commander of the counterterrorism unit, did you form a similar opinion in relation to the malicious damages and arson attacks? I watched the news reports. When your offender can't spell "Israel" and sprays a swastika on back to front, I don't think they've really got any deep-seated antisemitism in them. I saw media reports on Farrugia and Marshall—and I expect you won't comment because those matters are before the courts—and I formed an opinion then, and I'm sure lots of people, including experienced investigators, formed an opinion about those people. At what stage did you form an opinion that these may not be the antisemitic attacks that they've been portrayed to be?

DAVID HUDSON: After the discovery of the caravan and the links from that caravan to other incidents, and the identification that the jobs were linked, I think that suspicion spread from not just the caravan but also to some of the other jobs. But it was a suspicion at that stage, as I said, complicated by some reporting.

The Hon. ROD ROBERTS: Of course—well founded, perhaps, but merely just a suspicion at that time. But it was certainly a line of inquiry that you were pursuing.

DAVID HUDSON: Correct.

The Hon. ROD ROBERTS: Can you give me a rough date for that again, please?

DAVID HUDSON: The caravan was detected on the 19th.

The Hon. ROD ROBERTS: So after 21 January, at least?

DAVID HUDSON: It was well after that when links to the owners of the caravan and other antisemitic jobs and other links had been established.

The Hon. ROD ROBERTS: At that point in time, did you inform either the Minister or the Premier in briefings of your suspicion in relation to the authenticity of a possible terrorism attack in relation to the caravan? Did you also tell them, "Listen, we're also suspicious about the true motives behind these arsons and malicious damages"?

DAVID HUDSON: At the time of the briefings—and they were short but ongoing at different stages, and quite frequent at different stages, with the commissioner—we did identify or declare that we believed the incidents were linked and that the potential suspicions surrounding not just the caravan but also those other jobs were similar.

The Hon. ROD ROBERTS: I'll leave that one there for the moment. Mr Pisanos, now that the court case has completely finished in relation to the Clare Nowland manslaughter, and the officer has been convicted of manslaughter and sentenced, I take you back to the media release fiasco. Did you personally direct that the word "taser" be removed from the media release?

PAUL PISANOS: No.

The Hon. ROD ROBERTS: You didn't? You had absolutely no involvement in it whatsoever?

PAUL PISANOS: No.

The Hon. ROD ROBERTS: You were aware that it happened?

PAUL PISANOS: No.

The Hon. ROD ROBERTS: None whatsoever?

PAUL PISANOS: No, I had no involvement in the media release.

The Hon. ROD ROBERTS: In the structuring of the media release?

PAUL PISANOS: No involvement in the media release.

The Hon. ROD ROBERTS: I'm looking for assistance here. Who has control of the State Rescue Policy?

KAREN WEBB: The State Rescue Board.

PETER THURTELL: I chair the State Rescue Board.

The Hon. ROD ROBERTS: Perhaps it is the State Rescue Board. I'm asking questions on behalf of my friends in the fire brigade, so I'm relying on what they've provided me. Help me out here: Under the NSW State

CORRECTED

Rescue Policy, the police rescue coordinator is responsible for the coordination of rescue incidents across the State.

PETER THURTELL: Correct.

The Hon. ROD ROBERTS: Which includes the tasking of volunteer rescue units accredited by the State Rescue Board—SES, VRA et cetera.

PETER THURTELL: Correct.

The Hon. ROD ROBERTS: In practice, the RCO is made aware of the unavailability of volunteer rescue units by way of a manual form filled out by volunteer agencies in conjunction with section 2.09 of the NSW State Rescue Policy. Recently the State Rescue Board published a memorandum reminding all rescue units of this reporting obligation.

PETER THURTELL: Correct.

The Hon. ROD ROBERTS: To what extent is the unavailability of volunteer rescue units presenting delays to providing an adequate response to incidents such as road crash rescues? Is it the case that the availability issues aren't always proactively reported to the RCO?

PETER THURTELL: I suppose there are two questions there; I'll work backwards. In terms of are they always reported to the RCO, I would say possibly and even probably not, depending on how long term they're not available for. If it was just, "We can't get anyone tonight because everyone's at the football", or something like that, they probably don't. I'm not 100 per cent sure on that. In terms of whether the unavailability of volunteer agencies is impacting rescues across the State, I'd have to say not, to the best of my knowledge, to a significant degree because there are always other agencies, or generally there are other agencies, that can be can be deployed. It may impact timeliness occasionally.

The Hon. ROD ROBERTS: To that, then, reducing the number of road fatalities and injuries continues to be a priority of the New South Wales Government. However, the State Rescue Board recently admitted that they undertake no collation of data indicating the outcomes of road crash rescue incidents. It says in these notes from my colleagues in the fire brigade, "bottom of page 28, Emergency Services transcript, 24 September". I'm assuming that was a budget estimates hearing.

PETER THURTELL: Could have been, yes.

The Hon. ROD ROBERTS: Does the NSW Police Force agree that, whether collated by them—and I hate to see you loaded up with more work—or another agency, such a dataset would assist the State Rescue Board in evaluating the suitability of rescue arrangements across the State?

PETER THURTELL: I think the board and the State are satisfied with the rescue arrangements that we currently have. In relation to data, what would we do with that data? Possibly analyse it. Then you've got to get it from all of the agencies et cetera. I suppose you can never have too much data, if somebody wants to analyse something. But it hasn't been brought to my attention as the chair of the board before, I don't think.

The Hon. ROD ROBERTS: The third and final one in this tranche of questions: Unlike volunteer agencies, Fire and Rescue NSW are legislated to guarantee a response to emergency incidents and to have paid and sufficiently trained personnel situated across New South Wales ready to respond. Port Macquarie Fire Station sits directly next to the SES shed, but the primary rescue duties remain with the SES in that area. Using the example of Port Macquarie, Fire and Rescue NSW Fire Station sits right next door and is manned 24/7. Given the objectives of the State rescue policy include consideration of the quickest responding and available rescue unit, do you consider that existing rescue arrangements across New South Wales are adequately capitalising on the availability of our paid professional firefighters to attend these jobs?

PETER THURTELL: The RCO does have the discretion to deploy more than one unit if there's going to be a delay. So, yes, Fire and Rescue could be deployed more often, but obviously the RCO is satisfied with the response time that they're getting from the SES for a particular rescue. How often Fire and Rescue NSW have been deployed for Port Macquarie, I can't tell you. I'd have to find that out.

The Hon. ROD ROBERTS: I wouldn't expect you to know, either. That's not the point of the question. The point is, you have a 24/7 body sitting there, right beside them is a volunteer body that has to be called out if they're not at the footy and stuff, like you say, and yet the primary response unit is the volunteers that are all at home or perhaps at the footy when the 24/7 manned one is right beside it. In an ideal world, who would you be calling first? Probably the 24/7 manned.

CORRECTED

PETER THURTELL: As I said, it depends on the availability of the unit, but the RCO does have that discretion to call more than one unit.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: Where are you up to in relation to the body-worn video cameras and the standard operating procedures? Are they under any review? Are they being changed?

KAREN WEBB: They are under review. The SOPs are under review, but also the Integrated Connected Officer program includes the purchase of new devices that will link to—the loading of a firearm, drawing of a firearm, drawing of a taser will automatically activate the body-worn video et cetera. We're in that process right now, and I'll hand to Mr Smith about some of the particulars.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: Perhaps we might come back to body-worn cameras, if we can. I'll hand back to the Opposition.

The Hon. SCOTT BARRETT: I presume this will be you, again, Deputy Commissioner Pisanos. The different zones in regional New South Wales that come with different incentives, how are they set?

PAUL PISANOS: They apply a formula. It's the Modified Monash Model in terms of determining whether a location or a zone or a sector or whatever is remote or special remote, and with that comes a particular drop in of either a cash incentive and/or rental dispensation and the like. Those things are managed, I think, as part of the award, but certainly through our people capability command. I can go into detail in regard to the amounts of the incentives and that to attract police to remote and special remote locations, if it would assist.

The Hon. SCOTT BARRETT: Can you explain for me the process of getting a different area put into a different zone? You say they apply for it. Is that the police officer going to that area, or are areas already designated in different zones?

PAUL PISANOS: The area is designated through a particular method, and the method is to do with the infrastructure and what's available in the community. The incentive is attached to the more difficult and challenging the area, the less facilities, infrastructure, and obviously there's a compensatory amount that attaches to being posted to that location. It's preset for a particular location and, unless I'm mistaken, it's certainly linked up and categorised in our award, from memory.

The Hon. SCOTT BARRETT: How many different zones are there?

PAUL PISANOS: I'm not sure if zones is the correct terminology. I can provide it to you either in writing or we can go through it now.

The Hon. SCOTT BARRETT: As long as we understand what we're talking about, if you can provide that for me in writing, that'd be fine.

PAUL PISANOS: Yes, no problems at all. I'm happy to do that.

DEAN SMITH: I think the classifications are like regional areas and remote areas and then special remote areas. We can provide the details and the breakdowns of each of those locations that are broken down into those categories. Then the regional incentives which are captured under the award are different amounts for different locations in terms of whether they are remote or special remote locations. They are classified in the way that Deputy Commissioner Pisanos has outlined, and that's what we work through. We can provide that detail. Depending upon whether it's remote or special remote, it could be an additional 6,000 a year over four years; it could be up to 8,500, 9,000. There are other incentives that come, depending upon the remote or the special remote classification in regard to those locations.

The Hon. SCOTT BARRETT: Are the boundaries of what's remote and special remote reviewed?

DEAN SMITH: They are reviewed. We review them as part of the incentive program for regional and special remote. I won't say they are constantly looked at, but when there is a case or a cause to look at how a location is currently classified, a process is undertaken through our people and capability command and in consultation with key stakeholders such as the association as to how that classification is made.

The Hon. SCOTT BARRETT: And some or maybe all of those regions come with housing?

DEAN SMITH: Yes, depending upon remote and special remote. I'll stand corrected, but special remote all would come with the housing. But, again, there are like 80, 100 locations which are classified into those different areas, and I'd have to take on notice what that looks like in terms of the housing classifications for each of those as well.

The Hon. SCOTT BARRETT: When we were talking about police building assets earlier, did that include those regional houses?

CORRECTED

DEAN SMITH: Our program is for police stations. In terms of housing, we work with Housing NSW. I think that's the name; I might be wrong. My apologies.

The Hon. SCOTT BARRETT: That's my understanding.

DEAN SMITH: We have worked with them, so they manage the property in consultation with our infrastructure and assets program in terms of those police properties which are classified as a police housing environment.

The Hon. SCOTT BARRETT: Does New South Wales police contract that role to Housing NSW?

DEAN SMITH: That's correct.

The Hon. SCOTT BARRETT: Who sets the amount? Is it a per house amount? Do you just give them a budget and they have to meet a certain standard? How does that work?

DEAN SMITH: Are you talking about for repairs and maintenance?

The Hon. SCOTT BARRETT: For the management of those houses.

DEAN SMITH: I'd have to take that on notice. I think there is a funding envelope which is allocated to manage our portfolio of police houses, and the exact figure I would have to get. The way that that is managed I don't believe is part of our role, but we obviously would know what's going on and keep track of anything that comes up or is reported to us to make sure that we have an ongoing relationship with Housing NSW in regard to how that is managed and what is being done, and the funding envelope from within that exists.

The Hon. SCOTT BARRETT: So if a police officer has mould in their house in Coonabarabran—wherever they are—do they ring New South Wales police or Housing NSW?

DEAN SMITH: In terms of the portfolio, they would generally go through the police district or the police area command, and then that referral would go through in terms of whether it's straight into the managers of those of those districts and those areas through Housing NSW and/or infrastructure and assets command.

The Hon. SCOTT BARRETT: What I'm getting to is we're hearing about a lot of disparity between police housing and teacher housing or nurse housing. How would that come about? I presume they are all managed by or through Housing NSW.

DEAN SMITH: I wouldn't be able to answer that question. I'd have to take it on notice, and I don't know that it's a question that I, as an agency, would be appropriate to give without consulting with Housing NSW.

The Hon. SCOTT BARRETT: Are we generally happy with the quality of police housing in regional New South Wales?

DEAN SMITH: I think if you use the term generally, yes. We're always looking for opportunities to improve. We have programs and funding programs about regional and remote housing programs, which are run to actually build new locations, source new locations and properties as part of that program of works.

The Hon. SCOTT BARRETT: Are they physical buildings or do you rent them out? I'm just thinking in one instance it might be a single person moving into that community; in another instance, it might be a family which would have different requirements. How does that measure up?

DEAN SMITH: There are different factors for different locations. Have we historically rented places? Yes. Are those buildings suited to families or singles or shared or others?

That is generally done as part of the transfer process with officers about what their needs are and where they come from. If they're going into a lock-up keeper's residence, it's a lock-up keeper's residence. That could be for a single person or a family. But, generally, we're not putting our police in rural or regional in units or otherwise; they are generally lock-ups, which have been in our portfolio for an extended period of time.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: Commissioner, last time we spoke there were a couple of police stations that were closed due to staff shortages. I just wonder if we could get an update. Is the Paddington Police Station open now?

KAREN WEBB: I'll defer to Mr Thurtell, who owns metropolitan, as to whether that's the case.

PETER THURTELL: I think you'll find Paddington Police Station has always been open. It's not a manned general duties police station. The highway patrol are based out of there, but it is a functioning police station.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: So it's 24/7?

CORRECTED

PETER THURTELL: I doubt it's 24/7, but it may be. I'd have to check.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: If you could take that on notice, I'd be grateful. The other police station was Swansea. Is that open?

PAUL PISANOS: I'd have to get back to you in terms of Swansea itself.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: That'd be great. Mr Hudson, I wonder if we could go through the chronology in relation to the discovery of the caravan at Dural on the 19th. I understand you said there was then a separate briefing with the Minister and a separate one with the Premier on the 20th, and then there was a joint briefing on the 21st. I think that was what we said this morning.

DAVID HUDSON: Mr Thurtell briefed both on the 20th and then on the 21st. They were briefed together.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: At what stage were you involved in those briefings?

DAVID HUDSON: I was involved on the 21st, and the commissioner was there as well.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: And then there were regular briefings as needed in the days following?

DAVID HUDSON: As they required them, yes.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: And they were joint briefings, or were the Minister and the Premier briefed separately?

DAVID HUDSON: Some were joint, and some were just with the Minister.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: Were any other Ministers given briefings?

DAVID HUDSON: Not by me.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: At these briefings, there was the Minister and/or the Premier. Were senior staff accompanying the Minister and the Premier?

DAVID HUDSON: Chiefs of staff I believe were present, from memory.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: So the Minister, the chief of staff or the Premier and the chief of staff. Was there anybody else from the from the Minister's department or from the Premier's Department?

DAVID HUDSON: On a couple of occasions I think the secretary or acting secretary from Premier's was present.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: Any other officials?

DAVID HUDSON: No, not that I recall.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: From the police, it would have been yourself conducting the briefing. Was anybody assisting you in that capacity?

DAVID HUDSON: Not assisting, but the commissioner was always present.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: The commissioner would have been Mr Hudson or Mr Thurtell. Were there any other members of the police?

DAVID HUDSON: No.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: Within the police, this was a highly sensitive investigation, so you were discussing it with the AFP. The AFP would have been aware of these investigations.

DAVID HUDSON: The caravan job was a joint investigation with the NSW Crime Commission and also ASIO.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: Was the AFP involved in the investigation of some of the other antisemitic incidents that you've subsequently found were actually connected to the caravan?

DAVID HUDSON: No. The AFP's involvement is solely restricted to the caravan.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: The people who would have been aware of the Dural caravan incident before it was released to the press would have been the police Minister, her chief of staff and perhaps the secretary or the acting secretary; the Premier, his chief of staff and perhaps the secretary or the acting secretary; senior AFP personnel; and a commissioner, so Mr Thurtell or Mr Hudson. That would be the group of people who would have been involved in these briefings?

CORRECTED

DAVID HUDSON: And the Crime Commission and ASIO. There was a situation report released when the caravan was detected that was circulated quite broadly amongst the organisation as well, which was unfortunate.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: When you say "quite broadly amongst the organisation", to whom would that have been circulated?

DAVID HUDSON: It was on a number of distribution groups, I understand. A distribution group is a group established on our email system, which has a number of members in it. I'm not too sure who may have received that but, when I saw it, I shut it down pretty quick and told people that they need to submit them as covert. That was prior to coming into the joint counterterrorism team arrangements. That was the first Sunday it was detected. The location or the discovery of that caravan was put on a situation report and it was distributed.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: So it was discovered on the 19th?

DAVID HUDSON: Yes.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: It would have been distributed via those email lists on the 19th.

DAVID HUDSON: Correct.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: And then you realised how serious this was and then information was contained.

DAVID HUDSON: Correct.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: The situation report that was distributed by email on the 19th, did that contain details of the address of the synagogue and the fact that there were explosives in the caravan?

DAVID HUDSON: My recollection is yes.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: This distribution list went throughout the New South Wales police?

DAVID HUDSON: Not throughout, but to a large number of people. I don't know exactly how many.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: There would have been a large number of people. I understand, Commissioner, there's a professional standards investigation at the moment to see if any of those people released this information to the media. Is this right?

DAVID HUDSON: I referred the matter after 29 January to the Professional Standards Command indicating what had happened—my conversations with *The Daily Telegraph* and the potential that, apart from anyone else, it could have been the criminals who released it.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: That was raised this morning. My understanding is the current thinking is that there were a number of acts that were committed—the attack on the brewery, the attack on the bakery, the attack on the childcare centre, the attack on Mr Ryvchin's former home. The current thinking would be that they certainly had the impact of spreading a climate of antisemitism and a climate of fear amongst the Jewish community. Even though they may not have been motivated, strictly speaking, by antisemitic sentiments, they certainly had that impact. The intention of creating that body of allegedly antisemitic incidents—well, they were in fact antisemitic incidents—was perhaps so that information could be traded in relation to the caravan for the purposes of foreshortening sentences or whatever. Why would the criminals who are responsible have any interest in releasing that information if they're losing their bargaining chip?

DAVID HUDSON: We recovered or located the caravan on 19 January. By 29 January, it still hadn't been made public, so whoever was responsible for that was getting no leverage out of that caravan, because it was unknown to the public. It wasn't creating any fear or any angst within the community because it wasn't known to the community.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: But when they release it, they've got no further information to provide, do they?

DAVID HUDSON: I'm sorry?

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: If the criminals release that information, then where is the bargaining chip for the modification of a sentence? What have they got left to trade? Isn't the working theory that this was some elaborate plot so that they would have information of value to trade to the police, even if they're manufacturing this information themselves?

DAVID HUDSON: We suspect—and at some stage we'll allege—that the coordination of all of the matters investigated under Strike Force Pearl and the caravan job investigated under Operation Kissinger and

CORRECTED

those joint arrangements are all orchestrated by the same group or individual. The fear had been created through the attacks under Pearl, of synagogues and the matters you just raised—Ryvchin's former premises, the brewery, the kitchen, the childcare centre and others. An escalation of or a continuation of that fear within the community was also the caravan.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: But is it your understanding that the purpose of those operations was to create a climate of fear in the community, or the purpose of those operations was ultimately to provide information about some of these attacks that could be traded for personal advantage?

DAVID HUDSON: Without having identified the person responsible at this stage—there is no doubt the operation activity and the 14 individuals charged prior to this Monday under Strike Force Pearl, the identification of the individuals actually responsible, and their charging and putting before the courts, has had an impact of minimising any incidents. We haven't had an incident of significance since 2 February, when operation activity came to fruition. I would suggest that we don't know what else was planned. I think the operation activity under Pearl has negated further incidents being committed. Following the caravan, I don't know at this stage what else may have been planned. Based on the fact that there had been 14 incidents investigated under Pearl, plus a caravan containing explosives, the bargaining chip may well have been "What's next" and "I can prevent that", or a group of people might suggest they could prevent that.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: I understand that you have responsibility for enforcing certain aspects of the Commonwealth Criminal Code in New South Wales, or the New South Wales police does.

DAVID HUDSON: New South Wales can charge with Commonwealth offences, yes.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: What work is done to inform frontline police of updates to the Commonwealth Criminal Code—I'm thinking in particular of the laws outlawing sale, trade and public display of Nazi symbols?

DAVID HUDSON: When a significant piece of legislation is enacted, either State or Commonwealth, police prosecutors will do a law note and distribute it amongst the organisation so that there is knowledge and awareness of what charges might be able to be preferred and what investigations might be able to be conducted. The operational legal advice section is also always available for advice for those in the field to ring and see what the most appropriate charge following an incident is.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: What work is done to educate police so that they can recognise symbols of listed terrorist groups?

DAVID HUDSON: We have an Engagement and Hate Crime Unit. There was a hate crime package that was distributed. It was mandatory for those to undertake, probably 18 months ago. We have ongoing training in the hate crime space. We have a university course, which 180 of our officers have undertaken. That will be ongoing over the next three years to better educate them in relation to things to identify in relation to hate crime and how to better investigate it. Our unsolved homicide and homicide investigators are undergoing that following the special commission of inquiry. Our engagement and hate crime police and counterterrorism police are undertaking that training, as well as general duty police and investigators.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: Deputy Commissioner Hudson, can you confirm what was the evidence you just gave? So you will allege that all those offences are ultimately motivated by a single operator who had no ideological, political or religious motivation?

DAVID HUDSON: The 14 offences, we will allege, are coordinated by either an individual or a group of individuals, yes.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: And that is for a criminal organisation for their own beneficial purposes?

DAVID HUDSON: Correct.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: Can we go back to the body-worn video cameras—in particular, I'd love to touch on a couple of the things that the LECC report has recently recommended. How many body-worn video cameras are currently in operation?

DEAN SMITH: Ma'am, I just have to go to my note to get the exact numbers—if that's all right?

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: Not a problem at all. And if you could also look for the note that says how many are currently broken, that would be appreciated as well.

DEAN SMITH: Yes.

CORRECTED

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: Commissioner, while the deputy commissioner is looking for that, why is it that in 124 allegations of police failing to comply with body-worn video SOPs between April 2023 and 2024, 46 have been declined to be investigated by the New South Wales police? Can you explain why that is and what that's about?

KAREN WEBB: I'd have to take it on notice, but it might be that an officer bumped it—who knows. The device could have broken or malfunctioned. The point you raise is that we've had a stock of old body-worn cameras that have been breaking down. We've had to buy some additional resources to get us over the line until the new product comes online. There could be a variety of reasons. But I'll have to come back to you with a more fulsome answer.

DEAN SMITH: As at 15 January 2025, a total of 8,427 body-worn cameras have been purchased, with 5,280 assigned to the field; 4,277 are in working order; 1,560 cameras are in for repair; and 2,500 have been condemned, at the end of life or beyond economical repair. We have purchased an additional 1,000 body-worn cameras in addition to the 2,500 that we purchased in 2023-24. This rollout is scheduled for the first quarter of 2025.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: Do the newly purchased ones—is there something that is improved in terms of the storage capacity and the recordings of the video?

DEAN SMITH: As part of the new environment for body-worn video, I know the commissioner has spoken about the interconnected officer program, which means that when an officer activates their body-worn, uses a taser or their appointments, the body-worn automatically switches on. It is an automatic activation that also captures other officers in the vicinity, so all of their cameras come on as well. The body-worn, in terms of the quality of the picture, the quality of the sound—we also have a contract of moving into what is called an evidence.com environment, which means storage into a cloud environment, which means the fact that downloads take less, the ability to save time for our officers to link to events and other and transcriptions is all part of that program of work. That trial has been operated at both Mount Druitt Police Area Command and also Goulburn police district. We are now in the phase of rolling those new cameras out across North West Metropolitan Region. The program is on track to be completed in full, with a rollout of over 10,000 body-worn cameras across New South Wales by the end of the first quarter of 2026.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: This could be a really silly question, but in terms of the evidence.com and the idea of the cloud, will there be any issues in terms of remoteness and internet service provision and outages and things like that?

DEAN SMITH: As part of the interconnected officer program and the police technology program, we've undertaken a network upgrade to make sure that whilst we are rolling out this equipment, our storage capacity can be increased and the operational reliability can be maintained, especially in rural and remote areas. We also have a program of works, which we referred to as blue connect, which is all about Starlink capacity where our police stations and vehicles are fitted out with greater capacity so that we don't have those issues that you are talking about.

We're making sure that our officers are more connected to be able to get better outcomes and not face the same problems with the legacy system that we have about storage capacity, download time and the like. There are a number of programs of work that go hand in hand. Some are foundational works to make sure that whilst we are rolling these out, our network can support, our data storage can support and also the connectivity can be supported to get the best out of the equipment that we are giving our officers.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: But you'll assure me that for anything that relies on Elon Musk, we've got a backup plan, have we? I'm worried about the references to Starlink. Everyone keeps assuring me that it goes beyond Mr Musk. I'm really hoping so, for all our sakes.

DEAN SMITH: Our cybersecurity environment and our technical platforms are always front and centre of our mind in terms of the environment we operate in.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: Thank you very much. That's a very kind answer. I turn briefly to the Premier's focus last year on Moree as an area of priority to be addressing youth offending. As part of that response, Commissioner, did you engage in police surging in terms of more numbers of police officers on the ground in that local area command? If so, could I have some detail about that?

KAREN WEBB: That's certainly been a strategy that the deputy has been putting into Moree and other regional towns that have needed extra support. I have been up to Moree a couple of times myself. It does have a problem, as I articulated earlier. It certainly has been subject to additional police resources over the last 12 to 18 months. It will continue as needed.

CORRECTED

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: I would've thought that police surging is a really good, logical and strategic response to any crime data that is showing peaks within criminal offending. Is that something that you are constantly looking at in terms of monitoring, surges and early engagement across the spectrum in terms of offending?

KAREN WEBB: Definitely. It's a big jurisdiction, so it can't be everywhere at the same time. But it's important to target areas where we know there are particular problems. As I said earlier today, we've got situations where young people are crisscrossing the countryside. It's a game of chance in some ways. It's also important to reassure the community that the local police are being supported. I can't ask anything more of the local police. They're doing everything they possibly can. That's why surge operations are in addition as support to locals.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: Data obtained by the ABC showed that in New South Wales, First Nations people are 5.6 times more likely to be searched by police than people identified as Caucasian. Similarly, African communities are 4.3 times more likely. Pasifika communities are three times more likely. I'm wondering what you, as commissioner, have done in relation to any racial profiling that still may be occurring in the NSW Police Force.

KAREN WEBB: We could talk about the way we manage our crime reviews and our PDR meetings et cetera, and the example of the wandering operations. What wasn't mentioned, but is important, is the interagency meeting that Kate Meagher sits on around all those stakeholders that have an interest in the introduction of this wandering legislation. Now that we've had the introduction, that will disband. That was a very important committee to reassure that committee and the people that they represented that we weren't racially profiling. I'm confident with the way that the police conduct those operations and behave. To the point I raised this morning around some of our own research around the over-representation of Aboriginal people as victims and as offenders, if I could somehow stop people offending, that would be a wonderful place. We respond to a crime. If the crime leads us to arrest particular people, that's how it works.

The Hon. ROD ROBERTS: Mr Hudson, I'll go back to the caravan, the bane of your life. Can I say from the outset—I want it recorded—that I think the NSW Police Force has acted most professionally and has done an excellent job in relation to everything surrounding Pearl and the other malicious and arson attacks in Sydney. I won't call them antisemitic attacks because I don't think they are. I think we're all in agreement on that. I want to say they've done a great job, and well done to the NSW Police Force. I have complete confidence in their handling of it. I'm going to quote from an article on Sky News written by Sharri Markson. At the end, you'll see where my criticism comes from. It's not towards the New South Wales police. It says:

That unrest first came to light when the AFP went public in late January to say there could be foreign actors behind these attacks.

This was based purely on their source, the Australian criminal overseas. It led to the media and the prime minister repeating the claim that foreign actors could be behind the caravan plot.

I remember watching that on the news myself. It continues:

Yet NSW Police said publicly at the time they had no knowledge of any foreign actors being behind antisemitic attacks in the Sydney community.

The reason NSW police didn't know about any offshore link was because the AFP was deliberately withholding information – even though the investigation was a joint operation with NSW Police.

Yet NSW police immediately were concerned that it was suspicious, as The Daily Telegraph first reported.

NSW Police were comfortable with investigating the caravan packed with explosives under Strike Force Pearl, their taskforce set up to deal with hate crimes.

My sources tell me it was the AFP that insisted on escalating the caravan plot into a joint-counter terrorism investigation.

There are a few things to unpack in there. First of all, were you confident, as the leader of the counterterrorism command, that the NSW Police Force had the capacity to do this investigation?

DAVID HUDSON: I certainly did and still do.

The Hon. ROD ROBERTS: So do I.

DAVID HUDSON: That's not entirely accurate. We called the AFP on the day it was found because, at its highest, the discovery of the caravan, the written material inside the caravan and the explosives would constitute acts in preparation for a terrorism offence. That then dictates that it is a joint counterterrorism team investigation under our protocols. The AFP deployed to the scene, and it was conducted once the machinery was established under a joint counterterrorism team investigation under a joint management committee chaired by the AFP.

The Hon. ROD ROBERTS: There's lots of speculation in the media. Clearly, this is something that needs to be cleared up. As a matter of protocol, you informed the AFP.

CORRECTED

DAVID HUDSON: Correct.

The Hon. ROD ROBERTS: And the standard operating procedures say that if there's something that is tantamount to a potential terrorism act, it has to be a joint counter taskforce. Is that right?

DAVID HUDSON: Correct.

The Hon. ROD ROBERTS: That clears that up. Did the AFP deliberately withhold information from the New South Wales police? I bear in mind the predicament you're in, because you have to work hand in hand as teams in other investigations coming forward. It's crucial to us and the public of New South Wales, who have tremendous faith in the NSW Police Force, if our officers are impeded in doing their work because the AFP is not freely sharing information in a combined operation. We've all walked that path before.

DAVID HUDSON: Again, I think it's unfair on the AFP to say that they withheld information. The information was provided. Their internal policies prevented them from telling us where that information was coming from. We did have some very vibrant discussions in relation to that.

The Hon. ROD ROBERTS: And colourful, I'd imagine.

DAVID HUDSON: At times. However, my peer deputy and the assistant commissioner, who was chairing the joint management committee, indicated to us—and I have no reason to disbelieve them—that the information that I wanted to know, they didn't know because of their internal policies.

The Hon. ROD ROBERTS: Were you told at any time that there was foreign actors behind the plot?

DAVID HUDSON: No.

The Hon. ROD ROBERTS: When the Prime Minister came out and said—I'm trying to find it in the article here again—that there were foreign actors possibly involved in it, did that come as a surprise to you?

DAVID HUDSON: I did see that comment. Bearing in mind that the Prime Minister has a broader remit than New South Wales, I was unsure as to whether that was referring to anything we were investigating, or potentially anything that may have been investigated, or was being investigated in Victoria. I don't think it was specific. I think it was more general, certainly from the AFP Commissioner, about—there were some generalities that he said or indicated in relation to how these types of jobs might happen, without being specific to our investigations. I think the Prime Minister wasn't that specific, either, is my recollection. Again, as I said, the Prime Minister's remit, the Australian Federal Police Commissioner's remit is broader than New South Wales. They could have been talking about other things that weren't relevant to us.

The Hon. ROD ROBERTS: Perhaps being very generous on your behalf. But, anyway, that's your position.

DAVID HUDSON: I'm a diplomat, Mr Roberts.

The Hon. ROD ROBERTS: Always, Mr Hudson. I have nothing further at this stage, Chair.

The CHAIR: Just going back to what I refer to—or the ABC referred to—as the potentially racial profiling. I'm just wondering, what do you do, internally, in terms of the force, to make sure that we prevent officers from conducting the profiling? I appreciate that the wanding laws have had a particular lens on this. I know that certainly when those laws were being introduced we raised this as a concern, as did many stakeholders. Is what's happening there now being applied more broadly into different commands and into different parts of policing across New South Wales?

KAREN WEBB: As I alluded to—and I'll ask Mr Hudson to expand—but we have the daily crime reviews et cetera and monthly PDR—prevention, disruption, response—meetings in each command to account for their crime activity et cetera across their area of responsibility. It's crime-driven. So if there's a youth crime problem, then the discussion will look to what can we do in terms of prevention, disruption and response in terms of that. If there are individuals identified who are youth, we have a youth strategy. The youth strategy says that there's different ways of dealing with youth. Those strategies are recommended. We've tried to line it up, I suppose you could say, for as many crime types as we can, that we can actually look at what's our strategy and what's our corporate response in terms of domestic violence, in terms of sexual assault et cetera. It's really about what's the crime problem we're dealing with and what's the best way to tackle it in a lens of PDR—prevention, disruption and response.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: I think this one might be for Deputy Commissioner Pisanos. I recently attended a community meeting in Goonellabah that was focused on the absence of support, particularly for young First Nations kids who are in a trouble zone. From your exercise in the regions, do you think that Goonellabah is

CORRECTED

a bit of a spot that could really do with more community service in relation to diversion and First Nations young people?

PAUL PISANOS: Yes, I think it's one of a number of areas that we see associated violent youth crime emerging up around the north there. The Northern Rivers area is one of many areas. It would be remiss of me to say that additional services and enhanced services wouldn't be a good thing. The police can't fix those complex problems, as we know.

The Hon. SCOTT BARRETT: Given this is probably my last opportunity, I just want to thank the police force in general for the work they're doing. I don't like implications that we're not doing that. We're very appreciative of the work that you're doing, in often very trying circumstances. As I wrap up, do we track response times?

KAREN WEBB: We do.

The Hon. SCOTT BARRETT: Do we have a breakdown of them as per regions?

KAREN WEBB: We do. We've got some statistics about P1 and P2, particularly. We've got a coded system for priority—priority one, two, particularly for urgent important jobs. Then to priority five, which are like administrative tasks. It helps divide the work. P1, P2 jobs—most important—we do measure those. We've got targets or benchmarks for how quickly we'd like to attend those jobs. I can talk to you about some of the response times. We've got a statewide target of 12 minutes to respond to urgent calls for service. The average response time remains within the target time. The average statewide urgent response time for 2023 to 2024 was 10 minutes and 57 seconds. The average metropolitan was eight minutes and 19 seconds. The average regional field operations urgent response time was 13.55 minutes. Given the workload, given the roads, given all the other complexities, I'm very pleased with how it's tracking.

The Hon. SCOTT BARRETT: Are you able to provide those numbers historically as well. I don't mean now; on notice?

KAREN WEBB: Sure.

The Hon. SCOTT BARRETT: Five years?

KAREN WEBB: I think we can do that on notice. I can try and do that for you.

The Hon. SCOTT BARRETT: Thank you. I appreciate your time.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: I endorse my colleague's comments and I'm very grateful we live in a safe society made safe by the very hard work of the police. Thank you. Commissioner, a uniform matter. I understand that permission is now being given for female officers to wear the male Antron cap. I think we might have seen photos of you modelling it.

KAREN WEBB: Wearing it, not modelling it. I do have it here, actually.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: I understand, though, that police are still waiting for approval of a new dark blue police shirt.

KAREN WEBB: That's been conjecture—well, not conjecture. It's been on the wish list for many years. Many of our interstate colleagues have gone to a very dark uniform. I think there's some suggestion that officers would like a dark uniform, or one colour. We meet with the Police Association regularly. I would have to get the exact date, but in our meeting mid last year, and during our negotiations for the pay increase et cetera, I said we, by agreement, took that off the table because I would rather give officers more money in their pocket than a dark uniform. However, if that's something that we do need to work towards, then we will. I have to say, I have no regrets paying officers more rather than a dark uniform.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: I have no issue with that. In relation to the reporting of domestic violence, I understand that in April 2022, there was an Auditor-General's report into responses by the police to domestic and family violence. There were a number of significant recommendations which were identified to do with issues like having to cycle through 148 screens to be able to complete a domestic violent incident report. Can you give us any update on whether these reforms have actually reduced the workload for police in terms of filing these reports?

KAREN WEBB: Some are a work in progress. I'll ask Deputy Commissioner Thurtell, who's our sponsor for this. One of the issues we'd worked on was reducing the DVSAT—the safety assessment tool—which is currently at 25 questions. We've come to agreement with our partners, including other agencies—and it's taken a long time—to come down to 11 questions. We're currently waiting on other agencies to uplift their IT systems to match ours to make that live. We've made a lot of progress—and that's just one example—in a lot of areas.

CORRECTED

Some of it just takes time when you're working across agencies and having IT systems fixed et cetera. I'll hand to Mr Thurtell for any other specifics.

PETER THURTELL: Thank you, Commissioner. Since '22 the New South Wales police has formed the domestic violence registry. We've also, with the assistance of the Government, of course, commenced the coercive control legislation as well. We have revisited our operating procedures, our operating model and our strategies for domestic violence. That will come before the Commissioner's Executive Team within the next few weeks for approval or otherwise, for consideration. In September, we have new legislation coming as well in relation to serious domestic violence prevention orders. We've done a lot in that space, in terms of domestic violence. I suppose our challenge, and I believe we're meeting it through these new procedures, et cetera, is to be consistent across the board in our approach to domestic violence.

As an organisation, we participate in I think it's 45 committees, including the domestic violence taskforce and the domestic violence board, which I represent at a State level. We're doing a lot in relation to domestic violence, but our workload in domestic violence isn't reducing any more. We have a significant workload. As everybody knows, domestic violence is one of the scourges of our modern society and there's no sign in the near future that our workload is going to be reduced, but we continue to fight the good fight in relation to that.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: In relation to coercive control, I believe there's only been three matters before the court. Is it too early to look at not the legislation but some of the issues from the police's point of view about evidence gathering, preparing a brief? Are there issues that you want to flag that perhaps need to be looked at to make those prosecutions more effective, or is it too early to offer an opinion on that?

PETER THURTELL: You're right, there's only been a few prosecutions. However, we have had over 200 matters investigated, or are being investigated currently. But we do have other DV-related charges that we often prefer to the coercive control. Don't forget, the coercive control acts could only have taken place after 1 July last year. At the same time, somebody might be engaging in an act of coercive control and committing another substantive offence as well. That's not to say that just because we haven't prosecuted with the coercive control that we haven't taken those acts and charged appropriately with them, because we have a suite of other charges we could rely upon as well. Yes, I think it is too early to definitively say what impact the legislation is having, but I know it's out there in the community. People are talking about coercive control and I know people are coming to us with complaints of it.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: Interesting. This has been touched on by some of my colleagues, but there is a continuing perception, certainly, in regional areas that sometimes it's difficult for women in particular to report domestic violence, if they feel that the alleged perpetrator has a close connection with the police, especially in small communities: drinking buddy, football player, whatever. I understand some of the things you're looking at in the domestic violence reforms, the streamlining of the reporting or things like the Empower You app—does any of that offer an opportunity to remove some of those let's call them social barriers to reporting, especially in smaller communities?

PETER THURTELL: The Empower You app is primarily a recording app for people to record what's happening to themselves. That's good evidence for the police down the track. In terms of reporting, yes, I've heard that issue. I don't know if it was raised here last September, because it's a very similar story.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: Yes, I think I raised it last September.

PETER THURTELL: Personally, I actually haven't heard any examples of that. I'm not saying it's not correct. People can report these things online and/or via our Crime Stoppers. There is the opportunity for them to ask for something to be done externally, I suppose, or they have the opportunity to report it externally themselves. By that, I mean go to another town or whatever and report their concerns about a friendship. Personally, I haven't seen any examples of it.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: It's a concern that has been expressed by a number of women. Is there any update on when the upgrade to the police CAD system is going to occur?

DEAN SMITH: That's part of the police technology program itself. That is currently at a stage of best and final offer with a vendor. That program will be rolled out over 2025. The expected completion date is into 2026. However, as I said, we are at best and final contract to engage a vendor. We will then work through those instructions around contracts, business requirements and other things that are already in place.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: I think these questions are probably for you, Mr Hudson. In relation to arrest for the display of symbols of listed terrorism groups, have there been any arrests in New South Wales to date since that new Commonwealth legislation?

DAVID HUDSON: I will have to get back to you on that. Not that I'm aware of.

CORRECTED

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: If you could let me know about that and any prosecutions. Is the Great Synagogue in Sydney regarded as a potential target for antisemitic or other attacks?

DAVID HUDSON: I think any place of worship, in the current environment, is of concern to us. That's why, through Operation Shelter—which commenced on 11 October 2023—taskings have been deployed around that and other places of interest; not just Jewish places of interest but also others. That has significantly increased with a proactive component with Strike Force Pearl as well. They have been done in conjunction. Certainly the Great Synagogue is on that list.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: And you've had discussions with the leadership there?

DAVID HUDSON: Yes, people have. We engage with the Jewish community a lot. That will continue.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: I am happy for you to take this on notice: Could you tell me the first time you were in contact with the Great Synagogue in relation to potential threats?

DAVID HUDSON: Potential threats? They would go back. The hate crime unit has a good relationship with the Jewish community and is constantly visiting. I can get that to you.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: That would be great. This is a question in relation to Hamilton and, in particular, Beaumont Street. We are certainly getting reports of an escalation of criminal and antisocial activity, drug trafficking, a murder and a consequent downturn for the businesses there. Are extra police being allocated in that area? Is there a response to that change in the community?

PAUL PISANOS: Yes, look, it's part of the Newcastle police district. We discussed at length today the way resources are deployed and existing resources are deployed into areas that are emerging as hotspots and presenting problems. Hamilton may be one such location within the Newcastle police district where there has to be greater focus. Certainly a number of strike forces are operating in regard to the homicide you mentioned. There is a lot of police activity in and around. Some of them are covert jobs that I'm aware of for drugs, firearms and other jobs that I won't go into here. There certainly is a strong police presence in and around Hamilton and surrounds as part of the broader Newcastle police district focus.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: Ms Meagher, this question may be for you. I don't know whether you can help me. I understand that industry pipeline analysis shows that the Hunter needs about \$500 million to get up to speed and allow zoned land to be delivered. When will the Hunter get the enabling infrastructure to unlock the existing pipeline for that region's housing and jobs?

KATE MEAGHER: Thanks, Ms Carter. I think I would probably answer that in a couple of ways. Largely this work would be driven by the Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure, as you can imagine. The Hunter regional plan is in place. It's *Hunter Regional Plan 2041*, so obviously it's on a long lead time, but the things that you mentioned there obviously are long-term initiatives. My understanding is that there is a review of that plan underway at the moment. I can take on notice any specifics around how they might address those individual elements. Certainly I know the Minister's interest, as the Minister for the Hunter, in particular is around Broadmeadow. There's work underway, again, with Planning and the City of Newcastle with regard to feedback on the place strategy and, obviously, resulting jobs and housing from that as well.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: I might put that question on notice.

KATE MEAGHER: No worries.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: Are you able to help me with the status of the Salamander Bay Fire Station upgrade?

KATE MEAGHER: I'm not, I'm afraid. I'm happy to take that on notice.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: All right. I might put those other questions on notice.

PETER THURTELL: Just quickly, can I correct the record on just one thing, please? Earlier on I said that there were two successful appeals for music festivals for reduced—there was actually only one. The other one was a women's cricket game that had less crowd. So there was one music festival.

PAUL PISANOS: Chair, would I be able to come back on one matter as well? In regard to the question around Swansea Police Station, Swansea has been closed for a number of years.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: That's my understanding, yes.

PAUL PISANOS: It's part of Lake Macquarie Police District. I'm probably telling you something you well know.

CORRECTED

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: No, I'm happy to get all the details correct. Thank you.

PAUL PISANOS: It's made up of Belmont Police Station, Charlestown Police Station, Morisset Police Station and Toronto. Out of those four operating police stations, as part of the Lake Macquarie Police District, that we've established, Swansea is out of play and has been for a number of years. Belmont is a 24/7 police station, and Toronto operates as a 24/7 police station. So staff are operating within those four stations, but the 24/7 other stations that I named—I didn't want to take it on notice. I actually have the information. I just needed to find it.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: Thank you. If you can assist me with this: Given our population increase in that area, is the situation in Swansea likely to be revisited?

PAUL PISANOS: Again, I can't clarify that. I apologise. I don't have that available.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: No, I just thought you may know.

DEAN SMITH: I will just tidy up a couple of questions from earlier. Mr Barrett, I think we answered the questions around authorised strength and the current strength. I'll have to take on notice some components, but what I can tell you is that workers compensation leave, as at 28 February—and noting, just to clarify, that this changes every day, depending upon the categories. Workers compensation leave is 1,440; parental leave is 374; long service leave, 124; leave without pay, 34; and sick leave reasons, which involve mental health issues, which are not clarified in terms of time frame, is 328. That changes—

The Hon. SCOTT BARRETT: Sorry, that was on that date?

DEAN SMITH: As at that date. They might have been off for a day, a week or a month in that space. We have 44 officers who are currently suspended, 10 with pay and 34 without pay. I'll have to take questions five and six on notice. Our budget is \$5.661 billion, and \$407 million of that is invested in our capital investment plan. And \$295 million is made up of our capital program and \$112 million in our lease, acquisitions and environment. The work around the police stations in question eight is Waverley Police Station, Rose Bay Police Station, Raymond Terrace, Liverpool, Granville and Wyong police stations, and Goulburn Police Academy and Goulburn Police Station itself being built.

What resources will be upgraded this year? We have capital works around our radio terminals migrating to a statewide shared public service network; the increased police officers in south-west and north-west Sydney; our commitment in relation to our response to domestic and family violence; the improved capability of High-Tech Crime Branch; and our strategic housing and data centre work. We also have our National Firearms Register work and also some work in relation to some PCYC matters. That's all the detail I can give you. I'll take the rest on notice. Madam Chair, if it's all right, Mr Roberts asked a question as well in relation to the student police officer costs. As at 28 February 2025, student police officer payments totalled \$16.964 million, and this commenced with class 362 in March 2024. The wage costs for a student police officer from commencement at the academy until the end of their probation period is \$113,347. That's on the assumption that they don't fail any component or have to repeat any component of that environment.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: That pretty much concludes the session for today. The secretariat will contact you with any questions taken on notice that haven't been provided. I look very briefly to the Government.

The Hon. GREG DONNELLY: We have no questions but, on behalf of the Government members of the Committee—and I'm sure I speak for all members—I thank the two commissioners, the deputy commissioner and the deputy secretary for the outstanding work you do for and on behalf of the citizens of the State. It's enormously appreciated. To Deputy Commissioner Thurtell, thank you for the enormous number of years of service. I can't imagine how much you've seen and done over that period of time, but thank you very sincerely. Thank you for the enormous example you've set over that period of time to what must be thousands and thousands of policemen and policewomen in the State. Thank you very much.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: Mr Donnelly just stole my thunder, but that's fine. On behalf of the whole Committee, thank you for all of your time and your evidence today. We know how much it takes. We know it takes you away from the front line. Obviously, we see the accountability processes of the Parliament and New South Wales as very important matters, and we genuinely and sincerely appreciate everything you do to prepare for today because we know your staff puts efforts into you being here today as well. Thank you on behalf of everyone. That concludes our session.

(The witnesses withdrew.)

The Committee proceeded to deliberate.