

PORTFOLIO COMMITTEE NO. 5 - JUSTICE AND COMMUNITIES

Wednesday 3 September 2025

Examination of proposed expenditure for the portfolio areas

POLICE AND COUNTER-TERORISM, THE HUNTER

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The Committee met at 9:15.

MEMBERS

The Hon. Robert Borsak (Chair)

Ms Abigail Boyd

The Hon. Susan Carter

Dr Amanda Cohn

The Hon. Greg Donnelly

Ms Cate Faehrmann

Ms Sue Higginson (Deputy Chair)

The Hon. Dr Sarah Kaine

The Hon. Mark Latham

The Hon. Nichole Overall

The Hon. Peter Primrose

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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Ms SUE HIGGINSON: Welcome to the fourth hearing of Portfolio Committee No. 5 - Justice and Communities for the inquiry into budget estimates 2025-2026. 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 Sue Higginson. I am Acting 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 procedural fairness for inquiry participants. I encourage Committee members and witnesses to be mindful of these procedures. Thank you for making the time to give evidence. All witnesses will be sworn prior to giving evidence. Minister, I remind you that you do not need to be sworn as you have already sworn an oath to your office as a member of Parliament.

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Acting Commissioner PETER THURTELL, NSW Police Force, sworn and examined

Deputy Commissioner DAVID HUDSON, NSW Police Force, sworn and examined

Deputy Commissioner PAUL PISANOS, Regional Field Operations, NSW Police Force, affirmed and examined

Acting Deputy Commissioner PETER McKENNA, Metropolitan Field Operations, NSW Police Force, sworn and examined

Acting Deputy Commissioner RASHELLE CONROY, Corporate Services, NSW Police Force, sworn and examined

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

Commissioner MICHAEL BARNES, NSW Crime Commission, affirmed and examined

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: Today's hearing will be conducted from 9.15 a.m. to 5.30 p.m. We are joined by the Minister for the morning, from 9.15 a.m. to 1.00 p.m., with a 15-minute break at 11.00 a.m. In the afternoon we will hear from departmental witnesses from 2.00 p.m. to 5.30 p.m., with a 15-minute break at 3.30 p.m. During these sessions there will be questions from the Opposition and the 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, and I might throw to you, Mr Latham.

The Hon. MARK LATHAM: Thank you, Minister, and thank you to the witnesses. In particular, with regard to the police command, I acknowledge and thank you for the service and outstanding things you do for the people of New South Wales and thank you for your time here today. Minister, if I could start with you, in May 2021 you and your office, specifically Tom Harris-Brassil, circulated an information sheet headed, "Why Chris Minns and Jamie Clements can never run the NSW Labor Party". In it there were two very serious allegations of criminality, for which I've received further information and moved motions accordingly in the Legislative Council.

The first allegation is that Chris Minns' Sunny Seafood Chinese fundraiser for the 2015 election was a dry run for the Aldi bag straw donors, albeit with smaller amounts of money. Jonathan Yee told ICAC that the list of illegal straw donors used for the Aldi bag and Huang Xiangmo's \$100,000 was the same as the list he used earlier to hide the cash in the Chris Minns campaign. This remains a criminal offence today. Minister, are you aware that Chris Minns himself rang the Labor head office at the time, seeking help on how to wash the cash left over from his Sunny Seafood Chinese fundraiser, and ultimately got the then ALP general secretary, Jamie Clements, to assist him with this task? In light of this new information and your earlier grave concerns, will you now order a police investigation into what Chris Minns has done and/or seek an ICAC investigation?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: Thank you very much, Mr Latham. Thank you for starting off by thanking the police. They don't get a lot of thanks, so thank you very much for that. For the Committee's benefit, I have never seen the document that you're referring to. It was not prepared by me. I did not have concern, so I have nothing to say in relation to this matter.

The Hon. MARK LATHAM: Did you ever investigate the fact that your staff member, Tom Harris-Brassil—

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: My staff member was dismissed immediately as a result of that, Mr Latham.

The Hon. MARK LATHAM: And your evidence is that, even though you sacked him, you didn't inspect the document for which he was sacked?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: I would tell the truth here, Mr Latham, and the truth is I have never seen the document that you're referring to.

The Hon. MARK LATHAM: Are you aware of the allegations that your staff member made?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: I have never read the document and it's news to me, what you have just said.

The Hon. MARK LATHAM: That's your evidence to the Committee. The second matter concerns Jamie Clements' sexual assault of a young Labor woman in this building in June 2015—again, something that remains a criminal offence. In light of the recent Legislative Council SO 52 on this matter, Minister, have you examined the police file, especially in light of your earlier concerns or the concerns of your staff member in this information sheet that, yes, in fact, Mr Clements was guilty and still remains an influence over the Premier as his close personal friend? Do the police files show that Clements, Minns and Brent Thomas collaborated to say that

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the victim was making up her allegations against Jamie Clements to clear a career path for her boyfriend at ALP head office? Minister, in the public interest and given the position Mr Minns now holds, will you now release these files and order a fresh police investigation into the sexual assault by the Premier's best friend?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: My understanding is that the police will deal with the SO 52 that they're subject to. No, I have not seen the files, and nor would I.

The Hon. MARK LATHAM: Did you see that part of the allegation made in your office?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: I don't know what you're referring to. No, I have not.

The Hon. MARK LATHAM: You weren't aware? You were in the Parliament, though, in 2015. You must have known of the incident and the trouble it caused.

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: Only what I read in the newspaper.

The Hon. MARK LATHAM: No colleagues ever spoke to you?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: No.

The Hon. MARK LATHAM: Or briefed you about it?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: No. I'd been there for five minutes.

The Hon. MARK LATHAM: They all had. Minister, now that the Iranian involvement in antisemitism has been revealed, on top of the Dural caravan hoax and associated attacks paid for by organised crime, can you please inform the Committee what has been the most serious antisemitic incident in New South Wales committed by one of our residents for reasons of antisemitic ideology?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: I think any antisemitic attacks are serious. I don't think one is more serious than the other. In the summer earlier this year, where we saw car bombings outside of homes, we saw a child care on fire, we saw houses attacked, we know of slurs being thrown at our Jewish community—I think all of them are abhorrent and they have no place in our community. We have made it very clear as a government that we do not tolerate that type of behaviour. We are a harmonious community, a harmonious society, and we do not tolerate any of them. I don't pick one over the other; all of them are equally as abhorrent as the other. But in terms of the incidence of antisemitic ideology in our community, as opposed to what the Iranian Government does and as opposed to what an organised crime guy hiding out in Turkey has done with the caravan and paying people to do other things, we must be able to separate those two. What is the most serious antisemitic incident in our State driven by the antisemitic ideology by one of our residents?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: I don't separate them, I'm sorry. I've just explained to you what my view is on this. Any antisemitic slur, attack or incident is abhorrent and has no place in our society. It never has and it never should. We as a society need to call it out, and the Government did that. I think it's important that we continue the message of peace, the message of harmony. That, to me, is what is important. As community leaders, all of us have a responsibility to do that.

The Hon. MARK LATHAM: But surely there's a huge difference between foreign agents creating these attacks and, say, for example, a convoy of people going from Lakemba to Dover Heights every night doing it. There's no such evidence of the latter, is there?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: Again, I will say that as community leaders, and certainly as a government and as members of this Parliament, we all have a responsibility to call out behaviour that is racist. Antisemitic behaviour, Islamophobia—it doesn't matter what it is, in my view.

The Hon. MARK LATHAM: It doesn't matter?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: All of it has to be called out. It is all abhorrent and we must make sure that we call it out, as far as I'm concerned.

The Hon. MARK LATHAM: But you can't name what you regard as the most serious domestic antisemitic act in New South Wales driven by that ideology?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: I made it clear to you, Mr Latham, that I think that every act—and you have to put this in some perspective. If a person feels vulnerable and feels like they are being attacked, then to them that is the most important attack that has happened in this city. I've spoken to many people who have been personally attacked, who have been in close vicinity of the attacks that have occurred on our streets, whether they be in the shape of a firebombing or graffiti or whatever the case may have been. They are all significantly important to individuals.

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The Hon. MARK LATHAM: Sure, but in terms of policing—

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: I accept that, and I think that it's important that we also respect the fear and the immense discomfort and horror that it puts into people individually.

The Hon. MARK LATHAM: But you're in charge of policing. Isn't there a world of difference, obviously, in the policing task concerning the Iranian Government or some organised crime figure with some weird plea bargain agenda and an actual homegrown problem that needs to be policed on the streets of Sydney? Isn't there a huge difference between those two scenarios?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: The New South Wales police obviously police domestic matters. In the instances that we're talking about, they've done a fantastic job. They did an enormous job and they did it so professionally and so well. No-one tells us that more than the Jewish community, who were the subject of a lot of these slurs and incidents themselves. The New South Wales police have been extraordinary in the work that they have done on our streets, and I can't thank them enough.

The Hon. MARK LATHAM: Yes, we all thank the police for the work they do. Minister, will you correct your often repeated claim of 700 antisemitic attacks, given that the acting commissioner has confirmed at an upper House inquiry that of the 700 so-called incidents, 41 per cent were antisemitic, 15 per cent Islamophobic and the rest classified as "other"? That brings the number down to 280. Of these, isn't it true that they should be more accurately depicted as reports of incidents, as they're essentially low level, like someone calling the police to say, "A car with a Palestinian flag drove past and someone yelled out something", or mentions of Hitler. Whether we like it or not, a lot of schoolkids engage in the dark humour about him. Will you correct the record of your claim of 700 antisemitic incidents?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: I might just take that on notice for now, but I will come back to you because I do have that actual figure. If I didn't have the figure absolutely correct then, yes, I will correct it. But I will also make this point to you which I think is important. The number or the amount of antisemitic slurs and attacks on our community during that period would be way higher than 700, quite frankly. There were so many that weren't reported, and I know that because I've had those conversations with people myself when I have been out in the community. Look, I may have had the figure wrong—and if I did, I apologise to the Committee—but, quite frankly, there would be so many more incidents than have been reported. That I know for a fact.

The Hon. MARK LATHAM: That's always the case, but we can only go on reported numbers. If the number is 280, can I just say, as an individual in public life, I would have had that many attacks on me in the last couple of years, but I haven't gone around whinging and inventing something called "anti-Lathamism". Isn't it time to tell the Jewish community to grow up and get in the real world, where they're barracking for one side in a fierce conflict in Gaza and there's bound to be some pushback but, luckily, here in Australia with our laid-back culture, no serious signs of homegrown, serious antisemitic ideology are evident in Sydney?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: That's offensive, Mr Latham. You're a white Australian male, so you would not know what they're feeling.

The Hon. MARK LATHAM: Well, I know the sort of attacks your man Minns and Sweet Nell have put on me. People get attacked.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: Thanks, Mr Latham. Minister, have you recommended or had a conversation to the police about whether or not New South Wales now needs to set up any taskforce or operation to deal with far-right extremism and neo-Nazis?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: The New South Wales police deal with this all the time, as you know. They deal with every matter of policing, and they did a great job on the weekend. They averted, I think, probably what could have been a quite serious nuisance on our streets. Again I say thank you to them. It was pretty full on. But police deal with this all the time.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: Do you think that, after Sunday and the display that we saw—and I understand and am very grateful the police have confirmed they're investigating the dreadful assault on the train of the two Palestinian brothers who have lost their family in Gaza right now. But do you think there is cause or need for some kind of taskforce operation, some escalation of the police response to far-right extremism and neo-Nazis in New South Wales at the moment?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: Police would do that as a matter of course. That's their operational business. Regardless of whatever is happening on our streets, they will purge—

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: Have you spoken with the Premier about it and whether or not there needs to be an escalation of resources?

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Ms YASMIN CATLEY: Of course we've spoken about the situation that happened on the weekend and the results of that. I think, though, that police will purge their resources to meet the safety of the community regardless of what the issue is or the incident is. That's what they do, and they do it extremely well. I've certainly spoken to Mr Hudson in relation to the weekend and what occurred, as well as Mr McKenna, because he was the deputy in charge of the weekend's events. The police will purge their resources to whatever is the unsafe environment that our State finds itself in at any given time.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: Minister, why did you tell a caucus meeting prior to the March for Humanity that the Palestine Action Group's offer to delay the march was not genuine?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: I'm sure you won't find it surprising that I will not be discussing caucus matters with you, Ms Higginson.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: I'm not asking you to discuss caucus matters with me. I'm asking you why you said a thing. I'm asking you about why you said something. It could have been to caucus; it could have been to anybody. It just happened to be to caucus. Why did you say that the Palestine Action Group's offer to delay the march was not genuine?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: I'm not going to discuss anything that I said in caucus to you. But that does not sound like something that I said.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: You deny saying that?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: I'm not going to discuss anything that I said in caucus with you.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: Is it your view that the Palestine Action Group's offer to delay the march was not genuine?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: No, I can tell you exactly what happened.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: I know what happened, but I'm asking you about why you thought something that you said.

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: No, someone has told you that's what I thought.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: Are you denying you said it?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: I'm not divulging to you what I said in caucus. I never have and I—it's not going to be first time.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: My information is you did say that. So what basis upon—

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: That's what I said to you: That's what you've been told.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: I have been told that.

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: Maybe you should go and check your source.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: I'm not the only person that has been told.

The Hon. Dr SARAH KAINE: Point of order: I'm not sure that it's within the standing orders to continue with hearsay when the Minister has already said that she, one, didn't say something and, two, she's not prepared to divulge what is caucus practice, which is what goes on in caucus. I'm not sure that hearsay, when the Minister has said that she didn't say it, is an appropriate line of questioning.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: Thank you. Can I confirm Ms Kaine's point? You're saying here and now you did not say that?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: I'm saying that I'm not divulging to this Committee what I said in caucus. I do not discuss caucus matters outside of the caucus room.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: Do you think that the Palestine Action Group's offer to delay the march was genuine?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: I think that there was a series of conversations with the police which were very productive. They were waiting for the magistrate to make the decision. Once that decision was made, then, as we know, the march went ahead.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: For your benefit, Minister, I am going to table and provide you with a copy of, so you can keep it for good measure, a statutory declaration sworn by Josh Lees, the organiser, so you can see the depth, the breadth and the efforts that he made to make genuine efforts.

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Ms YASMIN CATLEY: I acknowledge that, and I just acknowledged that. They worked with the police, and I just acknowledged that in my comments.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: Do you accept that the police wasted significant time and resources on that Supreme Court challenge, which actually failed and—you'll see in the statutory declaration—their consistent refusal to engage in meaningful and cooperative discussions with the Palestine Action Group?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: Police's responsibility is to keep the community safe. It was their view that the risk of the march going ahead on the bridge was not going to be safe. Obviously the court decision was made. They hold that view and I respect that view. They went through the process that they have available to them. That's all they have available to them. What might be of interest to you to know is that whilst the march went ahead and was peaceful, as you know, because of the number of participants, there was serious concern for crowd crush. I am told by those police who were there that we were extremely lucky to avert a serious incident occurring on the bridge in relation to the number of people that were there. So the police—

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: Can you expand a little bit on that?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: I just want to finish. Part of that problem was because there was no planning on where the crowd was going to disperse to on the northern side of the bridge.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: So you accept the point.

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: I think that it's very—

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: So you accept the point—

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: I think that it's very important that we take advice from the people who have the most experience—

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: So, Minister, you accept that on 29, 30 and 31 July, 1 August—and actually 26 and 28 July—all those opportunities for the police to discuss with the organisers the safety issues that they had were completely wasted by police?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: My understanding is—sorry, I didn't hear all the dates you said and I don't know in what forum—

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: It was from 26 July to 1 August—every effort the Palestine Action Group made to organise with the police, and they refused to cooperate. It's all written in the statutory declaration.

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: That's not true. That is not true.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: They refused.

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: The police made every effort as well.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: They refused. They went to court, Minister.

The Hon. PETER PRIMROSE: Point of order: You ask a question—that's reasonable—but you can't also try to answer it. I think we should allow the Minister to at least have an opportunity to respond.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: I agree. I uphold the point of order.

The Hon. GREG DONNELLY: To the point of order—

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: I've ruled on it. I've taken it. It's a point of order, and I've ruled on it.

The Hon. PETER PRIMROSE: It's a further point of order.

The Hon. GREG DONNELLY: If you're going to do that to me—

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: A further one?

The Hon. GREG DONNELLY: Yes, indeed.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: Go, Mr Donnelly.

The Hon. GREG DONNELLY: The Minister hasn't even been given an opportunity to read the statutory declaration. You've gone through a series of dates, you've made a series of statements, then you're prosecuting a set of questions, which you're entitled to do.

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Ms SUE HIGGINSON: Thank you, Mr Donnelly. I uphold the point of order. I rule on it. You're right; I'll move on. Minister, in relation to your statement about crowd crush, what do you say and what have you been informed was the crowd crush potential in the moment?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: I wasn't there and police would be best to answer that. However, as I was just describing to you—but you were speaking over the top of me so you didn't hear—as the crowd were heading in a northerly direction, as we very well know, there was not any plans put in place for the dispersion of the crowd.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: Whose fault's that, Minister?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: There was no time to actually put a plan in place. Police would ordinarily, with a large number—even with 10,000 people, in actual fact—have sat down and worked out a plan. But there was no plan.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: So why did the police not sit down and work out a plan, Minister? From 26 July to 1 August, why did they not make a plan?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: What's that? Ten days?

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: Why did they not make a plan?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: We're talking about something that's quite significant and takes a lot of preparation, not just with police but with Transport and other agencies as well. There is just not enough time in 10 days to put together a very succinct plan to manage that number of people. That is just the reality of it. They were told—

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: But the truth is, Minister—

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: Can I please finish? They were told by the organisers that they were going to proceed regardless of what the outcome of the magistrates was.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: The Supreme Court justice, actually, just simply didn't make the order. Of course the people could proceed. Minister, why do you say that the police did not waste all of those days? The fact that they did have a plan at the eleventh hour, why do you say they hadn't wasted all that time when they could have—

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: They didn't. They did exactly what they should do, and that's to keep the community safe. To do that—

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: So they'll do that again?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: To do that, they have to put in place pathways for people to be able to exit the bridge. They did not have the opportunity to do that.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: Morning, Minister. Good morning, everyone. I also would like to recognise the great contribution that the police make to keep us all safe. Thank you for the work that you do. I'd especially like to welcome back Mr Thurtell, who we didn't think we'd see again. It's nice to see you again. Minister, did you advise your staff to defy a lawful summons to attend as witnesses before a committee of this House?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: No.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: What conversations did you have with your staff about attending the inquiry into the Dural caravan as witnesses?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: None, but I thought that you dragging my staff before your kangaroo court was outrageous.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: Minister, you didn't have any discussions with your staff at all?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: No.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: I would be interested to review the evidence from your staff, which I think told a different story. What apps do you use to communicate with your staff?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: I use all the apps, but mostly I have conversations. I'm a bit old fashioned like that; I like to pick up the phone and have a conversation, but mostly I like to have conversations face to face, because I think that's when you always get honesty.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: Are disappearing messages enabled on the apps that you use?

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Ms YASMIN CATLEY: I don't know. They may have them disappearing. I'm not sure.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: What measures do you have in place to ensure compliance with the State Records Act?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: I absolutely adhere to it, as I'm supposed to.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: What measures do you have in place to ensure your absolute adherence?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: I don't think I have to put measures in place. I've just told you: That's what I do.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: Do you think that taxpayers' money should be spent to provide legal advice from a top Sydney firm to ministerial staffers who do not want to obey a lawful summons?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: I'm not aware of the taxpayers' funding for that.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: Minister, you're not aware that members of your staff have been authorised to receive ex gratia payments from your Government to cover legal fees to advise them whether or not they have to obey a lawful summons?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: No, I'm not. I'm not at all.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: Minister, are you seriously telling us that, as a member of the Government and as a member of Cabinet—

The Hon. Dr SARAH KAINE: Point of order, Chair—

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: I'll hear the point of order.

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: This had nothing to do with me.

The Hon. Dr SARAH KAINE: Ms Carter has just, with increasing volume, asked the same question that the Minister has already answered. I'd ask that she deal with her with courtesy and move on to the next question. The question's been answered.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: To the point of order: I am ascertaining that the answer I received is correct, because I find it very surprising.

The Hon. Dr SARAH KAINE: You've got the answer twice to that.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: And I note that that answer was given under oath. Thank you.

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: You might be surprised, Ms Carter, but it has nothing to do with me.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: There is no point of order. Carry on.

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: That was a matter for the staff and for obviously people that they were dealing with.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: Minister, it's not a matter for the staff, because the payment needs to be authorised by your Government.

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: It's certainly not out of the Police budget, and that's the one I'm interested in.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: So, provided the money comes from somewhere else, you have no objection to your staff's legal fees being covered by a top Sydney firm?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: I didn't say I didn't have an objection. Your question was, do I know about it, and I said no, I didn't.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: Do you have an objection to your staff members' legal fees from a top Sydney firm being covered to give them advice about whether they should obey a lawful summons or not?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: I don't know the rules around these things, but I'm certain that if it's available to them, then that's available to them. I don't know the rules around these things.

The Hon. NICHOLE OVERALL: Minister, good morning to you all. I reiterate my parliamentary colleagues' thanks to you for the work that you do every single day in our communities. Minister, can you please tell me how many police districts there are in New South Wales?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: Police districts?

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The Hon. NICHOLE OVERALL: Yes.

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: Regional—56, are there?

PETER THURTELL: That's combined regional, and PACs and PDs.

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: That's combined, sorry. There are two: There are districts, and then there are PACs and PDs.

The Hon. NICHOLE OVERALL: What's the authorised strength of the NSW Police Force?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: I'll get you the exact number. They will hand it to me in a moment. It's 18,600 and something, I think.

The Hon. NICHOLE OVERALL: That's the authorised strength. What's the current strength of the NSW Police Force?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: The current strength is 15,926. This was as of 24 August.

The Hon. NICHOLE OVERALL: It's 15,926, and the authorised strength was 18,600 and something?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: Yes.

The Hon. NICHOLE OVERALL: Can you tell us then, Minister, as these numbers don't appear to be included in the annual report, how many police officers are currently on leave?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: You'll have to get that information from the deputy director.

The Hon. NICHOLE OVERALL: I have a number of questions in relation to that.

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: Here it is—my apologies. Authorised strength is 18,398.

The Hon. NICHOLE OVERALL: You don't have to hand the number of police officers currently on leave?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: If you give me a moment, I will come back to you with that.

The Hon. NICHOLE OVERALL: That's okay. I can provide you with a list here because I've got quite a number of these. If we could have the numbers on leave; workers compensation; parental; long service; leave without pay; sick, including mental health—

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: This question has been asked before, and I'm sure there will be clarity on that. It is difficult to answer, including mental health, so I think you need to just say sick.

The Hon. NICHOLE OVERALL: Okay, we'll say sick; suspended, with and without pay; and terminated. I do have that list, so we can provide that so that it can be—

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: No, we'll give the answers towards the end.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: Minister, I'd like to come back to you about the questions I was just asking you. I'm just confirming that you said that you had no discussions with your staff about their appearance before the committee.

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: I had no discussions about their appearance except to say—I absolutely said to them that I think it's disgusting that you're going, and I do. I think that it was shocking—

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: So you did have conversations with them about it.

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: Not about the committee. I had discussions with them being—I said that to you. I believe that it was shocking that they were dragged in. I think if you were put in that position and it was your staff, you would feel exactly the same.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: Minister, I'm just trying to get a clear answer.

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: Why do public servants have to answer—

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: Just a clear answer.

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: Why do staff have to answer these questions?

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: Minister, you refused to appear. That's exactly why your staff were called.

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: But you are not allowed to force me to appear, and what you did was bring staff in. It's shocking, and history will prove that you were wrong to do that.

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Ms SUE HIGGINSON: The law says otherwise.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: Exactly. I endorse the comments of the Chair: The law says otherwise. If you were that concerned to protect your staff, you had the option to appear yourself—an option which you declined to exercise.

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: The law also says I don't have to come.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: But the law says that your staff do have to come, Minister.

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: We have been through the Dural caravan process chapter and verse at the last estimates—

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: You are deflecting from answering a question.

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: —and you continue to ask more questions.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: Minister, why are you refusing to actually answer the question?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: I don't know what you thought I was going to say that was different, because I absolutely tell the truth when I'm in this room.

The Hon. GREG DONNELLY: Point of order: It is really for the benefit of Hansard—to enable them to be able to take down the transcript of what's going on.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: Minister, can I just ask you and Committee members to please try not to speak over the top of each other. Hansard does an incredible job here trying to reflect the democratic process of these budget estimates hearings, so let's have some respect for them. Thank you and carry on.

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: Can I just say that I do have the utmost respect for Hansard staff, Chair. I agree with you, and I thank them very much for the work they do.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: Minister, I'm concerned you have lied to this Committee, because I've had an opportunity to review the transcript of evidence, and your staff member Dr South, said:

TILLY SOUTH: I spoke to Minister Catley on the evening that the caravan was found.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: No, about the summons.

TILLY SOUTH: About the summons—I'm so sorry ... it would have been at the time we received it because we received it in the office.

Similarly, this is the evidence given from your staff member Mr Neilson:

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: Mr Neilson, did you have conversations with Minister Catley about whether you should or should not attend these hearings?

ROSS NEILSON: Yes, she agreed with me that we shouldn't.

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: I just told you that I said exactly that to them.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: No, Minister.

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: Yes, I did.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: No, you said before that you did not advise your staff not to attend.

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: I didn't.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: Either your staff is telling the truth or you are telling the truth. Which is it, Minister?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: I just said to you that I told them that I thought it was shocking that they were attending. And I do, and I say it again. However, that has nothing to do with me talking to them about them attending the committee.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: Minister, I asked you, as the first question: Did you advise your staff not to attend the hearings? You answered no.

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: That's right. It wasn't advice. I did not say to them, "You should not attend." I said to them, "They should not be asking you to attend." I stand by it, and I'd stand by it every day of the week. What you have done is shocking.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: Minister, with respect—

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Ms YASMIN CATLEY: It's unfortunate you didn't have respect for our staff.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: —what you have done is try to evade the question.

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: No, I haven't evaded the question.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: You have answered with half-truths in an effort to evade the question.

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: No, I have not evaded the question whatsoever.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: I think the point is made, Minister, but I would ask you to treat—

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: No, let's keep talking about it, because I am happy to keep talking about it.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: There's only a point talking about it if you will give truthful and honest answers.

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: I am being very truthful and honest.

The Hon. PETER PRIMROSE: Point of order: Again, I think it's appropriate that the Minister be allowed to respond to the allegations being made by the member.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: I put the allegation to you clearly, Minister—

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: The problem for you, Ms Carter, is that I'm not saying what you want me to say. I am being honest and truthful.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: I asked you whether you spoke to them.

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: Yes.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: You said no.

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: I speak to my staff every day.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: The evidence from your staff members is that you did.

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: That isn't what you asked. You asked if I had told them not to attend—was your question.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: Then I followed up with a question about the conversations you had.

The Hon. PETER PRIMROSE: May I have a ruling? I'd suggest it's still appropriate.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: I think you are right. If we could engage in the ordinary course of questions and answers, with time to do that, I think it would benefit everyone in the room.

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: I agree with you, Chair, but I was just told that I was being dishonest, and I take offence to that, quite frankly. I was not being dishonest. I was being very clear. Quite frankly, I think Mrs Carter owes me an apology.

The Hon. NICHOLE OVERALL: Minister, have you appointed a new commissioner?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: No.

The Hon. NICHOLE OVERALL: What's holding up the decision to appoint a new commissioner?

The Hon. MARK LATHAM: Today!

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: No, it won't be announced today, Mr Latham. Nothing's holding it up. We're just going through the recruitment process, as would be expected.

The Hon. NICHOLE OVERALL: It doesn't seem to be an inordinate delay?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: No, absolutely not. The commissioner, Karen Webb, is the commissioner until the 30th of this month.

The Hon. NICHOLE OVERALL: Indeed she is.

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: So no, there is no delay whatsoever. We're just going through the process. We want to make sure that we get the right person for the job. It's a very important appointment.

The Hon. NICHOLE OVERALL: Incredibly important.

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: We're going through that process. There's nothing unusual about it.

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The Hon. NICHOLE OVERALL: Speaking about Commissioner Webb's resignation, what conversations did you have with her prior to her resignation as commissioner?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: She had advised me that she was thinking about retiring, and then she advised me that she was going to retire.

The Hon. NICHOLE OVERALL: Eighteen months prior to the end of her tenured role.

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: Well, that's the date that she has decided to retire.

The Hon. NICHOLE OVERALL: Did you or your staff ever suggest to the commissioner that she needed to leave her role?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: God no. Well, certainly not me.

The Hon. NICHOLE OVERALL: What about the Premier? Did he ever suggest it?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: No, not that I'm aware of.

The Hon. NICHOLE OVERALL: To you or to Commissioner Webb?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: No, not that I'm aware of.

The Hon. NICHOLE OVERALL: What about discussions that you had with Commissioner Webb after the announcement of her retirement?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: What sort of discussions? I speak to her regularly.

The Hon. NICHOLE OVERALL: On her plans for her future, shall we say.

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: She walked off two Fridays ago down at Goulburn.

The Hon. NICHOLE OVERALL: Was there a nice gin and tonic as a result?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: No, we didn't. It was breakfast. We did have coffee. She's planning on doing what most people do when they retire, and that is taking time to think about what she's going to do: take a few holidays and enjoy her life with her family and her husband.

The Hon. NICHOLE OVERALL: You just mentioned that Commissioner Webb's resignation is to take effect on 30 September. Why has she not seen out her role as commissioner until 30 September?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: The commissioner determined that date. She told me that's when she's going to retire, and she's entitled to do that. It's very normal for senior public servants to do other jobs for government during this period, and the Government has asked her to do another very important role in the domestic violence space.

The Hon. NICHOLE OVERALL: It's standard practice then—

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: It's not unusual.

The Hon. NICHOLE OVERALL: —for government employees to resign and yet continue on—

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: She hasn't resigned. She's resigning on the 30th. She has advised us that she's going to resign.

The Hon. NICHOLE OVERALL: Her resignation taking effect—and, therefore, instead of fulfilling that role, there is now another role that she is doing instead. And that's standard practice?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: It's not uncommon, that's for sure. Commissioner Webb has deep knowledge and experience when it comes to domestic violence, and the Government has made a decision—

The Hon. NICHOLE OVERALL: I would imagine that she also has deep knowledge and experience as a commissioner, hence that's why she was appointed to the role.

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: The Government has made a decision for her to do a job for them.

The Hon. NICHOLE OVERALL: I'm aware.

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: I'm not across it, to be honest; it's obviously not in my portfolio. They've asked her to do that. Why not get the best of the best to do something that you want them to do?

The Hon. NICHOLE OVERALL: Or to continue in the role that they were appointed to? Was this domestic violence special adviser role specifically created for Commissioner Webb?

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Ms YASMIN CATLEY: I can't answer that. I don't know exactly what her job description is.

The Hon. NICHOLE OVERALL: So you don't know what the role entails?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: No.

The Hon. NICHOLE OVERALL: Are you aware of media reports stating the role was to develop a comprehensive domestic violence prevention framework, continuing her commitment to championing the rights of victims?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: No, I'm not sure that I had read that, but that sounds absolutely like something that Commissioner Webb would do in spades.

The Hon. NICHOLE OVERALL: You're also acknowledging that that's a very important role that she's fulfilling in that regard?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: I think anything in the domestic violence space is critically important. Police attend—up to 60 per cent of their time is related to domestic violence.

The Hon. NICHOLE OVERALL: We know.

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: It's very, very important.

The Hon. NICHOLE OVERALL: It is.

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: Any work there will be important for the police; that's for sure.

The Hon. NICHOLE OVERALL: You acknowledge that this role is so important and the apparent significance of this task. Why is the position only for three months?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: Because she's retiring on the 30th.

The Hon. NICHOLE OVERALL: Indeed. So, conveniently, this position has been created in order for Commissioner Webb to see out the period of which she has given her resignation date on 30 September.

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: As I described to you, I am not privy to the details of the role and exactly what it is that is being delivered. That would be a matter for the Minister.

The Hon. NICHOLE OVERALL: The Minister has been asked about this as well. Perhaps you could—I don't know—take it on notice as the police Minister, who I guess Commissioner Webb is still answerable to as she is still the commissioner until 30 September? She is undertaking this role for the Government. Was the role manufactured to give her the opportunity to serve out her remaining time?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: That's not my understanding.

The Hon. NICHOLE OVERALL: A question that you might be able to answer: Does Commissioner Webb continue to be paid at the rate of a police commissioner while undertaking this domestic violence related role?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: Yes.

The Hon. NICHOLE OVERALL: How much is that?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: I'd have to have a look. I'm not sure.

The Hon. NICHOLE OVERALL: You'll take that on notice and get back to us?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: No, I won't take it on notice. I'll give it to you, because we'll have it. It's public knowledge.

The Hon. NICHOLE OVERALL: Great. Please do.

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: It's \$670,000 or something. Don't take that—I'm not sure that's absolutely correct.

The Hon. NICHOLE OVERALL: So approximately \$670,000, being paid as the commissioner, but undertaking an entirely different role in a different department and a different jurisdiction. Does it come from the police budget?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: Yes.

The Hon. NICHOLE OVERALL: So she's still being paid by the police budget, but you can't actually answer to what role she is undertaking right now until 30 September?

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Ms YASMIN CATLEY: I've already told you that Commissioner Webb does not leave her post until 30 September, so it makes sense that she is still in her role.

The Hon. NICHOLE OVERALL: Let's get back to the idea of the creation of the role. It wasn't yours, you've suggested.

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: It's not in the police portfolio.

The Hon. NICHOLE OVERALL: Whose idea was it? Was it the Premier's?

The Hon. PETER PRIMROSE: Point of order: As per the resolution of the House establishing budget estimates, it's appropriate to ask the Minister questions in relation to her budget, but it's not appropriate to ask her questions in relation to someone else's budget.

The Hon. NICHOLE OVERALL: To the point of order: The Minister has just qualified that the commissioner is still being paid through the police budget. Therefore, these are the questions that I'm asking—that she's fulfilling an entirely different role but being paid for by the police budget, yet the Minister can't answer to the role that she's currently undertaking and whether it was created in order to facilitate, very conveniently, the period before her resignation takes place on 30 September, and being paid very handsomely.

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: It is \$679,050.

The Hon. NICHOLE OVERALL: That's \$679,000 for a special adviser role.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: I will quickly rule. I think the question is in order. But thank you, Mr Primrose. That was a good point.

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: It is \$679,050.

The Hon. NICHOLE OVERALL: Thank you for the specifics. That's great. Do you have any idea, Minister, if the DV role—given how important you've acknowledged it is—will continue after the commissioner leaves that role?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: No, and why would I?

The Hon. NICHOLE OVERALL: I don't know—you just might know what your employees are doing.

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: People go on secondment all the time. I'm not quite sure why you find this so extraordinary. The commissioner is very well qualified, obviously.

The Hon. NICHOLE OVERALL: Because being paid \$679,050 to undertake—

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: Because the commissioner is still—

The Hon. Dr SARAH KAINE: Point of order: Ms Overall is not letting the Minister finish again. It's quite astounding that questions have been asked but there seems to be no attempt to listen to the Minister give the answer. Could we afford the Minister the courtesy of listening to the answer before the next question?

The Hon. NICHOLE OVERALL: Do explain, please, Minister, how it is that you feel that it is not something that you need to oversee—that Commissioner Webb continues to be paid through the police budget to fulfil an entirely different role that conveniently fits within the period that she has given for her resignation?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: Very easily. DCJ is the agency that is in charge of the role, not me as the police Minister. I do not step into other agencies' business. She has been asked to do something that is extremely important—

The Hon. NICHOLE OVERALL: But you're happy to continue to pay her wage.

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: She is overqualified to be able to do that job, and I have no doubt that the work she is doing will be incredibly valuable to the State of New South Wales.

The Hon. MARK LATHAM: Minister, you said earlier on that you didn't have the correct number of antisemitic attacks in the last couple of years. Have you got that number now?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: Sorry, I didn't ask for it. My apologies. I was busy getting other numbers for others. I will, though, before—

The Hon. MARK LATHAM: When you do get it, can you strip out those incidents that were sponsored and instigated by the Iranian Government?

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Ms YASMIN CATLEY: They were still attacks on our streets, and they were still antisemitic, and the police, in those instances, have arrested people and charged people, and some of them are now in correctional facilities.

The Hon. MARK LATHAM: With all due respect, Minister, you're not saying to this Committee that you won't give us the number of incidents that have been sponsored and instigated by the Iranian Government?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: The Federal Government announced, as we all heard, that there were two incidents.

The Hon. MARK LATHAM: Just two?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: I can only go on what I've heard as well.

The Hon. MARK LATHAM: Haven't you been advised, given the information sharing between our Police Force and the AFP?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: I understand it's still two. Mr Hudson, do you have anything further to add to that? My understanding is it was the two. They were very clear on what those two incidents were. But they were still domestic in New South Wales, and New South Wales obviously policed them and made those arrests and charges.

The Hon. MARK LATHAM: Can you strip out the numbers that have been instigated and sponsored by organised crime figures paying people to go and do this for non-antisemitic purposes, such as plea bargaining?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: Can we do that? Why would we want to do that? This is the thing that's so—

The Hon. MARK LATHAM: You've asked me a question. Minister, why we want to do it is because you and the Premier have put out the notion that antisemitism is rampant across Sydney—dangerous, needed to sponsor the hate speech laws that many in the upper House regard as under false pretences. We're trying to get at the core truth of what you've actually put around, creating fear in New South Wales—in Sydney, in particular. That's why we want to do it. Don't you think that is valid?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: I think your notion that we're creating fear couldn't be further from the reality. There was fear. There is still fear. The summer of 2025 was incredibly fearful for the people of our Jewish community.

The Hon. MARK LATHAM: Minister, I'm just trying to get to the source of these incidents that you've conflated into something much bigger than what I believe it really is. I don't live on the Central Coast or up near Newcastle; I live in Western Sydney, where these things are supposed to originate from, and I'm interested in the source. So, can you strip out the organised crime sponsorship of these attacks where people have been paid and, when they went and did it, they obviously weren't antisemitic? Their relatives said they never talk that way. They had a swastika around the wrong way. They couldn't spell Israel. It is legitimate to strip those out, isn't it?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: For the purpose of us collating a number of antisemitic attacks, they are still antisemitic attacks and they will continue to be counted as such.

The Hon. MARK LATHAM: Minister, that's like telling me two plus two is four, but it doesn't assist the public in understanding the root causes of the problems that you've identified and spoken about, and the Premier has spoken about extensively, to the point of sponsoring hate speech laws in the Parliament in the way you did. Once you strip those sources of the incidents out, can you then identify the number—and the acting commissioner said it's somewhere obviously below 280, minus two, whatever the other number is—of reports of things that were said, so, hurt feelings?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: Sorry, can you just repeat that?

The Hon. MARK LATHAM: Those that remain after we take out those from foreign agents, those from organised crime—the number that remain of these incidents that have been identified—can you report to the Parliament where the incidents relate to things that were said? Reports about things that were said—someone drove past in a car with a Palestinian flag, they yelled something out and someone had their feelings hurt by that. Can you identify incidents of that nature?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: No. There are 663 offences under Shelter and, no, we can't—they're all offences—and 254 charges have been laid. There are currently 45 before the courts.

The Hon. MARK LATHAM: Can you identify attacks on property—vandalism—and also those that are more serious?

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Ms YASMIN CATLEY: Just read *The Daily Telegraph*—or any newspaper, for that matter, or news channel. They're obviously very well publicised.

The Hon. MARK LATHAM: I read *The Daily Telegraph*. I don't regard it as an organ of truth. What about attacks on people and prosecutions?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: No, it's just 663 offences.

The Hon. MARK LATHAM: Didn't the acting commissioner go to the antisemitic inquiry and provide data?

PETER THURTELL: Yes, I did.

The Hon. MARK LATHAM: Didn't you say it comes down to 280?

PETER THURTELL: I think, from memory—and I stand to be corrected—what I said was, of the number recorded under Shelter, that, if I said 280, then 280 were—

The Hon. MARK LATHAM: Well, 41 per cent of the bigger number was 280.

PETER THURTELL: —then recorded as "antisemitic". Then there's a percentage of others that are recorded as "other", which you've already pointed out. The motivation behind each one of those is not necessarily known, so it's probably recorded as "other" as opposed to known "antisemitic", but obviously there was some element of antisemitism in it, which made them record them under Shelter.

The Hon. MARK LATHAM: What's an element of antisemitism? Surely antisemitism is someone who hates Israel and hates the Jewish people.

PETER THURTELL: Well, it could have been, or—

The Hon. MARK LATHAM: What's an element?

PETER THURTELL: —it could have been a Nazi symbol scrawled on a toilet wall, and someone might put down "other" as opposed to "antisemitic".

The Hon. MARK LATHAM: So when some teenager, being idiotic—as some are—drives past a synagogue yelling out something about Hitler, how do you classify that?

PETER THURTELL: That would be up to the officer who took the report of the matter.

The Hon. MARK LATHAM: So this is a very imprecise—

PETER THURTELL: Yes, that's exactly right.

The Hon. MARK LATHAM: —police recording exercise.

PETER THURTELL: Yes.

The Hon. MARK LATHAM: In your own assessment, serious attacks on property and serious attacks on people instigated by antisemitic ideology by people living in Sydney, how many of those have we got?

PETER THURTELL: I couldn't put a number on it.

The Hon. MARK LATHAM: Could you take that on notice?

PETER THURTELL: I'm happy to take that on notice, but even taking it on notice won't necessarily give me an exact number. But I certainly will take it on notice.

The Hon. MARK LATHAM: If you could do your best, please, because it would assist us. We've been involved in legislation, and a lot of MPs don't regard it as valid. We're trying to get to the truth of what has gone on in our city. It's very important given the nature of this debate, which is fuelled by others on both sides of the fence. So if you can help in that regard with as much of the data—because, obviously after we heard about the origins of the Dural caravan and then heard about the work of the Iranian Government that has been identified, we're wanting to strip it down to those who are people in Sydney acting out of antisemitic ideology, a hatred of Jews, doing these things in a serious way, not just driving past the synagogue and yelling out something stupid, but a serious attack on property or people.

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: Can I just say, the figures that I just gave you were handed—under Operation Shelter, 663 offences, 254 charges laid by police and currently 45 charges before the courts. I just wanted to be clear on that. That was all.

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The Hon. MARK LATHAM: And the acting commissioner is hopefully going to provide, to the best of his capacity and the information available, the breakdown that I'm seeking that I can assure will assist our House at least in dealing with these questions going forward. On a separate matter, it was mentioned about Commissioner Webb outgoing on the 30th of this month. Why isn't she appearing at estimates, Minister?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: Because the acting commissioner is Peter Thurtell. He is the acting commissioner at the moment.

The Hon. MARK LATHAM: So what's her status?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: I'm not sure what the title is, but she is actually, as you know, doing work for the Government with DCJ on domestic violence.

The Hon. MARK LATHAM: So her status is "work for the Government elsewhere", like gardening leave?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: I don't know what the official status is, but that's what she's doing.

The Hon. MARK LATHAM: Minister, when did you first become aware that Karen Webb misled the public about her association with the Hopes from the Hope Estate with Pokolbin, given her evidence to LECC that, far from hardly knowing them, they went on holiday together to Bali, planned another overseas trip cancelled by COVID, and went to birthday parties together? Mr Hope and Ms Webb were long-time business partners, and the Hopes came to Karen Webb's induction as police commissioner.

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: LECC's Askern report is privileged and it is subject to a non-publication order. I will not be speaking about it. I will not breach that. I know that you have, and I know you have on 2SM, which I think is rather foolish. I will not be speaking about it.

The Hon. MARK LATHAM: LECC had no problem the other day at estimates. I think they might have been quietly happy that the truth was out there. I can assure you, Minister, that police officers off duty come up to me and say, "Isn't it good that someone speaks the truth about this commissioner who lied." It gives them some assurance that it hopefully won't happen in the future. But when did you first become aware of and read that LECC report?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: I don't recall the date but, as you very well know, the legislation says that I get a copy of it. I can't tell you the exact date.

The Hon. MARK LATHAM: Can you take that on notice?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: It would be about the same date—I can give you the date.

The Hon. MARK LATHAM: Having read the report, why did you—

The Hon. PETER PRIMROSE: Point order: I seek guidance from you, Chair, but I believe that this line of questioning could be in breach of the non-publication order that has been issued.

The Hon. MARK LATHAM: To the point of order: Well, it's not. We're under privilege here and we're parliamentarians acting in the public interest. Minister, having read that report, why did you tolerate for so long the dishonesty of the commissioner?

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: Yes—

The Hon. PETER PRIMROSE: Well then, further—

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: Mr Latham.

The Hon. PETER PRIMROSE: Mr Latham—can I please, Chair, ask you to do that? Then I would have an additional point of order.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: I think we're straying close to unwanted territory, but I don't think we're quite there yet. We've just been saved by the bell. It's now Dr Cohn's turn.

The Hon. MARK LATHAM: Can I get an answer to my question?

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: You can come back in the next round. Dr Cohn, it is your time.

Dr AMANDA COHN: Minister, police continue to be the first responders to mental health emergencies in New South Wales. We have an extraordinary consensus between the police themselves, the Police Association, the Minister for Mental Health, people with lived experience and clinicians. Everybody agrees that this approach isn't working. I understand that there has been a working group established within government, including the

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Police Force, working on alternative approaches. I understand that that work has been underway for about a year now. What are the barriers to that work progressing more quickly?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: Work is progressing, and thank you very much for acknowledging the work that police do in relation to this. It is very cooperative and collaborative. I've said before in both estimates and more broadly that we acknowledge that it can often be the case that police arriving at a mental health incident can actually escalate the incident rather than not, so we are working towards a more health-led model. That work is progressing. I don't think there are barriers in the way, but it's a big change from police being the first responder to health being the first responder, and we have to make sure that we get it right. We have to make sure that paramedics are also safe, so there's a lot to consider. But the will is absolutely there, and it is happening. In fact, Mr Hudson represents the police on that committee. We really have come along way.

Obviously PACER is something that is health led as well. That's something that's occurring already. By all accounts—out in the field I get really good feedback on that. I hope that you have as well. But that doesn't mean that's necessarily the way forward. As you well know, we've had Kirsty Hayward, who is a police officer but also a psychologist, go over to England. She had a look at what they're doing over there. They're leading the way in response to mental health. She has come back and is informing the police on what is the best way forward. It's imminent in terms of our first steps of what we'll do. We'll keep the Parliament informed and abreast of what we're doing. At the end of the day, there is fierce agreement that we want people who experience mental health incidents to be treated properly and to have the care that they need.

Dr AMANDA COHN: Thanks, Minister. It's good to hear your support for this really important reform. The inquiry that I chaired last year into mental health made several recommendations in this space. We looked at some existing models in quite significant detail. We looked at the Mental Health Acute Assessment Team model that has operated in Western Sydney for more than a decade. I understand there's a similar model that's used by ambulance down the South Coast. There's the South Australian MH CORE model, where ambulance only activate police as a secondary response for the safety of health workers, and it's the health workers who lead the response dealing with the person who is in distress. Given that those models exist, and they are working in Australia—some in New South Wales now—are there any barriers to those models actually being expanded now?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: Mr Hudson, I'm sure would be able to talk further to that. But I believe that everything is being explored to make sure that we get the best model, deliver the best care for those people experiencing a mental health episode. Did you want to add anything?

DAVID HUDSON: I can, Minister. There is a model out for consultation at the moment. We, Health and New South Wales police, agree on a pathway forward, and that's gone out for consultation as of last month. We're waiting for feedback from that. With government support, that's gone out for consultation. Once that consultation with interested parties—those involved in the industry, clinicians—once we receive that feedback we will tailor those responses, see if they're relevant, need modifications to the proposed model, and then put it up for implementation. In answer to your question, there are no barriers. Health and the New South Wales police agree with the upper House inquiry's recommendation in relation to a health-led response, and that is the pathway, that is the proposal, that's out for consultation at the moment.

Dr AMANDA COHN: In relation to that consultation—which the mental health Minister also spoke about when I asked her the same questions—how can people who are interested in this reform be involved? There are obviously particular stakeholders who must've been invited to participate but there's very little public information available.

DAVID HUDSON: That's a very good point. I will have to double-check that. Maybe we open up for public consultation, I am not too sure. I'll have to discuss that with Health. That had been discussed with me. There are an interested group of stakeholders that we do need feedback from, but broader consultation I don't think has been considered. We can certainly take that on notice and consider that.

Dr AMANDA COHN: Can I clarify, is it yourself that is leading this process or is it the mental health branch at NSW Health. Is it Ambulance? Who's leading the consultation on the new model?

DAVID HUDSON: Health are leading the process. Obviously, we're interested stakeholders and members of the steering committee that are driving it.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: Just on that, when do you expect the new system to be implemented to commence?

DAVID HUDSON: That will be dependent upon the feedback we receive and what modifications we might have to make.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: Have you got a time frame in mind?

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DAVID HUDSON: The transition, in my mind, will be slow. There will be some issues, once agreed to, that we need to work through with Health through Ambulance NSW in relation to the definition of risk, the definition of threat, when police need to attend incidents in conjunction with Ambulance because we're not going to walk away from the responsibility. Some of these incidents are potentially highly violent, and we can't expose our ambulance personnel to those risks. We are working through that with Ambulance. We are redesigning the MOU with Ambulance at the moment, which I don't think is too far away in relation to how we treat risk in these instances. I think that MOU will be agreed to in the short term, but then the broader transition to a totally health-led response will be incremental as they take greater responsibility and we slowly withdraw to just those incidents we're required to attend.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: Minister, you would be aware of the dreadful incident on 27 June, where at a peaceful picket outside of SEC Plating—a manufacturer that supplied weapons plating to Israel for the use in its genocide in Gaza—Hannah Thomas was assaulted by police during her arrest, is what is alleged, and caused her to undergo multiple surgeries and potentially be left visionless in one eye. Has a police officer been charged in relation to that?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: No, that is not my understanding. Obviously, that is a matter that is being investigated through the Professional Standards Command and LECC and that matter is before the court as well.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: Have you suggested that any charges against Ms Thomas be withdrawn?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: No, I would not suggest that to the police. The DPP, I believe, have that matter.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: Is there anybody in the police that have suggested to you that charges should be withdrawn, given the circumstances? It is incredibly egregious.

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: That is a matter for the DPP.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: The whole scenario around that, the police were regularly giving updates, including Assistant Commissioner McFadden—I will talk to Assistant Commissioner McFadden after but—

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: We don't have Assistant Commissioner McFadden here.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: Apologies.

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: McKenna.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: Is Assistant Commissioner McFadden still in his position?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: Yes.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: Notwithstanding the fact that he said—sorry, Mr McKenna, I think I mixed you up. I really did. I think I did. I apologise.

PETER McKENNA: Thankfully, that's clarified.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: We have clarified it. Is Assistant Commissioner McFadden still in his position?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: Yes.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: Do you think that that's tenable, given he said in public that he had reviewed footage, body-worn video footage, and that there was no police misconduct?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: I think we have to put this into some perspective in terms of—I know that you have been calling for a critical incident to be declared, but the reality is—

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: And one has been declared.

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: Correct, but that information wasn't available at the time to be able to declare that. So there are obviously criteria for—

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: Minister, sorry, can I just interrupt for one minute. You did know from the outset, because it was made very public, that a young woman had potentially lost vision in one eye as a result of an incident, and there was nobody else involved other than police and protesters?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: It doesn't matter what I knew; I don't declare critical incidents. Police make those decisions. The criteria are very specific around how to declare a critical incident. I think it's important that you remember a critical incident means that—hello, Mr Chair, how are you?

The CHAIR: Thank you, Minister.

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Ms YASMIN CATLEY: A critical incident is putting the police under more scrutiny and spotlight. It is not in their benefit not to do it, but you have to make sure that it adheres to the strict requirements to make that declaration. It didn't at that point in time, as I understand it.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: How much has the NSW Police Force spent on protests in the last 12 months?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: I can only go on—I do have that here—what was provided. This is under Shelter. There are other protests of course, as well. I don't have the accurate, the absolute amount. You've probably got that. What that your GIPAA, was it? I don't know.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: If you could just give us the figure you've got, Minister.

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: This is just for Shelter. That's not fair not to give you the other protests.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: What's the figure for Shelter?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: Is that the total figure? It was \$11,295,206.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: So rounded up to \$11.3 million?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: No, the figure is \$11,295,206.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: What other cost should we be putting onto that to get a total figure for the cost of policing protests?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: In this city alone there's, generally speaking, about 1,500 protests a year. In New South Wales there are more than 2,000—2,000 and a bit more. They are not included. This would only include the 110 that we have had from Shelter, so it is obviously not a clear indication of how much for police. But I think it's important that we remember that the police's job is to keep people safe.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: I absolutely agree.

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: That is what they are doing when they are attending the protest, to ensure safety of the broader community and also of the people who are attending.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: Minister, I just want to check those figures, because those figures work out to roughly 38 protests a week. Is that correct?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: Yes, you can ask Mr McKenna.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: Minister, do you agree with the New South Wales Police Association—

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: Let's just check with Mr McKenna, if you would.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: Minister, perhaps I can ask you a question, if I may.

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: You asked me a question and I'm asking the answer of Mr McKenna.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: I'm asking you another question, Minister. Do you agree with the New South Wales Police Association president that this places an enormous strain on the police officers?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: I think that we're very stretched. There's absolutely no secret made about that. We came into government and there was a serious concern from me, particularly. I had no idea that we were so short on numbers. There was no plan for recruitment. There was no plan for retention. We've had to really focus on—

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: Are you thinking it's only a matter of the Police Force being understrength rather than the impact that close to 40 protests a week is placing on our Police Force, with all the other responsibilities that they have? What impact is this having on police officers on the job?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: The shortage of police is having the greatest impact, that is for sure, because we are having—

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: Minister, are you discounting the impact of—

The Hon. Dr SARAH KAINE: Point of order: I'm not disputing a legitimate line of inquiry, I'm sure, except that Ms Carter is not letting the Minister finish her answers. We're getting two words in, and then—

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: To the point of order—

The Hon. Dr SARAH KAINE: I didn't even finish my point of order. Case in point there, Ms Carter.

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The CHAIR: Allow the point of order first. I want to hear it all. I've heard it all before, but I'll hear it again.

The Hon. Dr SARAH KAINE: My point being could we afford the Minister the courtesy of letting her answer the question before we head onto the next question.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: To the point of order: I'm just trying to get the Minister to answer the question that was asked, not the question the Minister wished had been asked.

The CHAIR: In that sense, I'll uphold the point of order. The Minister can answer the question in any way she likes, or not answer it. Please let her not answer it before you come in again with another question.

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: Can I answer the question now, because I do actually have an answer to this.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: I think we'll move on to a new question.

The CHAIR: Is this a new question?

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: I think it's a new question.

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: No, I didn't finish the last one, and I really want to answer it because it's very important, and it's important that the Committee members understand what's happening with our police. We're short. To man the protests in this city and in this State, it's often the case that we have to bring officers on their down days back in, and they're exhausted. It is very important that we acknowledge the fact that we are short on numbers. Therefore, we have an overworked Police Force, which is being called on regularly to attend various numbers of events in this city. It's the biggest city that we have in the country. They are tired, and they are coming out on their days off to keep the community safe. The thanks to them are endless.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: As you've indicated, they're coming out on their days off. What's the size of the overtime payments in the last year for policing these protests? If you could take that on notice, I'd be very grateful. A further question in relation to costs—we've established that it is at least \$11 million and likely significantly more. Do you think it is fair that taxpayers are having to pay for these protests?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: I go back to where I started this answer for you, and that is that the police's job is to keep the community safe. I'm not sure what cost taxpayers put on safety, but they are doing their job. It is money that is out of the police budget. I'm sure that the community of New South Wales is so grateful for our police and the work they do, in whatever form that looks like.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: With respect to the issue of public safety, and with respect to the protest that we saw recently on the Sydney Harbour Bridge, do you agree with the Premier in relation to that protest that it's important to be on the side of public safety and, therefore, that protest should not have occurred?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: I think that—and I explained this to Ms Higginson—the police's number one priority is assessing the risk that is involved.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: Minister, if I can just say to you, that wasn't a question about the police's priority. I'm asking you. Did you agree with the Premier that the protest on the Sydney Harbour Bridge should not have occurred?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: I am going to go back, because this is a preamble to my answer. Police's priority is to assess the risk. They then obviously share their concerns with me. They were concerned about safety—there is no doubt about that—and quite legitimately so. I do agree with the police. If that's what the Premier said as well, then he was properly informed as well.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: In fact, police were so concerned about issues of public safety in relation to that protest that they took the matter to the Supreme Court in relation to the issuing of a form 1. Do you know why, in that matter, any issue under division 7 of the Roads Act was not raised?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: No, I do not know.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: Division 7 of the Roads Act—the heading of which is "trespassing on Sydney Harbour Bridge and other major bridges, tunnels and roads"—essentially provides that infrastructure named there cannot be blocked. In fact, regardless of whether you have a form 1, that's not going to create a waiver in relation to that provision of the Roads Act, yet this was not raised in argument before the Supreme Court. Was there any reason why these powers that you have to stop the blocking of the Harbour Bridge were not used in relation to that protest?

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Ms YASMIN CATLEY: I think that, at the end of the day, we all accepted the Supreme Court judge's decision. It was for them to give us the decision on that particular matter, and we know exactly what happened after that.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: But, Minister, you'd be aware that in a common-law court, a judge can only decide on questions that are put before the judge. The police did not put to the judge the matter of division 7 of the Roads Act. Why was that? Why wasn't that power used?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: I'm very confident with the position that the police put forward. I am always confident with their approach to things. As I said to you, safety was paramount, which is always the case. The Supreme Court judge made the decision and the decision was set as it was.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: If the matter was run again, would you be asking the police to raise the issue of division 7 of the Roads Act?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: Let me be very clear: I don't ask the police to do these operational things.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: With respect to public safety and the matters on the bridge, were you concerned about the reported display of terrorism group symbols and the image of the Iranian leader that were on display in that protest?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: I understand that that matter was investigated. I'm uncertain if it's still under investigation. Do we have a status on that at all, Mr McKenna?

PETER McKENNA: We've sought some legal advice on that. The difficulty is, on that particular protest, identifying individuals when it was raining and there were up to 100,000 people there with umbrellas and the like. The police on the day were concerned about public safety, not about minor incidents. But those matters are being looked at.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: Is it true that there's a consistent issue with enforcing laws in protests about being able to identify persons who may have been in breach of particular laws?

PETER McKENNA: It can be. It just depends on certain circumstances. Also, people think that holding a flag up with a prohibited symbol is an offence. It's not. It's more nuanced than that. You actually have to approach the person and ask them to put the flag away. You have to know that it's a prohibited symbol. There's lots to it. We have legal advisers to give us assistance in that space.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: Terrorism symbols are not minor offences, are they? They're really significant.

PETER McKENNA: I would say any time someone is doing something like that, we take it seriously. That's why we investigated.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: Do you think it's important that we have laws that make sure that anybody involved in a protest can be clearly identified by the police and not have their faces obscured by facial coverings of any kind?

PETER McKENNA: We just follow the laws of the day.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: Is that a difficulty with enforcement, though—being able to identify the people on the day?

PETER McKENNA: No, because if someone is committing an offence or we need to use powers, we have the power to make them remove a face covering.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: Given the Minister's comments about being understrength, did you have the strength, with a march the size of that on the Sydney Harbour Bridge, to actually go in and carry out those enforcement actions against people who may have been holding up terrorist symbols?

PETER McKENNA: When you're getting up to 100,000 people there, our priorities do change, especially when we don't have the opportunity or the time to plan for that type of protest. Significant concerns around crowd crush and public safety, as I said, were at the forefront of our thinking.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: Am I hearing correctly that if the crowd is large enough there is no enforcement of provisions such as 93Z?

PETER McKENNA: No, that's not the case at all. We have the ability there to take action when we need to take action. But on this particular day, I don't think that people have—I think people have underestimated

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the significance of that particular operation, the decisions that had to be made very quickly, the concern the police commander had and the police on the ground.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: I'm not underestimating anything. I recognise the extraordinary job that the police did to keep everybody safe under those circumstances. I'm just concerned that we have existing laws that do not appear to have been used.

The Hon. NICHOLE OVERALL: Minister, did New South Wales police go down to Victoria to assist in the search for the alleged Porepunkah shooter?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: I'll come back to that. Would you like the answers now? You said to wait until you come next, so can Rashelle give you the answers to your numbers?

The Hon. NICHOLE OVERALL: I might go through these first and come back to that in the last couple of minutes that I have. Thank you, Rashelle, very much.

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: Yes.

The Hon. NICHOLE OVERALL: They did?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: Yes. They're still there. There's a command set up in Albury. Sorry, I just want to give you the right detail. It's called Interlink, the command.

The Hon. NICHOLE OVERALL: Were any of those officers required to come back to deal with the large volume of protesters and the marathon event that was taking place in Sydney the weekend just past?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: No, that's not my understanding.

The Hon. NICHOLE OVERALL: So they went down and they were able to remain?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: They're tactical—yes.

The Hon. NICHOLE OVERALL: Minister, when it comes to last weekend's protests, you stated in the media that the huge deployment of officers was necessary for public safety and that it would not impact regular police work. However, the Police Association of New South Wales president stated:

Covering these shifts limits our ability to respond to core policing duties, including ... crime-related activity at police stations across the state.

Which of you is correct?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: First and foremost, I would say that, obviously, the Police Association do a great job, and I thank them for their advocacy and their support of the police, ongoing. I am advised by the police that it does not have a significant impact on the general duties in commands around the State.

The Hon. NICHOLE OVERALL: But you have already suggested, and we've heard, that police are having to be taken from elsewhere in order to facilitate numbers to deal with these huge protests, so how could it not impact?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: Because, as I just described to you, a lot of these officers are on leave. They're coming off their leave. As you know, they work different rosters. It could be their five days off, or they could actually be on annual leave. We've even had some coming back from annual leave to do this. It's a complex arrangement of the various status of each officer.

The Hon. NICHOLE OVERALL: I'm sure it's incredibly complex. But as the Police Association president said, covering them limits the ability to respond to core policing duties. When it comes to the money for these protests, you have said that it comes from the police budget. But there is no separate budget allocation for protests specifically, is there?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: I'm unaware of that. We might have to ask the—no.

The Hon. NICHOLE OVERALL: There's not. So this just eats into the normal annual policing budget?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: Yes. I don't know if "eats into" is correct.

The Hon. NICHOLE OVERALL: Well, there is no separate budget allocation for it, therefore—

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: There is a line item. It is captured. That's how we capture it. There you go. You might be best to ask the police that. Obviously, I don't do the police's internal budgeting.

The Hon. NICHOLE OVERALL: How much is the line item? Mr Hudson?

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RASHELLE CONROY: For Shelter it's—

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: That's only for Shelter, so that's not—

The Hon. NICHOLE OVERALL: Again, we're limited in what we have there. How many other services, programs and policing needs are being negatively impacted by these escalating and continual protest costs? You're taking money from one area of the police budget; clearly, it is impacting other areas. What other areas are being impacted?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: I'm not aware of, specifically, that I can point to, any area that is being impacted.

The Hon. NICHOLE OVERALL: How is the police budget being impacted generally?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: I'll describe that to you again: It's the welfare of the police officers. That's what I'm concerned about. They're exhausted. That's because we don't have enough officers, and we are working tirelessly—

The Hon. NICHOLE OVERALL: I hear you, Minister, and I fully agree with you. We'll get to questions about what you're doing about it. But how much more—

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: Can I finish my answer, please? That is a real concern to me.

The Hon. NICHOLE OVERALL: It's a real concern to everyone.

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: What we need to be doing is getting more officers, more boots on the ground, and having all of our vacancies filled.

The Hon. NICHOLE OVERALL: No argument.

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: There are too many vacancies, and we need to be recruiting more.

The Hon. NICHOLE OVERALL: Yes, I agree.

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: We are definitely working tirelessly to do that, and we are seeing green shoots.

The Hon. NICHOLE OVERALL: I am wholeheartedly backing you in all of what you have just said, Minister. But let's come back to the current police budget and the impact of these ongoing escalating protests—on average, 38 per week. How much more can be borne by the existing New South Wales police budget before the situation is no longer sustainable?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: Again, the police's job is to keep the community safe, and this is part of policing, so that is exactly what we are doing.

The Hon. NICHOLE OVERALL: Are you committing to increasing funding to the NSW Police Force in order to deal with these escalating, ongoing, protest-induced cost pressures?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: I'll be advised by what the police ask of the government of the day. But I will remind this Committee that the police budget this year was the largest that it has ever been.

The Hon. NICHOLE OVERALL: So you'll commit to continuing to ensure—

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: No, I'll be guided by what the police ask for.

The Hon. NICHOLE OVERALL: I'm sure the police will always ask for more money to do their job as well as they possibly can. Do you have any other plans for dealing with the ongoing issues of these escalating numbers of protests?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: We'll continue to man them in accordance with the risk assessment that the police provide and determine, because that's what police do.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: Minister, have there been further applications from other groups to have protests on the bridge?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: They don't come to me, obviously. You might have to ask the police that.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: Can anybody provide a quick answer to that for us?

PETER McKENNA: Yes, there has been.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: How many further applications have there been?

PETER McKENNA: There are two; one has been withdrawn and there is one currently.

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The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: So, two further, one withdrawn, one current?

PETER McKENNA: Yes.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: Minister, was the uplift in the police budget necessary to fund the cost of ongoing policing of protests?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: No, not to my knowledge. That wasn't considered.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: Then what was the reason for the uplift in police funding that you mentioned in the budget?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: Because an increase from the previous year was in line with what we would anticipate and expect for the police to continue to do the work they do.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: The uplift you pointed to was simply inflation; it wasn't an actual uplift in real terms of the police budget. Is that right?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: We delivered the largest police budget that has been delivered.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: But was it an uplift to provide for additional resources that the police so sorely need, or was it simply a CPI uplift?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: I might remind you, Ms Carter, that they need to fill positions. They need to fill vacant positions. That's what they need. We have, as you would know—you've just worked it out from the numbers that I gave you—in excess of 2,000 vacant positions. We need to fill them.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: There were 2,000 vacant positions last time we spoke, Minister.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: Minister, are you aware whether an application to hold another far extreme right-wing protest has been made for 13 September?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: I'm not aware, no.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: You're not aware?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: But I wouldn't be. They don't make them to me.

The Hon. MARK LATHAM: Which one? How far right and how extreme?

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: Self-proclaimed neo-Nazis as the organisers. Do you have any form of communicate at the moment between your commissioners in relation to such a matter? Have you got an alert system after Sunday's protest?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: I don't have an alert system.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: Do you think it would be appropriate to, given there is so much commentary right now from experts warning about the rise in far-right extremism and neo-Nazis?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: If the police felt that they needed to advise me of it, then they would.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: As police Minister for New South Wales, you wouldn't take that initiative? You don't think that's an appropriate initiative for you to take?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: I wouldn't single out any group. The police police for safety.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: If organisers are self-proclaimed neo-Nazis?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: Hold on, this is important: Police police for safety on the streets, regardless of who's having a protest, regardless of if it's a protest or two sporting groups—

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: Minister, do you know the difference between people who espouse violence and intolerance and people who espouse peace and non-violence? Do you know the difference?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: Don't be insulting, Sue.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: It's a question. I'm asking you. You said police will police all things.

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: That's right.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: I'm asking about protests, an application for a protest. I'm just curious about the approach you, as police Minister, will be taking to Cabinet, given experts are warning about the rise in far-right extremism and neo-Nazis in New South Wales right now.

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Ms YASMIN CATLEY: We will make sure the community is kept safe. I think that those views are abhorrent, as everybody does. There is no tolerance for that. But if there is a protest on our streets, the police will be there and keep our streets safe. I might remind you in 2024, or I think it was October '23—no, it was Australia Day, around Australia Day in 2024, when we had a group board a train in North Sydney and the police were there immediately and averted that group from meeting up with another group that was protesting up in Victoria Park. The police will police, and it's insulting for you to suggest that I don't know the difference. I absolutely know the difference. And I'll tell you what I'll do: I'll back these guys every single day of the week. I'll take their advice. They are the experts. They can assess risk, they can manage crowds and I'm so pleased to have their advice.

The Hon. Dr SARAH KAINE: The first question is a specific one and then I'll get to a more general question. Nine months ago, wandering powers came into effect. Can you give us an update on how they're helping get dangerous weapons off the street?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: Thank you very much for the question. You might remember that our knife wandering laws came into being after a lot of advocacy from the Beasleys, who tragically lost their son in an incident in Queensland. They came and they spoke with the Cabinet, they spoke with parliamentarians. They had been advocating around the country for quite some time. Today, in actual fact, they are in New South Wales. They are doing some education programs in our schools to advise young people of the dangers of knife crime and the fact that it is life changing. If you leave the house with a knife, it is life changing. It can be life changing for the individual, obviously, who is attacked and the results are devastating for the family, for the broader community, but it also ruins the lives of those who are the perpetrators. They're out educating people, and I can't thank them enough for their advocacy and for assisting the New South Wales Government in going down this path.

The police tell me that the wandering operations that we have had—which have been many—are really welcomed by the community. They are pleased that we're proactive in this space. More than 200 knives have been removed from our streets as a result of our wandering operations. That's 200 less knives that we have out there that potentially could have ended up in devastation, in devastating circumstances. We are seeing quite a large number on our transport networks, which is terrible, but the police again—there's Operation Waratah—are out there proactively ensuring that we remove as many knives as we can from those young people who have them on them. I don't understand why people leave their homes with a knife. I find it terrifying. I think that the message is for all of us to portray to young people, and that is: Do not leave your home with a knife.

The Hon. Dr SARAH KAINE: There was a wide range of issues covered today, and I felt at some stages we maybe didn't get to enough of the information from you. I wondered if you had any additional information that you'd like to add from this morning's session?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: Unfortunately, Dr Cohn isn't here, but the collaboration in the Parliament with the mental health response I think has been second to none. I just want to say I'm really proud to be a parliamentarian in New South Wales to address an issue that is critically important. There are very vulnerable incidents that occur, and I think I said possibly in my first estimates that it became obvious to me from the very beginning of being the police Minister that people who are experience mental health incident that ends up in devastating circumstances is an absolute tragedy. It's a tragedy for the individual, for the family and, quite frankly, for the State. We're addressing that and we're addressing it as a collective. I think that is to be absolutely commended, and I'd like us to be able to do that with a lot more issues as well. This is certainly a shining example. We've got to get it right, as has been described by Deputy Commissioner Hudson. It may take time, but we have to get it right and it's worth taking the time when something is so important.

The CHAIR: We will take a break now and return at 11.15 a.m.

(Short adjournment)

The CHAIR: We might recommence questioning with the crossbench, and that would be me. As you may or may not be aware, Minister, in the New South Wales firearms regulations there is a demerit points system for firearms licence holders that is similar to a driver licence. Licence holders have up to 12 points over a rolling five-year period. If they exceed those 12 points, their licence can be suspended or cancelled. Could you please tell me which firearms offences attract these demerit points?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: I'm going to say to you, Mr Borsak, that I did not know there was a demerit system until you just mentioned it.

The CHAIR: That is the point.

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: Yes. Shall we ask Mr Hudson? He might be able to enlighten us.

DAVID HUDSON: I will take it on notice, Minister.

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The CHAIR: In case they've slipped your mind, they relate to unsafe storage of firearms or ammunition; failure to notify the Firearms Registry of a change of address or circumstances; carrying or using a firearm contrary to licence conditions, e.g. hunting without permission; failure to produce a licence when requested by police; and some minor record-keeping breaches for firearms dealers, club armourers or security licence holders. Have they been used at all since they were introduced?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: We will find that information out for you, Mr Borsak. I would be interested to know that as well.

The CHAIR: Perhaps you could move your microphone a little bit closer to you.

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: My apologies.

The CHAIR: I have a reason. I've been shooting for 50 years and I'm deaf.

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: In answer to your question, yes, we will take that on notice.

The CHAIR: Could you tell me how many times demerit points have been used? Why do police immediately remove, suspend or charge licence holders over small infractions rather than saving the taxpayer and the judiciary time and money by using demerits and fining those licence holders, as was envisaged in the regulations? In other words, they go from nought to 100.

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: I was going to say, it does seem like a good system for that reason alone—as you quite rightly point out, instead of going through the process for quite minor infringements, having the demerit system. So this is something that I think is positive, and I am sure you would agree. I will certainly have a look at that as well. Perhaps we can have a meeting to discuss that because, as I said to you, you have brought to my attention something that I was unaware of.

The CHAIR: The reason I ask this is because of the avalanche of unfair charges I hear of. One farmer had his firearms stolen from a compliance safe by thieves and was installing a new, stronger safe when police arrived and charged him with unsafe storage. He is before the courts. Another licence holder informed police that his laptop and some other items had been stolen, but not his guns; they were safe. Instead, police conducted a search of his house, found two nine-millimetre rounds under a bed in a box—far from an easy discovery—and dragged him through the courts, only for his case to be dismissed and thrown out. Minister, is it fair to say that you are needlessly creating work for the court system and police?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: I would like more information about the demerit system and to see how that would apply to the instances that you have just referred to.

The CHAIR: I ask these questions because, in the proposed changes to the regulations in the review, you recommended that fines on demerit points be doubled along with any other charges. But of course, as you rightly can see now, the system is not being used at all. We're just going from nought to 100, as I said earlier. Minister, I ask that you look at how the demerit points system is being employed and that you inform us why they aren't being used more often to take the pressure off the courts and the judiciary—and, of course, the police.

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: I will look at that and report back to you.

The CHAIR: You were meant to answer some of those questions so I had a chance of actually going through it. Thank you.

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: Thank you, too, for bringing it to my attention.

The CHAIR: I have been hearing a lot of feedback from licensed firearms owners across the State, so I will ask a few questions about firearms maintenance and safe storage. The regulations and the Act allow firearms owners to have firearms outside the safe for the purpose of cleaning and maintenance. Is this correct?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: I would have to have a look at the regulation. But, as you know, we are reviewing the regs. They are due to be finalised, I think, August next year. So we are going through that consultative process. Also, the FRCC—the Firearms Registry Consultative Council—are looking at all of these regulations. If you think these are things that we could be discussing in that forum, then I think that would be a good idea. I'm happy to speak to Kirsty in relation to that too, to ensure that happens.

The CHAIR: Yes, Minister, I'll have a fair bit to say about that review in due course—not here today, of course. Do New South Wales police view favourably those who choose to upgrade their safe storage so it is above the compliance level required—in other words, tougher to break into?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: What was the question?

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The CHAIR: Do New South Wales police view favourably those who choose to upgrade their safe storage so it is above the compliance level required—in other words, a level higher or, in other words, tougher to break into? What is the police view in relation to those people?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: Do you mind if I refer to Mr Hudson?

DAVID HUDSON: As long as all of the other requirements—if it's tougher to break into, as long as it's bolted into the ground, it complies with everything else and it's in the right location, it would be positive, I would suggest, Mr Borsak.

The CHAIR: Following the recent floods, would you agree that it is necessary for some licensed firearms owners to both clean and maintain their firearms as a result of moisture and dry out the locations where their safe storage is secured?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: Are you asking me, sorry, or Mr Hudson?

The CHAIR: Through you, Minister.

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: Mr Hudson?

DAVID HUDSON: If they were water affected, I would have considered that reasonable. But I know something is coming, Mr Borsak.

The CHAIR: Sorry?

DAVID HUDSON: I know something is about to follow that.

The CHAIR: You know something about flooding?

DAVID HUDSON: No, I know something is about to follow that answer I just gave, saying it's probably reasonable.

The Hon. MARK LATHAM: He's onto your questioning, he's saying. He's onto you.

The CHAIR: Oh, of course it does.

The Hon. MARK LATHAM: You're setting him up.

DAVID HUDSON: Totally.

The CHAIR: I never set anybody up; I'm the one that gets set up. Is it then reasonable for a licensed firearms owner to, with all the doors and windows secured in the home and no unlicensed individuals in attendance, remove firearms from the safe, unbolt the safe to dry it out, dry the carpet and the flooring, and then resecure it in the shortest time possible on the same day without breaching safe storage requirements?

DAVID HUDSON: Without knowing the individual circumstances to which you are referring, I would have to take that on notice.

The CHAIR: Is it breaching safe storage for firearms to remain in the original compliance safe before or while the new, upgraded safe is being installed?

DAVID HUDSON: Again, based on circumstances, whether they are in the possession of the licensed firearm holder at the time that they're not safely stored—

The CHAIR: As you can appreciate, most of these questions are coming from live examples that have been put to us in the past where people have been breached—caught in the act, if you like.

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: Can I add to that, Mr Borsak? Given the prevalence of our natural disasters, these are perhaps considerations that we need to discuss at more length because they are becoming more prevalent, these instances, and I can see how people would get caught up in various breaches as a result of that. But we also have to use our common sense. So I think it might be worthwhile—obviously, continue your line of questioning, but perhaps we best sit down and have a discussion around this with the Firearms Registry so we can have a practical approach in these circumstances.

The CHAIR: That's why I started off by talking about demerit points. There seems to be a general approach from police on the ground where they find a prima facie noncompliance and they go from nought to 100—as I said, licence gone, firearms gone, "Bang, you're done"—without consideration of the circumstances and using what I'd call common sense in relation to these situations, provided there are no other circumstances around it to make it more complicated that would warrant that sort of approach.

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: As Mr Hudson referred to.

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The CHAIR: I have a few more questions I will ask in relation to that, but I will come back to them.

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: Good morning, Minister. Good morning, officials. We have spoken many times now, Minister, about the issue of police officers who are perpetrators of domestic, family and sexual violence themselves, which has quite complex nuances compared to other instances of DFV and sexual violence, particularly because of that access to tools, information, surveillance systems and the position of power that police have. Given that the police are still yet to implement the recommendations of both the LECC and the Auditor-General in relation to separating the functions for investigation in relation to DFV perpetrators who are also police, what have you done to become confident that you don't think there's more to be done in this area?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: Thank you very much, Ms Boyd. Ms Boyd, I will get Acting Deputy Commissioner McKenna to take you through the work that has been done. But just to give you a brief overview Mr McKenna has been working with LECC—we've got the races going over here, Mr Latham, thanks. Let us know what you are on.

The Hon. MARK LATHAM: You've got to have a bet. I don't believe all this anti-gambling thing youse go on about. People have got to have fun.

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: Well, you've got your opportunity to ask me some questions about that.

The Hon. MARK LATHAM: If I get a winner.

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: Okay. Back to Ms Boyd. He has been liaising with LECC at a very high level to work through the issues that you quite rightly said you have raised with me, at every occasion, in actual fact—thank you for that. They will be changing the New South Wales police SOPs in relation to this—Mr McKenna can go through and give you the detail—and they will be implemented later this month. They've worked on removing things like the perceived conflict, putting in place appropriate and transparent mechanisms. I might move over to—because I think you're going to want to hear this—

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: Yes, could I just—

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: And also in relation to access to firearms and those issues you have concerns about.

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: Thank you, because I'm going to come to those as well. That would be good. I would love to hear from Acting Deputy Commissioner McKenna but, because my time is limited, can we be quite specific as to whether or not the recommendation from LECC and the Auditor-General has now been implemented in terms of not being investigated by one's own command?

PETER McKENNA: The situation is that we've rewritten the SOPs. They've now been endorsed by our team, and they'll be implemented later this month. I've sat down with LECC and gone through the new SOPs with them informally, and had discussions with them and a number of questions back and forth, and they've indicated their complete satisfaction now. I've spoken to the DV sector about the SOPs, albeit before they were implemented, to give them an overview of it, and they've indicated their satisfaction. The fact of the matter is that there is no way in New South Wales we can say that police from a different command have to go do domestic violence matters. Often we will turn up not knowing that it involved members until we get there, for starters, but the tyranny of distance that we have across our regional areas just makes that impractical.

What we do have now is a set of guideline SOPs that are both transparent and give community confidence. Police turn up to the scene of a domestic violence incident and they find out there's an involved member as one of the parties involved. They must immediately ring their inspector, the duty officer. The duty officer will attend. If they can't attend, the duty officer will speak to both parties and ascertain if they believe there is any type of conflict of interest whatsoever about these police officers investigating this matter. If either party says there is a conflict of interest, and that duty officer cannot resolve that conflict of interest to their satisfaction and we don't have to do things immediately, then we will bring in other police.

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: Tell me how there cannot be a conflict of interest if you're being investigated by the same people that you're working with.

PETER McKENNA: For example, if that is the case—and we have had that before as well—we still go through the motions of body-worn video, that the domestic is investigated exactly the same way as it would be for anyone else, that it is oversighted by the duty officer—

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: When you say "the domestic", it seems like we're talking about one particular incident. I'm talking about, for example, there's been a series of incidents, there's been coercive control—

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PETER McKENNA: I'll just go through the process first, because it might answer your questions, okay? Then we'll come back to the specifics if you like.

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: I will come back to you in the afternoon then, if we are going to take that length of time, because I do have other questions for the Minister. But it seems to me that we've not exactly adopted what the LECC and the Auditor-General—

PETER McKENNA: No, the LECC are very happy with what we've put in place so far and—

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: I'll speak with the—

PETER McKENNA: —because there are other processes, right through to assistant commissioners having to have a review panel ascertaining that there is no conflict of interest, or it's been resolved, or all the action has been taken that should be taken.

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: I look forward to seeing those and I will come back to you this afternoon. Minister, there's also been a number of high-profile instances reported in the media with police officers unlawfully using sensitive police information for an extended period of time, with really quite serious consequences for victims and victim-survivors. In many of those cases, police were made aware of the perpetrator's behaviour long before anything was done about it. What are you doing to ensure that actions are taken in every case as soon as allegations are known about these police perpetrators?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: The New South Wales police don't tolerate that sort of behaviour. As you know, the commissioner has the opportunity to speak to those officers and to make determinations about their ongoing employment, depending on the severity of the complaint and the issue. But those being reported to senior police and action being taken within I think is something that Acting Commissioner Thurtell can certainly talk to. They do take these things very seriously and they do not tolerate or have time for that sort of behaviour.

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: So, given that we've had these incidents reported in the last year where that has not occurred, what have you done to ensure that action is taken as soon as allegations are known to police?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: I'm unclear of what incidents you're referring to.

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: For instance, Constable Jordan Weston unlawfully accessed the police database to find out information about his victim and people associated with her, including an ex-partner; Constable Reuben Timperley, who was charged with DFV offences earlier this year after previously being found guilty of illegally accessing the police database to look up his partner; and recent media reports about former police officer Mohamad Jamal Soueid exchanging information with an alleged DV offender, including photos of official reports during hundreds of illegal searches of the New South Wales police system over several months, which involved looking up victim details. That's just three of them.

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: It might be better if we take that on notice and provide you with a response to those individual instances that you have referred to. Overarchingly, my initial comments are certainly what the expectation of the New South Wales police is.

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: Thank you. Perhaps on notice, if you could tell me how many police officers by rank have been charged with offences related to accessing or modifying restricted data held in a computer in the last five years, and how many were found guilty and how many were convicted.

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: Yes, I can.

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: In February this year we were told there were 10 currently serving officers who had been found guilty of a domestic family violence offence and one currently serving officer who had been found guilty of sexual violence offences. How many are they now?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: Ten.

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: Still 10?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: Yes.

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: Are any of them under investigation to be removed?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: I think they're all historical. Two have been convicted. Is that right?

DAVID HUDSON: Two have convictions recorded; the other eight are non-convictions.

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: I think we've spoken about this, those ones found guilty but not actually convicted.

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DAVID HUDSON: The two that were convicted were from 2011, both of them, so it's historic.

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: They served some punishment for that?

DAVID HUDSON: I think they've all been considered by the commissioner for dismissal and given a range of actions from commissioner's warning notices to deputy commissioner's warning notices to assistant commissioner's warning notices. The two that had convictions recorded in 2011, both received warning notices. They were considered by the commissioner for removal and declined at that time.

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: Okay, I might come back on that. Minister, in answers to questions on notice that were provided in February of this year, it was disclosed that no police officer who had been found guilty of a domestic and family violence offence had had their personal firearm licence suspended or seized in the last three years. Do you know why that would be?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: I'd have to ask the police to provide a response to that. Mr Thurtell?

PETER THURTELL: It depends if they even had a firearms licence to suspend or remove.

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: Perhaps you could clarify because—

PETER THURTELL: Yes, we'd have to find out.

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: —in previous answers, we were given the figures for how many actually did have a firearms licence and just hadn't had it suspended.

PETER THURTELL: We will take that on notice.

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: Maybe we can come back to that this afternoon as well. Finally, Minister, there are still an alarming number of misidentifications of the primary aggressor in domestic and family violence matters. I note that there is an update to the SOPs. Has there been anything in addition in those SOPs to cover police incorrectly and inaccurately identifying victims when they go to a domestic violence incident?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: Police will have to answer that directly, in relation to the change to the SOPs, but I think it's important, as an overarching factor, to remember that police will just police the evidence before them and what the crime is. Mr McKenna might like to talk more to that.

PETER McKENNA: We have done lots of work in our training around misidentification, the problem being that no-one has actually been able to tell us what the definition of misidentification is. We see there is some dispute about whether there is some self-defence or whether it is retaliatory violence, which really has to be broken down. I have had our police prosecutors branch do a review across the whole of the State. They tell me this is not an endemic issue at all. There are some isolated cases but, where they are isolated, they actually have been lineball calls because, whether we like it or not, sometimes we end up in situations of cross AVOs. It is rare, but we do have that.

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: It is not rare. Mutual AVOs are actually quite common.

PETER McKENNA: I would have to take on notice the numbers, or you could tell me some numbers if you like.

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: We will come back to that this afternoon.

PETER McKENNA: I can only tell you what we are seeing and what I see as the corporate and executive sponsor for police.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: Mr McKenna, I have a quick question to start: What is the name of the continuing applicant for a protest on the Harbour Bridge?

PETER McKENNA: It is—they are protesting against—Australia Unites Against Government Corruption. That's what they've put their banner up as.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: Minister, I'm pleased that you can be with us, even though I know that you have had to miss an important press conference at Campbelltown at 11 o'clock supporting the work of the Beasleys and Jack's law, which has been an important reform. When is your Government going to fully implement what Brett and Belinda Beasley are looking for and what has happened in Queensland and ensure that police have the power to wand anywhere, anytime?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: We think we have got the setting right in New South Wales. Again, I do thank the Beasleys for their ongoing advocacy and for being in New South Wales today. It's good to host them here, and it's good that they're teaching young people the consequences of knife crime. No-one knows it more than them, that's for sure. It's important to note that the police also have other powers in addition to the wandering laws to, if

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they have suspicion they can already determine whether somebody has a knife on them or not, search somebody. For that reason, we believe that we have the powers right—or have the legislation right.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: Do you think it is appropriate that police should have to flag to potential offenders, via a notice on a website, when the wandering operations are going to occur and where they will occur?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: We mirrored the Queensland laws for that.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: But the Queensland laws have, of course, now changed—haven't they, Minister—to anywhere, anytime. Will you be following that change?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: It's not something that we are intending on doing immediately, that's for sure. It hasn't been an incredibly long period of time, but we've seen successful results. Whilst we are seeing those, I think the settings are right, but we have always remained open minded. At this point in time, though, we think that the settings are right.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: What feedback have you received from frontline police or the Police Association in relation to the way the current law is functioning?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: The police have said—on the front line—that people are okay with the wandering operations, and they are pleased that police are being proactive.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: Sorry, people—being the people who are wandered—are okay?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: Yes, the community.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: What about police? Are they satisfied that they have the flexibility to wand anywhere, anytime?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: That's the only feedback I'm getting—the operational outcomes.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: When will every police officer in New South Wales have access to a wand at any given time?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: I'm not too sure that every police officer in New South Wales will have a wand anywhere, anytime. I don't know if you have seen the appointments that police have on them. They're not asking to have another appointment on them anywhere, anytime. Wands are deployed on an operational basis, and we have enough in New South Wales to meet that.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: I just wanted to know if there are enough in the cupboard for operational arrangements at all times?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: There has been to date, yes.

The Hon. NICHOLE OVERALL: Minister, given the campaign launched today on warning students about knife crime, obviously there are concerns. So what weapons are police finding in schools or on school grounds?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: I can't pinpoint directly to on school grounds. This is an education program to prevent children from actually going down the pathway of committing the crime. What we are trying to do is educate kids, just like we do about any type of crime, but in relation to knife crime. We are seeing more and more young people out and about with knives, and that needs to stop. That's what this is about.

The Hon. NICHOLE OVERALL: Out and about. Are there any instances of knives being sighted, brought to or suspected on school grounds, specifically?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: You'll need to ask the education Minister that question.

The Hon. NICHOLE OVERALL: Why wouldn't I ask the police Minister that question? Wouldn't police be called to attend in such matters?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: Most likely they would be.

The Hon. NICHOLE OVERALL: Can anyone answer whether there have been any instances?

PAUL PISANOS: Definitely there are instances. I would have to get back to you on numbers—

The Hon. NICHOLE OVERALL: That would be helpful.

PAUL PISANOS: —where we are contacted by a school at a local area command or police district level, as well as matters reported through the school safety response unit, which is our partnership with Education where there are instances of students bringing knives and cutting weapons to school. It does happen.

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The Hon. NICHOLE OVERALL: I would be very interested to—

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: Can I say that the Department of Education would keep very strict records on that. That's why I thought it would be best to go to them.

The Hon. NICHOLE OVERALL: But I would appreciate that, Mr Pisanos. Nothing more serious—guns? Are there any instances of sightings or suspected sightings of firearms?

PAUL PISANOS: Replicas and gel blaster types of things, yes. Again, the frequency, I can't tell you, but it does happen—people believing they are sighting a water pistol, reporting it and it ends up being a toy. People bring toys to school, yes.

The Hon. NICHOLE OVERALL: I would be interested to hear some more information if you are able to provide that, even later in the day.

PAUL PISANOS: We can get back to you on that. Maybe not today, but we can certainly get back to you. I will take it on notice.

The Hon. NICHOLE OVERALL: I would appreciate it as soon as you can, thank you.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: Minister, were you involved in consultations with your Government's decision to abolish the use of ankle monitoring for persons on bail?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: No.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: Nobody consulted you or sought police input in relation to that decision?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: Police may have. Are you able to—

PETER THURTELL: As far as I am aware, no, we weren't consulted on the removal of it—but I stand to be corrected on that. I can find out for you.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: I suppose my next question—which is what modelling was done on risk to community safety by the police—is otiose if you weren't even consulted. No modelling—

PETER THURTELL: As I've said, as far as I am aware, we weren't consulted on the removal of it, but I will find out for you.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: Do you have any concerns about continuing community safety, given that electronic monitoring is no longer available to monitor persons who are on bail?

PETER THURTELL: It's a matter for the court to grant bail. If electronic monitoring is no longer an option, then it's a matter for the courts to place alternative bails on. As for community concern, we are always concerned about violent offenders being in the community but, of course, the majority of those people have some sort of condition on them which the court imposes then subject to charges.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: Given the novel bail conditions that we have seen the court developing, have police been given any extra resources? I imagine it's much harder to monitor hourly selfies than it was to look at a control board with all the ankle monitors being registered on it.

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: Can I just make the point, though, that police didn't actually monitor them.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: Of course, Minister, you're right. It was paid for by the criminal. It didn't come out of the public purse. What's happened is we have taken something that the criminal paid for and it now becomes a matter for the public purse because of other enforcements. Given this move to the public purse from the private criminal, does this create a resourcing problem for police?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: By the way, that example that you have just given, that has been appealed and upheld. So that practice is no longer able to take place.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: Sorry?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: Taking a selfie of yourself.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: In that one instance, it was appealed. But does that mean that your Government has also prohibited that as a bail condition? They are separate things, aren't they, Minister?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: Mr Hudson will answer that.

DAVID HUDSON: I think there were two instances where that particular bail condition of the offender having to purchase a mobile phone, provide it to the OIC and take a selfie of himself every hour and send it to the

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officer in charge—we appealed both and we won both of those. They are no longer part of those individuals' bail conditions.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: They may be no longer part of those individuals' bail conditions, but there is no reason to believe why a court in future couldn't order those bail conditions, is there, Mr Hudson?

DAVID HUDSON: And we would appeal that too.

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: It sets a precedent.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: Have victims of crime been notified when accused individuals are no longer being electronically monitored?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: The police don't notify victims of crime.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: Who is responsible for notifying victims of crime and helping them monitor their personal safety while alleged offenders are on bail?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: I think DCJ. You would need to ask the Attorney General, perhaps.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: So that would be a matter for Corrections, even for people who are pre-hearing?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: I said the Attorney General.

The Hon. NICHOLE OVERALL: Minister, there was recently a petition that was presented before the lower House. Did you contribute to or attend the recent debate on the 10,000-signature petition in regard to a missing persons inquiry?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: I don't recall.

The Hon. NICHOLE OVERALL: You don't recall?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: I don't think so. I'm not sure.

The Hon. NICHOLE OVERALL: Do you recall the presentation of the 10,000-signature petition in regard to a missing persons inquiry?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: No, I don't receive those directly.

The Hon. NICHOLE OVERALL: Clearly, the House was sitting. Where were you that you weren't able to attend the debate?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: I would have perhaps been in meetings. I don't know. I don't know what you're referring to.

The Hon. NICHOLE OVERALL: So you are not aware of this petition into a potential missing persons inquiry at all?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: No. I know that there was one, but I don't know if there were several. I have no idea what you are actually referring to.

The Hon. NICHOLE OVERALL: I am happy to table that, Chair. It's 5 June 2025, petitions of New South Wales, wideranging and systemic issues surrounding missing persons. By leave, I table the document.

Document tabled.

The Hon. NICHOLE OVERALL: So you, as the police Minister, are not aware of this petition?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: No, I said—

The Hon. Dr SARAH KAINE: Point of order: Ms Overall is tabling a document, which is appropriate, but it's also appropriate that we then give the Minister time to at least have a look at the document being referred to.

The CHAIR: I uphold the point of order. Please give a copy to the Minister so she can address it.

The Hon. Dr SARAH KAINE: And with enough time for her to actually—

The CHAIR: And also the rest of us.

The Hon. NICHOLE OVERALL: Sorry, I only have one, Chair.

The CHAIR: Can you come back to that?

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The Hon. NICHOLE OVERALL: Yes, I can. It's fairly brief. You would like the rest of the Committee to see it?

The Hon. Dr SARAH KAINE: I'd like to see it.

The Hon. PETER PRIMROSE: It's a matter of courtesy.

The Hon. NICHOLE OVERALL: I will go to a quick one while we pass that around. Can you tell us, Minister, the funding that was allocated to the Blayney Police Station—how much was that?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: It was \$8 million, I think, or \$7.2 million.

The Hon. NICHOLE OVERALL: It was \$8.695 million actually. How much was spent?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: I assume it was all spent. It looks fantastic. You should go and have a look. In fact, the police on the ground there are very happy with it.

The Hon. NICHOLE OVERALL: I will. I am in the area regularly.

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: I extend an invitation to you to go and have a look.

The Hon. NICHOLE OVERALL: Thank you.

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: The police there are very happy with it.

The Hon. NICHOLE OVERALL: You are suggesting that the \$8.695 million was all spent.

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: I would have to check with the police.

PETER THURTELL: That's not my understanding. I don't think there was that much spent on it. It might have been allocated but I don't know if that was spent. I would have to take that on notice and get back to you with the exact amount that was spent.

The Hon. NICHOLE OVERALL: Was the exact amount spent \$2.05 million?

PETER THURTELL: Yes, it was somewhere around \$2 million. I think you are right.

The Hon. NICHOLE OVERALL: It was an upgrade rather than a new station?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: Yes, it was an upgrade—an excellent upgrade.

The Hon. NICHOLE OVERALL: Where is the other \$6.645 million that you committed to, Minister?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: I would have to ask the police what they intend to spend that on. But, as you would be aware, the police have a very broad property portfolio—almost 1,000 buildings, in actual fact. I am sure that they would be putting every cent that they get to very good use. That has been my observation.

The Hon. NICHOLE OVERALL: I am sure that they will, Minister. But in the 2023-24 New South Wales budget, there is a clear line item for "major works, Blayney Police Station, \$8.695 million". That's a \$6.645 million difference to what you stood there and opened. You can't account for where this remaining money is currently or where it will be going. Perhaps it might be going to manning protests in Sydney?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: It will stay in the property portfolio, I would think. But what I will say to you is the work that was done for the two-point-whatever-amount million that they spent—

The Hon. NICHOLE OVERALL: It was \$2.05 million instead.

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: The amount that they spent on that was money very well spent, and what a waste of money \$8.65 million would have been. The station that has been—

The Hon. NICHOLE OVERALL: Minister, you committed to it.

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: And the police came up with an innovative idea, and I want to thank them for that. As I said, a little bit of money has to go a long way in the New South Wales police property portfolio.

The Hon. NICHOLE OVERALL: It sure does.

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: The buildings that we have—a number over 100 years. The heritage buildings we have are costing a lot of money to keep maintained.

The Hon. NICHOLE OVERALL: They are indeed. We could get into a list of that, too.

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: But can I say to you about the Blayney Police Station, the building itself has such good bones. What they did in there to bring that up to a standard that is acceptable today, with all of the

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technology that is required, is second to none. I applaud the New South Wales property arm and thank them very much for the work they did.

The Hon. NICHOLE OVERALL: An upgrade is very different from a new station.

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: And for saving the taxpayers' money—what a wonderful outcome!

The Hon. NICHOLE OVERALL: Have we been able to take a look at the document on the missing persons?

The Hon. PETER PRIMROSE: No, I haven't got a copy.

The Hon. Dr SARAH KAINE: I still haven't got a copy.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: I have another quick question while you are waiting. Minister, are you aware of probationary constables having to live in hotels because there is no housing in the bush for them?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: No, I'm not, but I am not surprised if that's the case. No, no-one has actually brought that to my attention.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: Is that something that concerns you and that you are prepared to investigate?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: It concerns me across the board that housing in regional, rural and remote areas is very difficult to find. It's not something that is just relating to New South Wales, of course; it's right across the country. It's important that we have our essential services right around the State. It's something that we all need to work together on and work harder on.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: You have already identified the difficulty with police numbers and the fact that we are—and we remain—at least 2,000 understrength. Isn't housing for probationary constables in the bush critically important to ensure retention of these staff?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: We are building more education and police housing. In fact, I was out just recently in Coonabarabran, looking at some new homes that were being built out there. They were fantastic—four new homes out there for families. They are all occupied, which is fantastic. The Government is certainly increasing the stock that we have. But, of course, there is more to be done—not just for police but for all of our frontline services. That is something that had not had any attention for a long period of time—certainly none under your Government. We are definitely opening more. We are doing maintenance on homes that are specifically for police out in our remote areas. They are all occupied, is what I can tell you—those that are fit for living.

The Hon. NICHOLE OVERALL: As we are still passing it around—I appreciate the copies. Minister, how would you describe the risk of terror attacks in New South Wales today?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: Our terror risk is at probable.

The Hon. NICHOLE OVERALL: What is the authorised and current strength for the Counter Terrorism and Special Tactics Command?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: I will get that to you. I do have it, but it's in my big folder, so I will just pull it out. I will give it to you before we finish.

The Hon. NICHOLE OVERALL: What is the specific budget for counterterrorism operations?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: Again, that is something we will have to get to you.

The Hon. NICHOLE OVERALL: Can you confirm—

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: Do you mean for the unit?

The Hon. NICHOLE OVERALL: Yes.

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: To pay for the staff in that unit? Is that what you're saying?

The Hon. NICHOLE OVERALL: The specific budget for counterterrorism operations. I don't know—perhaps any of you might be able to address that. Is there a specific budget allocation for counterterrorism?

DAVID HUDSON: There is a Counter Terrorism and Special Tactics Command.

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: Can we add Special Tactics to it, then?

DAVID HUDSON: I don't know the exact numbers—it's somewhere over 600.

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The Hon. NICHOLE OVERALL: I've got it there: Counter Terrorism and Special Tactics Command. It's what I mentioned in the first instance.

DAVID HUDSON: It's about 600 strong. There is a variety of units, including the tactical operations group, the rescue and bomb disposal unit, the public order riot squad, plus countering terrorism investigators, the security investigations unit, and other bits and pieces—protected operations and so on and so forth. Each unit has a budget, which is combined up to make the counterterrorism and special tactics budget.

The Hon. NICHOLE OVERALL: So that is a separate allocation, as such?

DAVID HUDSON: It's a separate allocation of that command. It's one of six commands that sits under me, yes.

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: So you have those answers now; I don't have to provide them?

The Hon. NICHOLE OVERALL: No, I'd like to know what that figure is. Minister, what actions have you taken to identify any other—so not what has already taken place—foreign agents active in New South Wales?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: I would have to ask the police. As you would well know, the New South Wales police work very closely with our other law enforcement agencies both in other jurisdictions and in the Federal space as well, so they would be best placed to—and I'm certain that it's those Federal agents that would be taking action to determine other foreign interference, but the police would certainly work with them in relation to that.

The Hon. NICHOLE OVERALL: Yes, that's of course what I am getting at—that it is about the New South Wales police operations in this regard. I will be interested to hear about that figure in the budget. You'll be advocating, of course, if you're unable to tell us what sort of foreign agents and influence may be active—what they're dealing with. You would acknowledge that, if there's a probable risk, the instances are potentially increasing.

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: I'd take advice from the police in relation to that.

The Hon. NICHOLE OVERALL: Let's then round it out to say the opportunity for you to advocate for a comprehensive budget for the Counter Terrorism and Special Tactics Command would be one of your priorities?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: The whole of the Police budget is a priority. Everything is important—so is domestic violence. The domestic violence registry is incredibly—

The Hon. NICHOLE OVERALL: In the circumstances in which we are currently placed and finding ourselves with foreign-backed interference, including in New South Wales, is this a priority for you and the Counter Terrorism and Special Tactics Command budget?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: The command does an extraordinary job—that I can tell you. They haven't indicated to me that they're underfunded but my priority is safety across the board. Everybody, regardless of your postcode, regardless of who you are, where you are, what your sex is—

The Hon. NICHOLE OVERALL: So you will commit to advocating on those grounds?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: —regardless of everything, my priority is safety and these are the people that keep us safe. I thank them for it every day.

The CHAIR: I'm continually informed by licence holders with immaculate personal histories—both of firearms ownership and in terms of their interactions with police—that they've had special conditions put on their licences, usually because of family members. The special condition used most of the time is to prohibit the storage of firearms, firearms parts and ammunition at the address where that relative resides or frequents. In the situation where no reason other than commissioner's discretion is cited as a justification, and no evidence is cited in the letter to the licence holder, how do the Firearms Registry actually justify these special conditions?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: Mr Hudson can talk more to that, but I think it's important that we do note that the safety around issuing firearms licences is important to the community more broadly. We all agree with that. It would only be if there was, I would think, an instance where the registry believed that that safety could not be upheld or, in fact, would be breached. But Mr Hudson might have more on that.

DAVID HUDSON: Thank you, Minister. I think you're right. Each individual case is different, Mr Borsak. If someone who's a licence holder is residing with someone who suffers from mental health issues or some other issues that would cause the Firearms Registry concern, then certainly special conditions would be

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appropriate to be placed on that licensee so that the firearms are appropriately secured and kept safe and that the overarching intent of the Firearms Act in protecting public safety is maintained.

The CHAIR: Minister, did the Firearms Registry use a risk assessment matrix or methodology when handing out conditions this way?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: I'd have to check with Mr Hudson if it's referred to as a matrix.

DAVID HUDSON: As I said, each case is different and is treated on its own merits. I know that the Firearms Registry, in conjunction with the police area commands and districts, explore each individual case before imposing special licence conditions. There are criteria that they look for in relation to what would trigger a special licence condition. I don't have those with me. Whether you'd refer to that as a matrix or not, or a risk assessment—

The CHAIR: What recognised or scientific methodology does the Firearms Registry use to assess risk in general, or is it just a come-by-chance situation?

DAVID HUDSON: It's not a subjective test. There are guidelines that the Firearms Registry issue for consideration, and they are taken into consideration when making those determinations.

The CHAIR: Could you give us a copy of those guidelines?

DAVID HUDSON: We can, yes. We'll take that on notice.

The CHAIR: Every other department uses risk assessments and a matrix approach. I'd now like to follow up on how numerous licence holders abruptly find themselves having to explain their eligibility to retain their licences for health problems that they've never, ever informed the registry about. Would you say that the Firearms Registry is a law enforcement body or an administrative authority?

DAVID HUDSON: Are you suggesting that the registry has requested medical evidence from the licence holder, which hasn't been declared by the licence holder?

The CHAIR: What I am saying is that, in relation to medical-related items, would you say that the Firearms Registry is law enforcement or admin? How is it acting in that particular circumstance?

DAVID HUDSON: I think it's a mixture of both. The overarching intent of the Firearms Act is to maintain public safety and ensure that gun ownership in this State is a privilege, not a right.

The CHAIR: With respect, I hear that all the time.

DAVID HUDSON: Well, it's in the Act.

The CHAIR: But that's only a catch-all. In reality, the police must conform with the law.

DAVID HUDSON: I totally agree. It being a privilege to own a firearm and the overarching intent of the Act being the public safety of the people of New South Wales, is in the Act. So we are abiding by the law.

The CHAIR: If it acts as an administrative body—and you've just said that it does—why is it accessing private health information provided to Service NSW purely, for example, for driver's licence purposes?

DAVID HUDSON: I don't know if that's correct. We take into account individual circumstances of people and their capacity to secure and maintain their firearms. There are many people with health conditions who have licences who have fulfilled their obligations and provided their ability to maintain their firearms licence and maintain the firearms that are allocated to them—including many disabled individuals, as was discussed here previously.

The CHAIR: There are plenty of circumstances where we've seen that there's no way that New South Wales police could get access to the sort of medical information that these people have held privately for themselves, but have been disclosed to Service NSW for driver's licence purposes. My question is does the registry seek the permission of licence holders before they access medical details on a person's driver's licence through Service NSW?

DAVID HUDSON: I'd take that on notice, but medical information is protected.

The CHAIR: It certainly is, Commissioner. There are plenty of circumstances, in our view, where that seems to be a breach and we can't ever get to the bottom of how that happens. Are you aware that this breaches section 11P (9) of the Privacy and Personal Information Protection Act 1998 and the Health Records and Information Privacy Act?

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DAVID HUDSON: I am well aware of those Acts, and we abide by those. I will check to ensure that we are not breaching those particular Acts, but I would also suggest that you're basing your questions on individuals who have provided information to you.

The CHAIR: I'm happy to provide privately information in relation to those people. If you want to have examples, I'm sure we can get their permission to provide that to you to talk about it because it seems to be happening far too frequently.

DAVID HUDSON: That is more useful than generalisations.

The CHAIR: On another matter, regarding the firearms clubs portal process, where is the implementation of the portal up to?

DAVID HUDSON: I'll have to check the latest status on that. Obviously, it is a desire of ours to get better coordinated with the clubs, including the ability to record and document those individuals that shoot at ranges and clubs.

The CHAIR: Can you tell us or maybe take on notice—you wouldn't know it offhand—what has been the cost to date of this project?

DAVID HUDSON: The clubs portal project or the overall Gun Safe project?

The CHAIR: The overall Gun Safe project obviously I know. But certainly the clubs portal is one that's been talked about and was going to be implemented for a long time, but it actually hasn't happened yet.

DAVID HUDSON: It's in development, but there are other priorities that we are trying to put in place in Gun Safe. It's been an incremental journey over the last five years, as you are aware and as we talk about. Licences and permits to acquire were the priority. Interstate transfers were a priority to block a hole that was facilitating the grey market in illicit firearms permeating through New South Wales. Incrementally, our priorities have been public safety issues. Some of those other more desirable functional areas have had to wait. The clubs portal is one of those, but it's in scope for the project.

The CHAIR: Thank you, Commissioner. Just to turn now to Tenterfield Police Station, a station that requires eight police officers has been reduced to four. Why?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: They have been advertised, those positions, and they are unable to fill them. But we did have some good news recently. I think they got a couple of the probationary constables that were going to go there, but I will have to check that unless—do one of you know?

PAUL PISANOS: No.

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: I was with Mr Holland, and he was talking to me about it because we were talking about it specifically.

The CHAIR: You're saying the strength is maintained at eight, but you can't fulfil the extra four?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: Yes, that's happening quite a lot right around the State, unfortunately, Mr Borsak. There's vacant positions that are unfilled, have been advertised time and time again, and are difficult to fill. People are not applying for them.

The CHAIR: There is no way people can be taken from within the existing—

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: That's what I was just saying. The command received a number of probationary officers and I'm pretty sure—but I want to check; I don't want to mislead the Committee—that at least one of the probationary officers were going to go there or they were thinking about a more experienced officer who is at another police station within the command, transferring them there, and backfilling that position. I'm happy to come back to you on that and just get clarification.

Ms CATE FAEHRMANN: Good afternoon, Minister. Eighteen months since the Early Drug Diversion Initiative came into force, New South Wales police data obtained by my office shows that just 7 per cent of almost 19,000 people caught in possession of a small quantity of illegal drugs are offered the chance of speaking to a health professional instead of being sent to court. Are you, as police Minister, committed to seeing people receive the health supports they need as opposed to going through the criminal justice system?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: Yes, as I've said before. As you know, this was discussed in the Drug Summit and that review has been provided to the Government, as I understand it. Health are leading it and the Government will respond soon. I said to you then, and I say it again, that we are committed to the EDDI program. Some of the things we are looking at is—I think we talked about this. If you have another drug on you then you can't—

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Ms CATE FAEHRMANN: This is the eligibility criteria, in terms of relaxing those?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: Yes.

Ms CATE FAEHRMANN: When you're saying "some of the things we're looking at", are you looking at that—

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: Were looked at, I should say, in the Drug Summit.

Ms CATE FAEHRMANN: Right. This is a question post-Drug Summit, because post-Drug Summit the data is still as bad as it was pre-Drug Summit. In fact, the data in terms of diversion—

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: We haven't made the changes yet is the point that I'm making, though. Until that comes back—and I'm anticipating that there will be some changes because that was certainly what was discussed with police. The collaboration between police and Health in relation to some of the issues that we discussed at the Drug Summit, I feel confident that there will be some of those elements included in the response.

Ms CATE FAEHRMANN: At the moment, again, 19,000 people and just 7 per cent. Are you saying that the police discretion in the EDDI scheme is part of the issue and is something that is going to be scrapped?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: I know that is an issue for you.

Ms CATE FAEHRMANN: Clearly, it's an issue for the scheme in its entirety because of the data.

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: I'm not going to predict the outcome of what we will see, but what I can say is I do feel confident that there will be some changes made. In relation to discretion, no—

Ms CATE FAEHRMANN: Do you think those changes will be made before the end of the year?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: It's not in my portfolio to deliver the response. I am not sure if you asked those questions of the health Minister or the Premier.

Ms CATE FAEHRMANN: I actually did ask questions of the health Minister.

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: I don't know the time frame.

Ms CATE FAEHRMANN: I just wanted to confirm that, because the health Minister seemed to think that everything was in your bailiwick, actually.

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: That sounds like the rest of Parliament.

Ms CATE FAEHRMANN: The health Minister said that, in fact, he has had discussions with you but, "To be fair, this is driven by New South Wales police."

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: What is the context to these comments?

Ms CATE FAEHRMANN: This is EDDI, pretty much the same questions. He said it was with you, and you're saying it's with him.

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: No, he will deliver the response. It will be in the response. That's what I'm saying.

Ms CATE FAEHRMANN: Is the health Minister speaking with you about this scheme in terms of making changes to it as part of the response to the Drug Summit?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: Yes.

Ms CATE FAEHRMANN: You're working together?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: Yes.

Ms CATE FAEHRMANN: That's good to know.

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: I wasn't trying to pass the buck. I'm saying he will deliver the response on behalf of the Government, and I anticipate the changes.

Ms CATE FAEHRMANN: We will wait and see probably within the next month, I assume?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: I would share more with you if I knew, but it hasn't been to Cabinet yet so I can't do that.

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Ms CATE FAEHRMANN: Minister, I want to turn to music festival laws. Since the Government made changes to music festival laws last September, has the New South Wales police reduced the fees that it charges music festival organisers for the privilege of having police, drug dogs and strip search tents?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: The police have what they call a user-pays policy, which you would be familiar with. The changes that have occurred in that period of time is that police now internally go through a process which is a three-tiered process. Mr Thurtell will be able to talk further to this. That's a matter of negotiation with the festival providers. They continually look at the requirements. Obviously, the police will look at the risk factors, first and foremost. They will negotiate with the providers of the festivals what that policing element looks like. It goes through three tiers first. They mostly end up landing on an agreed position at the end of it but, as I said, Mr Thurtell—

Ms CATE FAEHRMANN: In terms of overall Government policy, though, one of the most significant factors leading to the cancellation of music festivals in New South Wales, according to musical festival organisers, has been the exorbitant police fees in comparison to other jurisdictions. Since the music festival reform laws came into place last year, has there been a policy direction from you as Minister to the police for them to reduce their fees first up? Don't worry about all the appeals, all of that process internally, but to reduce their fees first up?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: We are looking at this more holistically than just me giving them direction to do anything which, as I've said many times—on policy, of course we do. It's the policy itself that we talk about, not a specific direction for police to reduce their fees, no. They still have to look at the risk. They still have to balance the risk with the entertainment aspect of it. That is exactly what they are doing.

Ms CATE FAEHRMANN: Is it riskier than Victoria or Queensland, what happens in New South Wales?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: The policy in New South Wales is such that the police have introduced an internal mechanism, which I've just described as a three-tiered process through negotiations. Then, as you know, it can go to the Minister for a final appeal. The police go through that process, which they haven't had in the past. They're doing that now. Can you—

Ms CATE FAEHRMANN: I'll come back to that this afternoon for the detail.

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: Mr Thurtell will be able to take you through it.

Ms CATE FAEHRMANN: I'll throw to my colleague.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: Where is the review into police toxic culture up to?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: What toxic culture review?

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: There is a review being undertaken by somebody independent, looking at the—

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: I don't know of any toxic culture review.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: I thought that this was what we discussed at estimates last time. Maybe it's not referred to as the "toxic culture review". That's what it is referred to out there.

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: I haven't heard that. You are talking about—

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: Deputy Commissioner Pisanos is nodding his head. You're aware of it?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: No, I know—

PAUL PISANOS: It's just to the language that was used, in terms of "toxic", that I was nodding. That's not what it's known as.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: What is it known as then?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: It's a cultural review.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: Oh, a cultural review. I apologise. People ring me and say, "Where is the toxic culture review up to?" I apologise. That's what people out there are referring to it as, including ex-coppers and people—

PETER THURTELL: I don't know about a toxic culture review. There is a review that was commissioned by Commissioner Karen Webb—a "cultural review", not a "toxic culture review". People out there don't refer to it as a "toxic review". Somebody that spoke to you may have.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: More than one person.

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PETER THURTELL: The police officers out there that are participating in this and have had an extensive opportunity to contribute to it certainly don't refer to it as that. However, that review is still ongoing.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: I merely want an update, that is all. What is the anticipated time frame? When will it report back? Have people had an opportunity to participate? Have they had an opportunity to participate with confidentiality and those parameters?

PETER THURTELL: Yes, all of that. Kristen Hilton is the name of the lady that's running the independent review. There is a survey that's gone out to our officers. There were questionnaires sent out to our officers. A number of officers have been given the opportunity for private reviews to discuss with their independent team. That is still going. We anticipate by—I think it's February next year. But certainly by the end of this year there will be interim recommendations. Kristen Hilton is very positive about the review.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: Minister, are you aware that on 22 July a New South Wales police officer pushed an Aboriginal woman to the ground, causing her to hit a pole and leaving her with sustained injuries, fractured ribs, severe concussion and a cut to her ear requiring ear glue? There was a video of the event that circulated fairly widely. Are you aware of that incident?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: I can't say I'm familiar with that.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: I wrote to you about it. You don't read my letters. Have you expressed any concern about that incident after receiving the letter, or are you just not aware of it?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: I think when we talk about use of force more broadly, that is certainly not the intention of the police. I think it's important to remember that when police are policing, there are decisions made in split seconds. Sometimes they're not great decisions; sometimes they're great decisions. I just think it's important that we have some context, that's all. Of course we don't want people injured in circumstances like you've just suggested. I don't think these are intentional. I don't think police go out to intentionally injure people.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: Following up from your discussion with Dr Cohn earlier, in relation to the developing of a new approach to persons suffering mental health distress, what role is the Police Association playing in the steering committee developing that response?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: Mr Hudson is on the steering committee, so you're best to ask him.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: What role is the Police Association playing?

DAVID HUDSON: In relation to—

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: Are they a member of the steering committee?

DAVID HUDSON: No, they're not.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: Why not?

DAVID HUDSON: They'll be part of the consultation process.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: Why aren't they a member of the steering committee?

DAVID HUDSON: Because their views are appropriately reflected in the steering committee. I'm aware of their views.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: Who is reflecting those views?

DAVID HUDSON: I am totally aware of their views, as is—

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: Thank you. That's fine.

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: Can I just come back to you? I've got those figures for you. There are 792 positions in Counter Terrorism and Special Tactics. The budget is \$115.7 million.

The Hon. NICHOLE OVERALL: I appreciate that, thank you.

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: I've also got for you—

The Hon. NICHOLE OVERALL: That's okay. I know you'll get to those other ones.

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: But you never come back to it, and it's important.

The Hon. NICHOLE OVERALL: I promise you I will, but I want to get through these ones first.

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: Did you hear that, Mr Chair? That was a promise.

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The Hon. NICHOLE OVERALL: Exactly. I keep my promises.

The CHAIR: Promises are always kept here.

The Hon. NICHOLE OVERALL: Absolutely—from Nichole Overall they are.

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: I'm going to make sure of it.

The Hon. NICHOLE OVERALL: We jogged your memory of the more than 10,000 signature petition.

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: Yes, you have. Yes, I am familiar with this. I didn't know what you were referring to earlier.

The Hon. NICHOLE OVERALL: You are familiar with the call for a missing persons inquiry. You didn't contribute to or attend the debate about the petition.

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: No, I did not.

The Hon. NICHOLE OVERALL: Why not?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: I had meetings.

The Hon. NICHOLE OVERALL: You know that families came from as far away as Western Australia, and you didn't take the time to meet with any of them about this really important issue.

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: No, I did not.

The Hon. NICHOLE OVERALL: Will you make any time to meet with families so impacted and raising this really important topic?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: I meet with families of missing people in my line of work already.

The Hon. NICHOLE OVERALL: Will you meet with these families who have put forward—

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: They haven't reached out to me.

The Hon. NICHOLE OVERALL: We may need to qualify that. Have you met with Search Dogs Sydney and the Centre for Missing Persons?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: I've certainly had correspondence with them. I don't recall meeting them.

The Hon. NICHOLE OVERALL: They have requested a meeting with you.

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: Yes.

The Hon. NICHOLE OVERALL: Will you agree to meet with them?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: I'll make that decision when they make another request.

The Hon. NICHOLE OVERALL: They've got to make another request before you'll consider it.

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: I don't need a broker. If they want to meet with me, I'll make that decision.

The Hon. NICHOLE OVERALL: They have made a request, Minister.

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: And I said to you, "Yes, I'm aware of that."

The Hon. NICHOLE OVERALL: But you haven't done anything about it, and they've got to request it again before you will.

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: I'll make that decision.

The Hon. NICHOLE OVERALL: That would probably help them immeasurably. Will you agree to an inquiry into missing persons as has been put forward in this petition of more than 10,000 signatures?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: Is that one of the inquiries? I don't think it does say that in the petition, actually.

The Hon. NICHOLE OVERALL: "Immediately commences a parliamentary inquiry into missing persons investigations".

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: Where are you reading that?

The Hon. NICHOLE OVERALL: The second paragraph.

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: Oh, yes. The Parliament will make that decision.

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The Hon. NICHOLE OVERALL: Will you back it, Minister?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: I'm not in your House, so I'm not sure. Is it a Legislative Assembly petition?

The Hon. NICHOLE OVERALL: Will you advocate? Will you provide any support to it, considering you're not even meeting with these clearly still bereaved and struggling families?

The CHAIR: Yes, it's a Legislative Assembly one.

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: I'm sorry?

The CHAIR: It says "Legislative Assembly".

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: Well, I haven't been approached for that. That is incorrect for you to say that I don't meet with families of missing people, because I absolutely have.

The Hon. NICHOLE OVERALL: How could you possibly say that you haven't been aware of potential for an inquiry into the lower House when you have admitted that you are aware of the petition?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: I was aware of a request in the upper House.

The Hon. NICHOLE OVERALL: That is an entirely different matter that is being looked at in the upper House. We'll move on with your noncommittal answer. How many murders are currently listed as unsolved in New South Wales?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: I can give you that. The homicide squad—739 unsolved cases.

The Hon. NICHOLE OVERALL: And how many of them relate to young women?

The Hon. MARK LATHAM: It's all Ivan Milat.

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: I'm unsure about that, Mr Latham.

The Hon. NICHOLE OVERALL: Can you take that on notice?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: Yes.

The Hon. NICHOLE OVERALL: Can you advise us of information relating to historical murders that have been mixed up or lost altogether?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: What are you exactly after? What do you mean? Do you have names?

The Hon. NICHOLE OVERALL: I do. I don't know whether that would be appropriate for me to mention specific examples that have been presented.

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: How will I know?

The Hon. NICHOLE OVERALL: Let's talk about Mr Paul White and Mr Steve Smith, who are residents of the Miranda electorate, in relation to their murdered partners.

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: What's your assertion? That the evidence—

The Hon. NICHOLE OVERALL: Mixed up and lost evidence relating to these historical murders.

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: One of the outcomes of the SCOI report was that record keeping was undesirable; it wasn't quite up to speed. New South Wales police have done a full audit on that and have really increased their evidence record keeping. So that has been, certainly, a positive.

The Hon. NICHOLE OVERALL: So that's been completed?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: I believe so, yes, and it's all in one place now. It's been moved. It was in quite a number of different locations, so it's been collated together and that is, certainly—and, in fact, the evidence that has been found and used in some of these unsolved homicides has now solved some homicides, which is a positive thing. I think it's important that we note that: Police never stop searching.

The Hon. NICHOLE OVERALL: I'm aware. I am very aware, and we do know that the reactivation and reinvigoration of cold cases can lead to great successes. That's what we're talking about—ensuring that these matters are looked at appropriately. Are you confirming that a full audit has been done and is now in place?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: I'll just double-check that's been completed.

PETER THURTELL: As a result of the special commission of inquiry there was a full audit of exhibits held across the State in relation to unsolved homicides, and that audit has been completed.

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The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: Minister, we've talked too often in these hearings about police stations being used as what's been described as "kiss-and-drop zones" for prisoners, and police being asked to babysit prisoners. Is that situation resolved or are police still being asked to take care of prisoners?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: Police are speaking with Corrections in relation to transportation of prisoners. Mr Pisanos will be able to speak to you more about that. My understanding is that they are making some improvement. Can I say, though, this is historical. It was certainly around in—this is something I've inherited and another thing I've had to fix. I've definitely got them at the table.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: I agree, Minister; I was about to say we had the same answer last estimates. I'm just wondering where we're at with this issue.

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: That's not considered historical, but 12 years is certainly historical. Did you want to add anything to that, Mr Pisanos?

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: Perhaps I can come to you this afternoon, Mr Pisanos, because we're running short of time. Is there any movement on this issue or are we still in exactly the same place we were at the last estimates hearing?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: They're at the table talking. I don't know whether they did that under your Government. They're certainly trying to iron out some issues and coming up with solutions to address the issue.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: What impact will the introduction of the bail division have on this problem for police?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: The bail division?

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: Yes. You'd be aware that all the bail hearings are now via AVL and there's a cut-off time of 10.00 a.m. on weekends and 12 noon on a weekday. If a prisoner is picked up at 11 o'clock on a Saturday morning, where are they held for their bail hearing?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: There are provisions that they can ask for that to be heard—just so that's clear. It's early days with this program and we need to give it some time to deliver us some evidence to suggest that it is working. I think it's important that we do that. Technology is going to become very useful for policing; we've said that before, and this is an example of that—and for the courts.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: What input did you have into the design of this bail program with respect to the likely impact on police resources?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: The police would have to answer that for you. Obviously, I'm not a police officer.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: No, but—

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: It's operational, Mrs Carter. Would you mind answering that, please, Mr Thurtell?

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: Sorry, as the Minister, you had no discussions with the Attorney General when all of this was being designed?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: Certainly not in design. I'm not a lawyer. I'm not a police officer.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: No, you're the Minister.

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: We're best to leave those things to the experts, and we do. That's what we do all the time; everything we do, we take expert advice. We did discuss the technology, which is important, and as you know, we've been rolling out the AVLs around the State, which is important. But in terms of detailed design, I'm sorry—

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: It's above your pay grade. Okay.

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: —I would prefer to take my advice from the experts.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: In terms of the rollout of AVL, is it available in every courthouse in New South Wales?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: You would have to ask the Attorney General.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: Is it in every police station?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: Not every, but I'm pretty certain I can say in every police command and—

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PAUL PISANOS: District.

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: District, yes.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: As part of the Moree response and the action plan that was one of the key milestones of that response, what actions have been allocated to the police under that action plan?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: You'd have to ask Mr Pisanos about the actual actions. In terms of the work that police are doing out there, it's extraordinary.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: There's no contest about that. I am looking at the specifics of what is changing because of the Moree response.

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: Certainly, I can talk to you about the after-hours response from the PCYC, from the SHAE Academy.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: How many extra hours is the PCYC operating because of the Moree response?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: Up until 10.00 p.m., and then the SHAE Academy is doing until, I think, one or two.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: What evaluation of that program has occurred?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: That's a DCJ matter. They'll do the evaluation.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: So it's a program the police are running—

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: Well, police have input in.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: —but you've got no involvement in its evaluation?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: Hold on a moment. Let's just take you a step backwards here. Police are not running these programs. Police keep our communities safe. Police are part of the response.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: Sorry, Minister, I understood that you'd identified PCYC and SHAE as things that the police have been asked to do under the action program, so they're police responses.

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: You didn't understand correctly, because that's not what I was saying.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: Well, then, what did you say, Minister?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: Police are part of the PCYC and they are there doing programs, through our Youth Command, with the children that are participating in those programs.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: But they'd be doing that anyway, Moree response or not. Is that right?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: Not to extended hours.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: What are the normal hours of operation?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: You'd have to check with PCYC. But certainly, they extended their hours as a result of getting more funding from the Government in the Moree solution.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: You talked about the SHAE Academy. What about the SAY program? Is that something the police are running in Moree?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: I'd have to check with Mr Pisanos.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: What about Youth Action Meetings? That's a police responsibility, isn't it?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: Yes, but that happened before.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: I understood that part of the Moree action plan was that Youth Action Meetings would be extended to nine additional police districts.

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: It was already in Moree. We extended it to others which were also identified as "hot" areas—areas of high criminality—which has also been very successful.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: Do you have an evaluation of them that you could share with us, Minister?

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Ms YASMIN CATLEY: I can check with the police in relation to evaluation. What is it that you want to see in an evaluation?

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: For example, Minister, you just said that has been "very successful". I'd like to know on what basis you made that judgement.

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: What I can tell you is, anecdotally, the report that I got back from one of the YAMs is that now they are not just focusing on the youth that has committed the crime; they are now focusing on their siblings, because what we're often seeing is that the siblings are following their older sibling. This is something proactive that they're doing. I, personally, see that as a good thing. So, yes, I see that as success.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: Yes, I agree.

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: That means that we're preventing people from going into the justice system. I know you might laugh at this and think it's a joke but—

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: Excuse me, Minister, why would I think that preventing young people from a life of crime is a joke? I do not understand how you would draw that—

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: Then don't laugh.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: I was not laughing at that, Minister.

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: Yes, you and your colleague were.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: I beg your pardon, Minister.

The Hon. NICHOLE OVERALL: No, we were not. That's offensive. Point of order—

The CHAIR: Order! Exchanges like that—

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: I apologise.

The Hon. MARK LATHAM: Come on, we've all been friendly. Let's calm it down.

The CHAIR: Please proceed.

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: Thank you. I consider that very, very successful.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: Minister, to your question—

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: In other areas, in Wagga Wagga, they already partner, as you well know, with other service providers, but they have extended that, and the service providers themselves are also now part of the monitoring and advising other service providers of the missing gaps in young people's lives. Collaboratively, together they are coming up with some good outcomes.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: Great. Thank you very much, Minister. To your question about what we're looking for in an evaluation, we're looking for exactly what the Moree response was meant to do—to be a pilot program that we could draw from for other areas.

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: But police are not responsible for the Moree response.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: Which is why my first question was, Minister, what were the actions allocated to the police under the action plan? But perhaps we can move on to something else.

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: You know what the problem is? You want the police to be everything to everybody and it's impossible. You have to, please, acknowledge that the police have to do what they have to do, which is police.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: Thank you, Minister. Perhaps we can go on to questions. Under the Work Health and Safety Act, the Police Force has a duty of care to its employees to address health and safety risks, including psychosocial risks. What are you, as Minister, doing to ensure that the Police Force is complying with this Act and that there is a psychosocially safe workplace for police?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: The police have set up the wellbeing command and we're fortunate enough to have the commander of that command here with us. I know that she'd love to talk about that and tell the members of this Committee exactly the great work that she's doing.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: We'll come to that in the afternoon; our time with the Minister is limited. I look forward to that this afternoon. The question was what are you, as Minister, doing?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: We set up the command.

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The Hon. NICHOLE OVERALL: Minister, you can hit me with those figures now, thank you very much—because, as I said, I keep my promises. Fire away.

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: Sick leave, 410; parental leave, 347—unless something has changed—workers comp, 1,286; long service leave, 159; other leave, which is rec leave and probably some other leave, 1,319; suspended with pay, 21; suspended without pay, four.

The Hon. NICHOLE OVERALL: Terminated?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: I don't have terminated.

The Hon. NICHOLE OVERALL: You'll get that for me, I'm sure. Thank you, I appreciate that, and I'm sure you appreciate me coming back to it, as we agreed. You have said earlier a number of times that we continue to have an officer shortage.

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: Sorry, I didn't hear you then.

The Hon. NICHOLE OVERALL: The officer shortage that you have discussed earlier this morning. We're still short of the authorised strength in police numbers. Why are there fewer classes attesting per year under your leadership at the academy?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: The police make that decision in relation to the availability of teaching staff, working in with the university—there are many factors that come together to determine that.

The Hon. NICHOLE OVERALL: You don't have any input into classes?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: No.

The Hon. NICHOLE OVERALL: Nothing at all?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: Just to try to promote police, try to promote people to become—

The Hon. NICHOLE OVERALL: So you're a publicity officer rather than a Minister?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: To try to promote new people being interested in joining the Police Force, getting out around the State—

The Hon. NICHOLE OVERALL: Are you advocating with the police, who are doing a marvellous job, for more classes to be reinstated?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: I'm advocating for more students to attend, which naturally would equate to more classes.

The Hon. NICHOLE OVERALL: You're suggesting that you will reinstate more classes once you have more students?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: I can't wait to have that problem.

The Hon. NICHOLE OVERALL: I'm sure you can't. It's the job, isn't it? How many recruits started in class 366?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: There were 314.

The Hon. NICHOLE OVERALL: Does anyone want to correct that? Is it 314 that started?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: Sorry, you said "enrolled"?

The Hon. NICHOLE OVERALL: Yes, started in class.

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: I don't know the number—I'm sorry, that was attested. My apologies.

The Hon. NICHOLE OVERALL: Do we have confirmation of 340? Thank you. You've just said that 314 attested. What happened to the other 26 recruits?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: There's a whole host of different reasons. They may not have—

The Hon. NICHOLE OVERALL: Do they specify when they move on?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: What do you mean? Who specifies?

The Hon. NICHOLE OVERALL: The recruits that don't continue in the program.

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: Do they specify why they didn't?

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The Hon. NICHOLE OVERALL: Yes.

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: Yes, they do know why they don't—

The Hon. NICHOLE OVERALL: You just said that there's a range of reasons, so do they specify—

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: And I was just going on to say them. It can be the case that they did not meet the physical requirements. They may have not met other requirements.

The Hon. NICHOLE OVERALL: You're suggesting that they're already there and they're not meeting the requirements. It's not them voluntarily saying, "We're pulling out; we're not continuing"?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: Mostly it's due to the fact that something has—they won't meet the requirements—

The Hon. NICHOLE OVERALL: They haven't met the requirements?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: They won't meet the requirements to attest.

The Hon. NICHOLE OVERALL: Thanks for the clarification; that's all I was looking for on that. Do they still receive the \$30,000 training fee?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: Yes. It's not a training fee. They are paid to attend the college.

The Hon. NICHOLE OVERALL: Regardless of whether they complete the full course?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: They're paid while they're there, that's right.

The CHAIR: Getting back to Tenterfield again, after 5.00 p.m. police simply don't go out unless it's an absolute catastrophe.

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: I'm sorry, Mr Borsak, I didn't hear that.

The CHAIR: I'm just going back to the questioning in relation to Tenterfield Police Station.

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: Yes.

The CHAIR: After 5.00 p.m. police simply don't go out unless it's an absolute catastrophe. Residents ring the police. The station at Glen Innes answers and they refuse to send out police who are on call. Instead, they say it'll take an hour to send a police officer from Glen Innes and so they don't turn up. Local criminals are not stupid. They wait until 5.00 p.m. and do their crimes outside of office hours. Minister, why are officers on call in a town not responding when residents need them to?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: That is news to me, and I think I've spoken to the same person that you've spoken to in relation to this example because I've heard this exact story.

The CHAIR: You may well have.

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: I will follow that up with the commander of that command, but that is news to me. I am told that there's a 24-hour police response in every police district. That's the police model. Can I add here, too: There aren't two extra positions; there was one extra position filled, so five of those positions are now filled in Tenterfield.

The CHAIR: Five, okay.

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: Of the eight, yes.

The CHAIR: Can you tell me what the strength at Glen Innes is?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: I'd have to check for you.

The CHAIR: You'll take that on notice?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: Yes, of course.

The CHAIR: Is it the practice of the New South Wales police to pay officers to be on call and then not have them turn up?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: They would be working at another station. Is that what you mean?

The CHAIR: Yes. They're on call to come from Glen Innes to Tenterfield and they're not coming.

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: You'll have to ask the police. I wouldn't think so.

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PETER THURTELL: It's a little confusing, the way you've put that. The reason we have officers on call is so that if there's a call-out then those officers on call go. If a response is able to be facilitated from a nearby police station, then it's facilitated from the nearby police station. Obviously in the Tenterfield-Glen Innes example you gave there is a travel period between Glen Innes and Tenterfield and, if the situation is more urgent than that, then obviously the Tenterfield officers would be called out, recalled to duty, if and when required.

The CHAIR: You're saying the recall relates to officers that are not actually there at the time?

PETER THURTELL: They're not actually on duty at the time.

The CHAIR: Yes, that's what I meant, thank you.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: A report released by Redfern Legal Centre and Harm Reduction Australia analysed 10 years worth of police data regarding strip searches and drug dogs. The findings indicate that only 6.43 per cent of total searches resulted in a conviction for possession, while only 1.43 per cent of total searches resulted in a conviction for supply. In 86.5 per cent of strip searches no illicit substance was found whatsoever, so nine out of 10 searches were unnecessary and potentially unlawful. Minister, do you agree that a conviction rate for supply of just over 1 per cent means that 99.9 per cent of strip searches did not lead to a conviction for supply?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: I think we have this same conversation about strip searches all the time. Police have advised me—and I support their use of strip searches as part of their policing and part of them being able to keep the community safe. They have given me enough examples of where strip searching could have ended up in a very different set of circumstances than had that not been the case. I know you have your data.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: It is not my data.

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: The data, sorry—and I know that you have referred to many instances where strip searching does not equate to finding anything.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: Ninety-nine per cent of the time.

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: That is the data that you have. But I am told by police, and I certainly accept their view, that strip searching is an important part of them being able to do their job.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: Do you only take advice about policing from police?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: No.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: Who else do you take advice from about reform of policing in the public interest?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: I speak to stakeholders—you know that, Sue. But it makes a difference, too, as to what is the context of what you are referring to. We have to tell the whole picture here.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: That strip searches can be unlawful, unnecessary, harmful, create trauma, and are really cruel to young people.

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: Are these people in custody? I don't know.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: No, these are just strip searches. They can be done—

DAVID HUDSON: Are they done in custody?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: Yes, but are they done in custody?

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: Some are done in custody, yes—in police custody.

DAVID HUDSON: Half of them.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: Half, yes. Minister, if you recall, police commissioner Karen Webb said police should not be responsible for Closing the Gap targets. I think she provided some explanation around that and there was some understanding, but do you still stand by that position? What are you doing in relation to meeting the Closing the Gap targets that police are responsible for?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: I had a meeting with the coalition of Aboriginal leaders just a few months back. Listening to them, I think, is important, which I do. Working towards Closing the Gap is very important to this Government; it is important to every one of us. The figures are not good—not good at all—but we have to keep trying. But there are big social problems out there for our First Nations people. I see that, particularly, when I am out in remote areas of New South Wales. Those societal issues are what need to be addressed. Police are at

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the pointy end of all of this—at the arrest end, once the crime has been committed. We need to stop the crime being committed in the first place. That's how we solve the problem, and that's how we close the gap.

In some instances, it is about making the family home a safe place because, in many instances, it's not. The home is not a safe place for children to go home to. It is not a safe place for women to be in. The disproportionate number of domestic violence cases against First Nations women again is a horrifying statistic. Sexual assault, a horrifying statistic—they all are. There is no doubt about that. But they are deep, societal problems. If they were easy to fix, it would have been done before today.

The CHAIR: Thank you, Minister. Government questions?

The Hon. Dr SARAH KAINE: We have traversed a lot of ground in the second session this morning. I want to check if there's anything you would like to add or clarify regarding anything we've touched on today.

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: Thank you very much for giving me the opportunity. I didn't realise it was nearly over. I was just starting to get warmed up! I do have a few things to clear up. Earlier I stated the costs for protests related to Operation Shelter were total of approximately \$11.3 million. I want to clarify that that figure also includes the costs of extra patrols in Sydney's east and other high-profile locations over the summer of '24 and '25. It is not just protest related; it is also keeping the community safe. As you very well know, we had PolAir out, we had the dogs—we had every possible police resource out keeping our community safe in that period. It is important to note that that \$11.3 million included that as well. In relation to the Mental Health Command, I mistakenly called Kirsty Hayward the commander who is undertaking the work for police. Her name is actually Superintendent Kirsty Hales. I thank her for the work she does and apologise for getting her name wrong. Sue got Mr McKenna's name wrong as well, so it's been a day for it.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: I did.

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: Mr Latham, you asked about the total number of antisemitic incidents in the community. I advise that in addition to police's reported incidents of antisemitism, there are also those from the CSG. They also have a large number of incidents. I did refer to you of those that are unreported to police, and they often report to CSG. It's important we clarify that as well. In relation to police housing, I earlier said that I was at Coonabarabran, but I was actually at Coonamble. I did actually go through Coonabarabran, but it was Coonamble where the houses were. I just wanted to clarify that. Apart from that I am good, thank you very much for asking.

The CHAIR: Thank you very much for coming this morning, Minister, and answering questions as best you can. We will now take a break and come back at 2.00 p.m.

(The Minister withdrew.)

(Luncheon adjournment)

The CHAIR: Welcome back. We'll start with Mr. Latham.

The Hon. MARK LATHAM: Thank you, Chair, and thank you to the officers who've returned for the afternoon session. Why have the New South Wales police failed to solve the Wanda Beach murders, when, at budget estimates two weeks ago, the Premier and a cannabis party MP indicated that they could through an upper House committee made up of MPs with no policing experience. What's gone wrong?

PAUL PISANOS: Firstly, the Wanda Beach murders, as you pointed out earlier, are over 60 years of age. But I will hand over to Mr Hudson, who has some information about the inquiries that we've conducted since.

DAVID HUDSON: Thank you, Commissioner. The Wanda Beach murders—the murders of those two girls—have been the subject of constant reviews by the Unsolved Homicide Team looking for new investigative opportunities. It was extensively investigated at the time, and no new leads have been determined upon review of the unsolved homicide case. It does come up intermittently. There has been interest recently from one of the upper House members in relation to the question as to whether convicted murderer Ivan Milat was responsible for those murders. We undertook those inquiries and negated the possibility that he had committed those homicides based on the fact that, at the time they were committed, he was in custody for other criminal offences.

There was a photofit picture that the upper House member indicated bore a striking resemblance to Ivan Milat. Inquiries through that case file indicate that that photofit was one of five that was completed in relation to the Wanda Beach investigation. That particular individual who, it's alleged, bears a striking resemblance to Milat, was never a suspect. He was seen in the vicinity of Wanda Beach the day before and, during a canvass, witnesses came forward and that photofit was developed from that. But he was never firmed up as a suspect in

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that matter. He was seen in the vicinity the day before. We don't think that the matters are linked and we're ongoing in relation to review of unsolved homicides and long-term missing person cases within New South Wales. That'll continue, and the Wanda Beach murders will be part of that review, ongoing.

The Hon. MARK LATHAM: Thank you very much, Deputy Commissioner. That's very helpful because did you, by chance, happen to see the Premier's estimates with Mr Buckingham, where they're speculating about this, as you say, photofit—the one on the left—and then a picture of a young Ivan Milat. Did you happen to see the Premier's estimates as they implied that that photofit was a suspect and, basically, in the words of Buckingham, that that is the murderer? Did you see that—where the Premier gave encouragement to this theory?

DAVID HUDSON: I didn't see that. I did see certain media reporting about it. But we've previously clarified that with Mr Buckingham in relation to—

The Hon. MARK LATHAM: You have. It was quite a show. The Premier seemed to be under the impression that the photofit had—he used words similar to—"a remarkable similarity" to Ivan Milat. They seemed to be talking about the presence of that individual in the photofit at Wanda Beach on 11 January 1965, the day of the murders, but you've just given evidence that he was seen the day before.

DAVID HUDSON: Correct.

The Hon. MARK LATHAM: Right. The Buckingham theory, then, that on 11 January Milat skipped the detention centre at Penrith, stole a car, drove all the way to Wanda, murdered the two women and drove all the way back to Penrith couldn't be true if we're saying this person is Ivan Milat, on the basis he was seen the day before and there's no evidence of this person being at Wanda on 11 January, the day of the murders.

DAVID HUDSON: That's correct.

The Hon. MARK LATHAM: That's correct?

DAVID HUDSON: That's correct. There's no evidence of the person contained in that photofit being present on the day of the murders, and there's obviously irrefutable evidence that Milat was in custody at the time they were committed.

The Hon. MARK LATHAM: Irrefutable? You've checked the logs or the roll call?

DAVID HUDSON: The Unsolved Homicide Team has on my behalf, yes.

The Hon. MARK LATHAM: That was my next question. After Belanglo and the horror of those backpacker murders, wouldn't the police have worked backwards on Milat to see what other murders he would've committed—a reverse chronology to see where else he could've been and to check the time he's in custody, time he's out and look at similar murders? What did that exercise show, as you worked backwards from Belanglo?

DAVID HUDSON: There was a very detailed intelligence probe at the time by Task Force Air, which was the name of the taskforce that did the Milat investigation at the time in relation to long-term missing persons and unsolved homicides that potentially could've been committed by Milat based on MO, based on time he was in custody and based on his known work movements at the time and locations. There were a number of missing persons and, I think, four—from memory—homicides that potentially fell within that scope. They were investigated and have been excluded.

The Hon. MARK LATHAM: I've got a lot of respect for Clive Small, who I knew from Liverpool and Campbelltown days. He, of course, did an outstanding job in identifying the Belanglo murders and arresting and ultimately convicting Ivan Milat. But he's on the record saying he's only able to identify one other possibility where Milat has murdered someone. Is that the conclusive view of the police today, given that Clive Small is obviously out of the service?

DAVID HUDSON: Clive Small would have the best knowledge of that investigation. Unfortunately, his health is not that good at the moment—

The Hon. MARK LATHAM: I'm sorry to hear that

DAVID HUDSON: —but we have, and we continue to do, extensive reviews of what could've been possible. That included, up until Milat's death in custody, numerous visits to him in jail, seeing if he wished to tell us about further matters. As we know, he's now deceased—those inquiries can't continue—but there is no physical evidence to link him to any other matters that we can prove.

The Hon. MARK LATHAM: Another Buckingham theory about this is that John Marsden, who was Milat's solicitor for a while in Campbelltown—it's not unusual in Campbelltown; every second person used Marsdens solicitors, and ultimately Milat sacked him—is still alive, when we attended his funeral in 2006 the box

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at the front of the Catholic church in Campbelltown was empty, in Turkey and Marsden, back in the day, was actively assisting Milat with these crimes and running cover for him at the police board. Would you dismiss that as a crackpot theory?

DAVID HUDSON: The allegations that have been recently made—the first I've ever heard of them—there's no evidence that I'm aware of to support those.

The Hon. MARK LATHAM: So the police look at this solely on the basis of evidence. Is there any evidence you can find that would justify an upper House inquiry into these particular matters? Especially given the motion that's been circulated, the committee would be receiving direct government funding from Chris Minns to do this work, presumably dragging it away from hospitals, schools, policing in New South Wales. Is there any evidence—open leads, possibilities—that would justify non-police investigation of the matters that I've just raised?

DAVID HUDSON: If we thought, as an organisation, that an inquiry would provide comfort to those surviving relatives of long-term missing person cases or unsolved homicide matters, we'd be supportive of it. But I don't think there's any chance that an inquiry would resolve these issues or solve unsolved crimes. It would also divert resources—most likely the limited resources of the Unsolved Homicide Team—to assist that inquiry, which would take them away from other work with a greater chance of success.

The Hon. MARK LATHAM: On a separate matter, to the acting commissioner, now that the appeal against the sentence for Kristian White has failed—and obviously we're going to have a new police commissioner shortly—can this young man be reinstated to the Police Force once his two-year community correction order has been completed? Shouldn't it be recognised, unlike the media coverage, that White's police colleague at the nursing home that night—early in the morning—equipped with necessary protective gear, was unable to disarm Mrs Nolan, and only then did Mr White take the action for which he was convicted? Yes, he made a mistake but, given the extraordinary circumstances, should this be a lifetime ban from the police service and employment if Mr White, at the end of the two-year period, wanted to be reinstated?

PETER THURTELL: No, he won't be reinstated and, no, he can't be reinstated. He now has a criminal history for the offence of manslaughter. There isn't a much more significant offence than that. He would be precluded, under our current policy, of being reinstated to the police.

The Hon. MARK LATHAM: Is there any exception to that policy that can be made?

PETER THURTELL: No.

The Hon. MARK LATHAM: No—it's blanket. Thank you.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: Acting Commissioner Thurtell, can I ask you to go back to the matter of Hannah Thomas, the young woman who was injured at the protest. I just want to go back to the circumstances around that in terms of the police communication that took place after that event. Again, Assistant Commissioner McFadden—who's not here—did say in the media, quite forthrightly, that he had reviewed the video footage and that he saw no police misconduct or untoward police behaviour. Did he see different video footage to what the lawyers of Hannah Thomas saw?

PETER THURTELL: He may well have. I'm aware that there are multiple body-worn videos—footage from different individual officers—in existence. I don't know what ones Assistant Commissioner McFadden viewed. From memory, what he said was that at this stage there was no evidence of misconduct on the police part. But the footage he viewed may well have been different to the footage that Ms Thomas's solicitors viewed.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: Would you be able to, for the benefit of this Committee, take that on notice and provide some clarity about whether we are talking about different body-worn video footage? Where I'm coming from is the concern about such a forthright statement being made and being so inconsistent with another statement that I think has a lot of credibility—the latter statement that there was evidence of police wrongdoing.

PETER THURTELL: It's hard for me to take that on notice. What I can say is that there is a critical incident investigation, and there is a complaint investigation being conducted by Professional Standards Command. If that critical incident investigation identifies any issues, procedural or otherwise, outside of the actual incident, then it would be a matter for that critical incident investigation team to either make a recommendation for that to be examined and/or to look at it themselves.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: What I'm asking, though, is slightly different to that. I appreciate that these matters are being looked at, and the critical incident means that the LECC will have oversight. This is more about Assistant Commissioner McFadden's statement that he made to the media and that a lot of people relied upon, and

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whether you would be able to take on notice to ask him whether he viewed footage that is separate or different to the footage that the lawyers of Hannah Thomas viewed. It's quite a straight—

PETER THURTELL: Yes, I get the question. We can certainly do that—find out what footage was viewed by both parties. But it does form part of the investigation—all the footage.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: I understand that. When you go back and inquire in order to provide an answer, if there is advice that that is material that is under investigation and that question itself is under investigation of some sort, then obviously that's the answer. But it may well just be a discrete, completely independent component, and that's the question I'm asking that can be answered. If there is sensitivity around it, of course we understand that.

PETER THURTELL: I'll take it on notice.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: Thank you very much. Again, that incident in particular highlighted this view and it was the words that just kept coming from the New South Wales police who were relevant and were commenting publicly around protests. Every time a statement was made about that incident or that event on 27 June outside S E C Plating, it was always said that it was an unauthorised protest—the protest was unauthorised. This notion that a protest has to be authorised is something that I think most people know is not a real thing. Why does that happen? Why do the police, every time they issue a statement about a protest, include the worst word? Sorry, not every time—often, and more often than not. In the case of that one, it was all the time. Every statement referred to the protest as an unauthorised protest.

PETER THURTELL: I would have to go back through what you're talking about, whether they are official releases from the New South Wales police or whether an individual officer or officers used that term when being interviewed. But a protest is only unauthorised if there are other breaches of the law that a form 1 should have been put in for. But you're right: Apart from that, it's a protest.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: It's a protest, yes. From your understanding in your position, do you think that's something that is quite known through the force, in all of its geographic locations? Do police officers understand that protest is lawful and people can protest? As you say, as long as they're not committing offences. If they're on public land and they're not obstructing, protest is lawful and it doesn't have to be authorised. Do you think that's commonly known?

PETER THURTELL: Yes, I think so because we get protests—as the Minister pointed out earlier in the day, 1,500 alone in the city plus more across the State. Apart from that, just little gatherings outside members of Parliament offices and things like that—we don't view those as unauthorised illegal protests. The police often go there at the request of either a member of the public or a particular member's office, or whatever, just to make sure that the protesters are being reasonable and not obstructing traffic or anything else like that, and we don't take action against people. We realise, as an organisation, and our officers do as well, that people have the right to protest. It's only in certain circumstances where that could be problematic.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: For a new probationary constable, as they're moving through the ranks, if they're in the regions or if they're in the metropolitan area, are there documents or internal materials that talk about protest?

PETER THURTELL: It certainly would be in our police handbook. I stand to be corrected on that, but I think it would be. But particularly, as I said before, the majority are in the Sydney city area—the CBD. Our officers are well experienced, and there are a lot of senior officers who have got extensive experience in protest monitoring and policing et cetera, so they don't have to go too far before they can ask a question about whether something is being properly conducted.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: Sticking with the protest at the end of June at S E C Plating in Belmore, the police originally cited the emergency riot powers in relation to charges against Ms Thomas. Do you know how such an inaccurate use of protest or riot powers and charges could be invoked?

PETER THURTELL: My understanding was that that was an ill-informed action on behalf of the officers that did that. That was contrary to the advice they'd been given.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: Was that Assistant Commissioner McFadden?

PETER THURTELL: No, that would be the responsibility of the officers in attendance.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: Does that happen often?

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PETER THURTELL: That was subsequently corrected. When you say, "Does that happen often," if a police officer uses the wrong law part code in a matter before the court, then obviously, once we realise the mistake, we will change it. When you say, "Does that happen often?", I would suggest, no, but it does happen.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: Did that one concern you? There was that particular instance where we saw police rock up and think that they had move-on powers, which they didn't. They then said to the public, through the media, that it was riot powers. They then said that there was no misconduct or poor performance on the part of police. We've later learnt that perhaps a police officer was responsible for nearly blinding a woman. I accept there was a critical incident, but do you accept that this is a real problem?

PETER THURTELL: In relation to this particular incident, as you just mentioned, yes, it is the subject of a critical incident and that will be part of their review.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: I might start with, Mr Barnes. Out of curiosity, in the last two years, how much has the NSW Crime Commission confiscated?

MICHAEL BARNES: Crime proceeds confiscation has increased very significantly in the last couple of years. The function has been restructured organisationally. The personnel have changed. But, more importantly, the philosophy behind the capability has been reconsidered. We now see proceeds confiscation as a frontline disruption strategy. I think perhaps in the past it has been seen as a mechanism to impose a cost of doing business on criminals. We now see that restraining their assets, preventing them getting access to things like luxury cars, is itself a primary disruption strategy. It has more effect. Crooks are involved in organised crime to get money and to get the trappings of wealth that particular parts of the community seem to particularly enjoy.

It has changed in what we're seizing. We've unfortunately now got many second-hand high-end sports vehicles and lots of expensive watches. That creates problems. Our colleagues in New South Wales police help us store those, but it is an ongoing issue. More to the point, we've got lots more money from them as well. The 10-year average is about \$30.1 million. Last financial year we confiscated \$80 million. We've got another \$160 million restrained. That itself is an achievement because it means that people who previously had those assets and that wealth can't use it in the meantime.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: Is that \$80 million in cash or \$80 million in cash and value of assets that you've seized?

MICHAEL BARNES: That is the sum total of the orders that have been made forfeiting property. The cash is easy: It goes straight into the confiscated proceeds account. The real property and the fancy watches and fancy cars have to be sold by the public Trustee and Guardian.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: How long does that process take?

MICHAEL BARNES: Longer than it should. The Trustee and Guardian is not expert at selling luxury watches or cars. The real properties are fairly easy to liquidate, usually.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: Is there room for rethinking the way in which it is sold, like whether it is appropriate to have an auction house that is more familiar with selling this type of goods involved?

MICHAEL BARNES: That is certainly something that could profitably be explored. Some of these commodities—for example, there are some very expensive wristwatches that can't be even valued in Australia. A police officer has the burdensome task of flying to Singapore to get them authenticated and valued. As you can imagine, you can't just sell that in a lost property auction along with the pushbikes and everything else. It does pose a problem for the Trustee and Guardian.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: Where does the money go?

MICHAEL BARNES: Into a discrete account set up under the Criminal Assets Recovery Act. That can then only be used for specified purposes. Sometimes it seems that the Treasurer likes to see it as part of consolidated revenue, but the legislation that creates it says it can only be spent for law enforcement, victims of crime, drug prevention, education and the like.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: Do you have any oversight or awareness of how much is sitting in that fund and how much is being dispersed on those statutory aims?

MICHAEL BARNES: Lots of our law enforcement functions are funded by it. We indeed got an uplift for our IT system a couple of years ago through that fund, but it has a balance of about \$100 million at most times.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: That's a significant amount that is sitting there. Perhaps a question for you, Acting Commissioner: Can the police make application for use of that fund for various programs, or is there a relationship between you and the Crime Commission about those funds?

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PETER THURTELL: I'll ask Mr Hudson to answer that. He is chairman of one of our boards, relevant to that.

DAVID HUDSON: We do make application directly to the Treasurer, through the Minister, for access to that account. We funded certain technological capabilities three years ago in relation to the analysis of mobile phones through that. But ongoing, the recovered assets pool fund, which is \$5 million a year and \$2 million for crypto currency, is funded through that account. Through that account is what we conduct our controlled operations—our activities governed by a controlled operations authority that allows us to buy drugs or conduct undercover operations or online investigations. That's funded through that account.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: I come back to you, Mr Barnes. That \$80 million last year, of course, doesn't include any money realised from Mr Obeid and his proceeds of crime. Are you certain that tracing money through Mr Obeid's accounts is beyond the reach of your forensic accountants?

MICHAEL BARNES: As you're aware, the offences that generated that tainted money occurred in 2010 and 2011 and came to the Crime Commission in 2013. In 2015, the commission came to the view that there was nothing they could do to recover the money because of the complex discretionary trusts or corporate trusts into which the money had been paid. After Mr Obeid was convicted and his appeal was dismissed in relation to the offences that gave rise to that tainted profit, we again reviewed the matter. It's not so much the tracing of the funds; it's more the other obstacles to proving what needs to be proved under the current legislation.

There is also a significant risk that the defendant, Obeid, can say that he has been disadvantaged by the length of time, and he would apply for a stay in the court, which would have a reasonable prospect of success. There are all the other complicating factors. One of the more likely opportunities, rather than trying to seize individual property, is to look at unexplained wealth. That has a six-year limitation. We've made submissions to government that that should be removed. Were that to occur, that might provide another option for seeking to recover the funds.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: When you say "other obstacles", if I'm hearing you correctly, you could trace the funds, but you don't believe you could recover them because—

MICHAEL BARNES: We can trace money into some accounts, and we can trace some money coming out of those accounts. Proving that's the same money is very difficult when lots of money has come into those accounts. But if we're only looking for unexplained wealth, then we don't need to be as precise in showing the way through. Currently that is limited by a six-year statute of limitations.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: In terms of the comment you made earlier about a change in philosophy and seizing of assets being a major criminal disruptor, it appears that the lesson that certain white-collar criminals may learn from Obeid is to hire a really good accountant and you can retire well. Does that worry you?

MICHAEL BARNES: It's very concerning that the more successful a criminal is, the more advanced or mature or sophisticated technical advice they can get. There's no doubt that organised criminals are big adopters of technology and big acquirers of high-end legal and accounting advice. It's very concerning to us that there are lawyers and accountants out there who are willing to provide services to people they must suspect, in our view, are engaged in crime.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: What can be done about this? Because what everybody's seeing every day, while Mr Obeid gets to enjoy the proceeds of his actions, is that you can get away with it.

MICHAEL BARNES: I'm not sure he's enjoying it when he's banged up but, nonetheless, you're right that the money hasn't been recovered. I'd prefer not to talk in too much detail in a public forum about what can be done and what the barriers are because we don't want to necessarily alert people to ways that might defeat applications in future. But we're reasonably confident that there are opportunities to act against people like that, engaging in that activity. You know also that tranche two AML/CTF amendments come into effect next year—query whether that'll affect accountants and lawyers who are prepared to knowingly act for crooks in any way. It puts an obligation on them to do that, but whether or not they'll comply is a different question. It will make it easier to get those people out of the professions, which will make it harder for the crooks to gain access to the advice they need.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: But Mr Obeid keeps his cash.

MICHAEL BARNES: I'm not prepared to give up on that at this stage.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: That's good to know. If you would direct these questions, Acting Commissioner, where you believe they belong, I just have a couple more in relation to protests to clarify some things from this morning. There were reports that there were terrorist group symbols, flags and certainly chanting

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of protest slogans on the bridge. Is anything being done to follow up if there was any unlawful activity in any way connected with that Harbour Bridge protest?

PETER THURTELL: I will hand over to Mr McKenna if he's got any specific information, but let me just say this: With such a large crowd and what you've termed "reports" of these things happening, firstly, it has got to be sighted by a police officer if at the time he was expected to take action, and/or filmed, and/or somebody identifiable in amongst a crowd of 90,000 people who may have committed an offence for investigation, which is all problematic—let's face it—in such a large crowd during a protest operation. Although we had a lot of police on, compared to the crowd number, they're fairly well dispersed amongst that crowd and amongst the area. But, in relation to that specific protest and what you're talking about with the specific symbols, I think Mr McKenna did say this morning that that's being looked at. But I'll pass you over to Mr McKenna, just to give any clarification to that.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: I'd love to come to you in a minute, Mr McKenna, but if I can just ask a follow-up question first. I acknowledge what you've just said about size of crowd and size of police attending. I think there were similar explanations given in relation to the Opera House vigil that was interrupted by a crowd that marched on the Opera House in October two years ago now. The answer that I heard—and please correct me if I'm misstating—is that if the crowd of protesters sufficiently outnumbers the police attending, there is just no way that police are able to enforce particular breaches of the law that happen on that occasion.

PETER THURTELL: No, that's not the case at all. A protest crowd will always outnumber the number of police. However, if police in attendance identify an offence happening—or a potential offence that's happening—the police in attendance will attend to that. If subsequently something is brought to our attention, then we'll attend to it subsequently. That may well be reviewing video footage, reviewing statements made by people et cetera. Just as it happened with the Opera House protests, the same could happen in any other protest where subsequently we examine footage—audio, video—visual, witnesses et cetera.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: How many arrests were made in relation to the Opera House protest?

PETER THURTELL: None, but we did explain that at the time—that there was, A, no evidence—

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: I thought it was inability to identify any one particular person who had committed what were seen to be breaches of law, but we couldn't identify individuals. Wasn't that the case?

PETER THURTELL: Yes, that's the case.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: I guess that's my point, really, isn't it? Mr McKenna, have you got anything to add?

PETER McKENNA: Yes, certainly—a couple of things. Going forward and into these operations that we police in 2025, we have our police operation centre running. We have legal people in those operation centres. When police on the ground see and observe someone holding up a certain flag or symbol, often they're not very straightforward to us what they might be. They're photographed, videoed, sent straight back to the operation centre. The legal people look at them on the spot, and they tell us if there is an offence for that being a prohibited symbol or otherwise. If it is, then our stance is we will move forward and take the appropriate action. As I said, just holding a flag up is not necessarily an offence because the law says you must warn them and they must take it down. If they then place it up again, they are committing an offence and we will take action.

There were a number of flags on the Harbour Bridge when we went through that process. They did not fulfil the criteria of being a prohibited symbol or offence, even though the media reported that way. There is one matter where we're still trying to identify a person, and it relates to subsequent footage that we've seen, and that is all there was. The police were under no illusions—even though that was a reactive protest that we had to pull together pretty quickly, that still does not give people a right to commit serious offences. What we do say is we have a level of tolerance in protest. We have a level of tolerance for people's passions—for people's heightened emotions, at times. We don't have any tolerance for serious criminal offending. It doesn't matter what the size is.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: Was there an al-Qaeda flag being flown in the bridge protest?

PETER McKENNA: We've got no evidence that an al-Qaeda flag or a flag that was a prohibited symbol was flown.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: I have a photograph here from a news website where it said it's an al-Qaeda flag.

PETER McKENNA: Some of the flags—and we see this all the time—are just slightly changed. When they are changed even slightly, they no longer fulfil the prohibited symbol legislation.

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The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: If a swastika is slightly changed, does that still not convey the same message to those people who are seeing that symbol painted on a wall, for example?

PETER McKENNA: I can only tell you what the law says, ma'am.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: Are you saying to us that we need to consider changes to the law so that if something is perceived to be a terrorist symbol as well as being an actual symbol, it should be prohibited?

PETER McKENNA: That's a matter for politicians.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: Are we hearing that that stops police enforcement of what could be terrorist symbols and could be perceived by other people to be terrorist symbols?

PETER McKENNA: All we can say is that it's either an offence or not an offence under the law.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: If somebody is walking across the bridge with a hoodie that says, "Death, death to the IDF", is that permitted?

PETER McKENNA: Again, we'd take legal advice on that.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: And did you?

PETER McKENNA: I'm not aware of the situation you're talking about—

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: I've got a photo of it here.

PETER McKENNA: Well, I'd have to take it on notice if the police saw it or didn't see it.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: Great. Happy to—

PETER McKENNA: I know there are times where the police will interdict and tell someone to take a shirt off because they can see the potential for a breach of the peace—for other people being offended by it—so we're using discretion where we can. We're trying to be as sensible as we can, understanding that people have a right to protest, people have passions, people have heightened emotions. But the law is the law, and we have our legal advisers sitting right next to us—right next to the police commander—to say, "Yes, they have now committed an offence" or "No, that does not constitute an offence."

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: What training do frontline police have so that they can recognise flags and symbols of listed terror groups?

PETER McKENNA: They're all briefed about those prior to going out to the field. They're shown photos, PowerPoints—all of our public order and riot squad police, who are subject matter experts in this area, are all well aware of that. And, of course, we have the experienced legal officers in the police operation centre with us.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: Does that include training about flags and symbols and prohibited terrorist groups under Commonwealth law as well as State law?

PETER McKENNA: Absolutely.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: Right. What about chanting a slogan "From the river to the sea"? How does that sit, for example, with relation to 93Z of the Crimes Act?

PETER McKENNA: Once again, we would seek advice at the time from our legal experts as to what is considered an offence or not an offence.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: Did you seek advice about that?

PETER McKENNA: I'm not aware of that chant being—I wasn't in the Police Operations Command, but if there was a chant like that—

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: There was.

PETER McKENNA: Well, it would have been considered by the legal people if the police were aware of it.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: Why would the police not have been aware of it?

PETER McKENNA: I can only say to you that, as I sit here now, from the briefing and the debriefing of that operation, the police were well aware to look for prohibited symbols, those flags and chants that might fulfil the hate crime criteria. I don't sit here now saying I know that that is a chant that would fulfil that criteria or not, but our legal people would give us advice on that.

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The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: Perhaps on notice you could provide advice from your legal people about whether that chant does fulfil the criteria, especially in light of the statements of the Prime Minister that were made in relation to the proposed recognition of Palestine and his statements that, clearly, the Hamas slogan "From the river to the sea" envisages the non-acceptance of Israel as a state.

PETER McKENNA: It's got nothing to do with what the Prime Minister has or hasn't said.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: That's the meaning of it, isn't it?

PETER McKENNA: It's either an offence at law or not, so we can certainly take on notice if that chant is an offence at law or not.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: That doesn't colour the meaning of it? Make it clear what the meaning is?

PETER McKENNA: It makes no difference to us whatsoever.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: What about images of the Iranian leader being displayed?

PETER McKENNA: Once again, if it's not a prohibited symbol, it's not a prohibited symbol.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: Is it true that because of the Harbour Bridge protest, a pre-planned Israeli hostage vigil had to be cancelled?

PETER McKENNA: I'm not aware of that.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: I have information that that's exactly the case, but my time has expired.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: Commissioner Barnes, I'm just curious whether you think there is a role for the Crime Commission to be looking at the rise of far-right extremism and the rise of neo-Nazis in New South Wales right now. I know that it's not generally within the work that you scope and that you're undertaking at the moment, but do you anticipate that there may be a role for the Crime Commission?

MICHAEL BARNES: It depends what individuals with that ideology were to do. If they're simply sitting around thinking evil thoughts or even saying horrible things, I can't imagine that the Crime Commission would ever get involved. If they commit crimes, overt crimes of a serious nature, we would, in theory, have jurisdiction. But you'll appreciate we're a small organisation of 150 people. There is regrettably a lot, perhaps even escalating, serious and organised crime occurring in Australia generally, so the competition for our resources is intense.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: I was thinking more in relation to the rise and the mobilisation of that neo-Nazi, far-right extremist agenda and more thinking of your intelligence function around that and whether there's any role for that. But, yes, I do realise how constrained your resources and capacity is.

MICHAEL BARNES: We haven't, to date, been involved in any of those matters.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: If there was, would that come through the management committee that you have? Is that how it would come to you if there was?

MICHAEL BARNES: In theory. It's more likely it would be generated by one of our law enforcement partners who would request our assistance or the assistance of our intelligence analysts or access to our hearing power.

The CHAIR: Thank you, Commissioner. We can now grant you early release. You're bailed. I don't know whether you had any questions on notice but, if you did, the secretariat will be in contact with you. Thanks very much for your time.

(Michael Barnes withdrew.)

The Hon. MARK LATHAM: To the commissioner, I've been around politics a little while and always fascinated by this debate about the extremes of what's going on and dangerous people out there. Generally, in Australia, you'd find we're a fairly laid back to the point of apathetic nation, with a "she'll be right" sort of attitude about politics and everything else. Would I be wrong in saying that, out there, people who need to be monitored, people who might be dangerous—maybe on the far left there's probably a dozen Maoist communists who want to go on another long march and cause violence and trouble and, at the other end, a dozen so-called neo-Nazis. These aren't big groups, are they, that take up a lot of resources of the police? Talk of them emerging and increasing media hysteria about it is more hype, isn't it, than the reality of what we find?

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PETER THURTELL: I think it's fair to say that they are of such concern to us—the emergence of these groups and the rise of some individuals within these groups—that we have our Engagement and Hate Crime Unit and our counterterrorism command and our State intelligence group constantly monitoring the activities of these groups. We have, obviously, investigations in place as required into some of these groups, but I will defer to Mr Hudson, who is in charge of our counterterrorism and Engagement and Hate Crime Unit.

The Hon. MARK LATHAM: I'm just trying to get it in perspective of reality.

DAVID HUDSON: In relation to neo-Nazis, we've been monitoring the National Socialist Network for some time, well before their behaviour at North Sydney on Australia Day last year. We're very much monitoring them and their affiliations with a similar group in Victoria, where they seem to be more high profile than they are here. We've tracked them. They have training days in suburban areas in Sydney where they basically show up in their blacks and perform calisthenics with a high police presence. We do monitor them. They had a protest here outside Parliament in July, I think, where they declared themselves as a political party—White Australia—and that they were renouncing the National Socialist Network. That hasn't come to fruition. I think they needed 1,500 names on a petition to become an electoral party, which maybe they haven't achieved. I don't know. We don't see the issues here in New South Wales like they do in Victoria where the group emanated, but we are certainly mindful of them and monitor them.

The divergence of the threats that we face in New South Wales and broader Australia are really diverging from the religious based to different types of ideologies: far right, far left, mixed, and sovereign citizens. We've seen that result in violence down in Victoria recently, whether that individual is purely sovereign citizen or other mixed ideologies in him as well—because they're not normally violent. It's a very clouded threat picture out there for us at the moment but, luckily, they are limited numbers. We do have the known entity management system where we monitor a number of individuals through four tiers, and they move through those tiers depending upon their escalating behaviour as to what level of attention they get from police. We'll continue to do that, but it's certainly a different environment in New South Wales and Australia than it was, say, 10 years ago.

The Hon. MARK LATHAM: Yes, but there's something in the water in Victoria where it's more prevalent. Isn't it also true to say that since 1945 there's been Nazis involved in different types of politics in every country all over the world? I can remember Ross May "The Skull"—shamefully a St George supporter. He also ran for the seat of Werriwa, my old seat, in 1974 against Gough Whitlam and got about 100 votes if that, maybe 80 votes. So they've never got off the ground in registering parties. He ran as a candidate then and got a feeble amount of votes. But is this politics or mental illness? Because you'd have to be completely deranged, wouldn't you, to think that the Third Reich was a raging success that anyone needs to repeat in any sane form of society and political activity? These are people who are not the full quid, aren't they?

The Third Reich. How crazy would you be to go around thinking, "Let's do it again"?

DAVID HUDSON: Someone's ideology—what ideology they follow—others who follow other ideologies would consider bizarre but, for them, it's probably quite real. Whether that's mental health driven or whether that's just belief system driven—

The Hon. MARK LATHAM: In your monitoring of them, is there a mental health dimension? Islamic terrorists, who want to blow this building up or whatever, they've got to be mentally deranged as well. This is at all ends of the spectrum. Do you find this is a healthcare issue as much as a political one? In one extent, how are these people allowed on the streets?

DAVID HUDSON: I think the issue of mental health in terrorism generally is something that we've pushed here in New South Wales, through the Commonwealth, to get greater focus on. The Islamic terrorist threat—mental health was never raised as a defence by a terrorist. It diminishes their commitment to their cause if they claim that, so it was never properly explored. We're doing a lot of work now with academics and others in relation to the mental health aspect. Because of the divergence of ideologies, but also because of the radicalisation of youth to religiously motivated violence—which was the catalyst for the emphasis on exploring the links between mental illness and terrorism offences—a number of individuals have come to our attention, some resulting in diversion and some resulting in prosecution depending on the level of planning they've entered into. We're talking young people that were radicalised quite quickly and who were suffering from some form of autism and other disabilities.

The Hon. MARK LATHAM: In closing, I thank you for the work you do. As you say, it is a more clouded and complex environment than it's ever been before. We're a lucky country in this place, touch wood, in large part because of the work you do in this complex field of policing. Hopefully, you get all the resources and government support that you need to continue the track record that you've established.

DAVID HUDSON: Thank you.

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Ms SUE HIGGINSON: Acting Commissioner, I mentioned to the Minister this morning about on or around 22 July, when there was fairly clear video footage of a New South Wales police officer who pushed an Aboriginal woman to the ground, causing her to hit a pole and leaving her with sustained injuries, fractured ribs, severe concussion and a cut to her ear requiring ear glue. Are you aware of that? It took place in Bungendore.

PETER THURTELL: In Bungendore?

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: Yes.

PETER THURTELL: Which is Mr Pisanos' area.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: Are you aware of that?

PAUL PISANOS: Yes, I am aware of it.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: You've seen the footage?

PAUL PISANOS: I have seen the footage, yes. It was posted.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: Has the officer that was responsible for that been investigated? Are there any charges that that officer is facing?

PAUL PISANOS: The matter definitely was referred through to the complaint management team for Monaro Police District, which is where the officer is attached to. I haven't an update for you in terms of today. But it definitely was referred in there to have a look at the use of force and the overall circumstances.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: Did you not think with your assessment of what you saw—is that not a circumstance that would warrant an automatic stand-aside?

PAUL PISANOS: There are definitely interim management actions available, depending on circumstances, with matters such as this whether it's the use of force or another matter. It's a decision that is made locally by the complaint management team in regards to interim action and whether or not the officer should continue to perform duties. They are localised decisions.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: At this point, that officer is still an officer performing duties.

PAUL PISANOS: To the best of my knowledge, absolutely. Yes.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: Do you think that that's acceptable?

PAUL PISANOS: The decision rests with the local commander in terms of the risk of the officer continuing on duty. The matter has got to be reviewed in all its circumstances.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: What about the victim of the assault? Do you know anything about her? Is she getting the support she needs?

PAUL PISANOS: I don't know, so I can't respond.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: Commissioner, where would you say that police cultural awareness training in NSW Police Force is right now?

PETER THURTELL: In specifically what culture—Aboriginal culture? Are we talking about multicultural training?

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: Specifically First Nations culture, given they're still overpoliced at rates—

PETER THURTELL: We have cultural awareness training conducted for our students at the academy. We have cultural awareness training conducted for our officers. We have induction programs in police districts, where new arrivals to the district are inducted into the local Aboriginal cultures. We've got extensive training on cultural awareness.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: Would you measure it as extensive?

PETER THURTELL: Extensive availability of cultural awareness training, yes.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: That's good to hear it is extensively available. In terms of a mandatory component or the uptake of that, would you say it's a high level?

PETER THURTELL: I would have to take on notice the mandatory nature of it. Certainly for our student police officers, that's obviously part of the completion of their course. It's strongly encouraged in a lot of areas and mandatory in others. I'd have to take on notice the compulsory training component.

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Ms SUE HIGGINSON: If you could please let the Committee know if it's available, what cultural training is available—it might be an easier way to take it on notice—then the mandatory component and then whether there is a continuing professional development component for people who have been in the force for quite a long time.

PETER THURTELL: As new initiatives come to light with cultural awareness training et cetera, it's not only people that haven't completed something that do it. With officers, it doesn't matter how long you've been on the job. I know we've got training going at the moment. Only a couple of years ago, there was a number of assistant commissioners who went to that training. As I said, as new training becomes available and new initiatives come to light within our organisation, then often our officers are engaged in that training. Just on the point of Aboriginal cultural awareness, it's also important to remember that the vast majority of commands that have what I call significant Aboriginal communities within the district have all got Aboriginal liaison officers. They are in touch with our officers on a daily basis. They're in and around the station—that's where they work. They talk to them about cultural issues all the time.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: I'm aware of that, but a lot of that work gets reported. I'm not sure if you've seen the latest independent, Aboriginal-led report on Closing the Gap undertaken by Jumbunna, the institute at the University of Technology Sydney. They talk about the cultural load those individuals have to carry. The burden is far too much. The only way we're going to have genuine cultural awareness is not by those individuals alone carrying the cultural burden—or the "cultural load" as it's referred to.

PETER THURTELL: From an education perspective, certainly they don't carry the significant burden. I am not saying that there is not a burden on our Aboriginal liaison officers. They get pushed and pulled from all directions at times, but we don't rely on them solely for Aboriginal cultural awareness within the organisation.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: On 17 April this year the LECC released its final report that included the component looking at bail compliance checks. It concluded that there is a powerful argument that the police practice of entering a property to check a person on bail without obtaining a court-imposed enforcement condition or having a reasonable suspicion of a breach of bail is unlawful. What's the position at the moment? Has the force implemented the LECC's recommendation from the report about bail compliance checks?

PETER THURTELL: The LECC report is contrary to our advice from the Solicitor General, which says that we are operating within the law and we have the lawful right to do that.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: To enter into people's premises when you don't have a court order to do so?

PETER THURTELL: To ensure that court-issued bail conditions are being complied with.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: Commissioner Hudson, did you want to say something on that?

DAVID HUDSON: The Solicitor General's advice was about the implied licence and our lawful right to enter the lands to conduct a check.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: You've just got my legal brain ticking. So if the person put a little note on the door saying, "Any implied licence is revoked. You can't come and check me at my bail" then that would revoke that implied licence?

DAVID HUDSON: I'd have to get the Solicitor General's advice on that.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: That's right. We should talk to the Solicitor General. That's very interesting. And so, at this point in time, the New South Wales police position is that you're able to knock on the door but not enter the premises. Is that right?

PETER THURTELL: Yes. Without putting words in the LECC's mouth, I think if they had a firmer view on it they would have put it in a stronger way in their report. I think they are aware that there is that legal right for us to conduct compliance checks for court-issued bail. But I don't talk on behalf of the Law Enforcement Conduct Commission, of course.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: No, of course. With that, though, and the LECC report, has there been any impetus internally within the Police Force to look at a risk assessment tool about when you would? Given it's such a hot area, and a significant area, to go to somebody's premise to check on them—because the assumption has to be they're complying—is there something that officers undertake to make a decision whether to go or not?

PAUL PISANOS: I can answer that. It's a bit of work. We've definitely taken on board the LECC's position. I concur in regard to the interpretation of the implied licence, common-law right, to enter at this stage. Under, say, for example, Operation Soteria—which, as you know, I lead across regional and metro operations—definitely, enforcement conditions are sought in appropriate cases. I can't be specific about numbers, but I've

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certainly spoken to the prosecutors, as recently as yesterday, and it's definitely a matter of policy for us to seek enforcement conditions where appropriate. But we are reviewing our bail compliance check SOPs to make sure that they align with best practice in terms of how we are approaching bail compliance checks, recognising that that implied licence is still alive and well, but that an enforcement condition in the appropriate circumstances is definitely ideal in terms of enforcing those conditions around curfew, non-association, residential et cetera.

And recognising there are limitations in those enforcement conditions too—we can't force people to comply, but it gives us a tool for compliance, bearing in mind that implied licence exists for more than just bail checks. It effectively gives the police the right at common law to enter a property to make legitimate inquiries for a whole range of things that there might be a non-specific power under statute to do. It's a right that we have, and that's why the Solicitor General preserved it.

PETER THURTELL: Can I just say, on the issue of implied licence, we do have training every year for our officers and some of those training subjects are what we call mandatory training. Last year the issue of implied licence was a mandatory training subject for our officers. We have significantly improved, I would argue, the manner in which we do bail compliance checks. They are more directed, as opposed to random, and more intelligence driven, and there has been a significant decrease over the past few years in the number of bail compliance checks that we are doing.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: I have a couple of follow-up questions. Perhaps this is to you, Mr Hudson, but you may redirect it. We have the Operation Shelter costs, which we understand include protests but also other activities that were related to but not contained in Operation Shelter. Is it possible to give us figures for the cost of policing all the other protests not included in Operation Shelter?

DAVID HUDSON: That's not me.

PETER THURTELL: I might answer that. As we've said several times here today, the majority of protests occur within the Sydney area and, obviously, that's Sydney City which does a significant part of those. They are generally supported, if necessary, by officers from within Central Metropolitan Region, whether it be their enforcement squads or their high-visibility policing units or whatever. Most of those are conducted as on-duty policing operations and the commands within that area are appropriately resourced to take into consideration that workload that they do have for monitoring protest activity.

So when you talk about costs, they are on ongoing costs because they are done on an on-duty basis. The officers are rostered, the protest takes three hours and they'll be taken out of a particular shift for three hours and dedicated to that duty and/or put on for a whole shift to do that duty. So it's very difficult for us to break down the cost of policing protest activity when it's often part of their paid shift.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: I think you just said they might be put on for a shift because of the understanding that protest activity is occurring. If they're not doing a shift for that, then presumably they'd either be off-shift or the shift would be for some other policing work. Is it possible to determine how many shifts were specifically arranged? I'm sorry, I don't know the right verb.

PETER THURTELL: We can certainly take that on notice. The number of shifts that are dedicated to protest activity per year, I suppose, is what you'd like to know?

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: Yes, that would be very helpful. Also, I'm very conscious of the strain on police officers and the number who are called in off-duty or when they have a reasonable expectation of rest. So if you could also look at overtime, people called in for duty?

PETER THURTELL: If I use Shelter as the example of that, you have that amount of money for officers that are engaged in those Shelter protest activities over the past couple of years. Those officers come in, effectively, on a cancelled rest day, but they're not forced to come in. Usually, the officers put their hand up and say, "I'd like a bit of extra money. Yes, I'm happy to work on this particular day to come in and do the protest work." But just going back to the issue of the number of shifts, the difficulty with giving you a financial figure on that is that we would have to then go to the pay scale of every individual officer. I think the best we could do there would be an estimate based on a mean value.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: I'd be very happy with that. It would be good to have a firm-ish indication, without wanting to put you to extravagant amounts of work. I don't know whether this question is for you, Acting Commissioner, or you, Mr McKenna. In relation to the flags that might be close to being proscribed, I was reminded that we'd actually drafted legislation which we were hoping to bring to Parliament. Was anyone in the Police Force asked to advise in relation to that draft legislation?

PETER McKENNA: I certainly haven't been advised of that. If anyone, it would have been our legal people. We could take that on notice if you want us to.

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The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: Yes, if you could, that'd be great.

PETER McKENNA: No problem at all.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: I'd appreciate that. Is there a standing police view in relation to a chant such as "From the river to the sea"? Are there lists of proscribed and okay chants?

PETER McKENNA: No, it's more about does it fulfil that new hate crime legislation. Again, we would take our legal advice on that. They are subject matter experts on it.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: Is there standing legal advice in relation to some of the things that are commonly encountered at protests?

PETER McKENNA: No, unless there's a precedent, of course—certainly, then there would be. But otherwise, every one is taken on its own merits.

The Hon. NICHOLE OVERALL: Deputy Commissioner Hudson, if I could ask some questions of you, please. Mr Thurtell has raised constantly monitoring groups and the potential for terrorism threats. Are you able to provide figures of perceived terrorism threats that have been registered by New South Wales police surveillance in 2023, 2024 and so far this year?

DAVID HUDSON: I can take it on notice. We can provide the investigations conducted under the Joint Counter Terrorism Team, the Terrorism Investigations Squad and the security investigations unit of counterterrorism, by number, which deal with threat at varying levels.

The Hon. NICHOLE OVERALL: Can I also ask—again, probably, on notice—how many potential attacks have been prevented by New South Wales police surveillance in those same three years, '23, '24 and '25?

DAVID HUDSON: Yes. We've done preventative investigations and made arrests which have prevented significant incidents, and that's quite frequent. But we can provide those details as part of that investigative download.

The Hon. NICHOLE OVERALL: And possibly a bit of a breakdown in that—how many individuals have been arrested in relation to terror offences in those time frames as well.

DAVID HUDSON: Certainly.

The Hon. NICHOLE OVERALL: Would you, very generally speaking and again off the top of your head, without having the figures to hand, generally hold that those figures are increasing?

DAVID HUDSON: I think they're diverging away from what we've historically seen as religiously based violent extremist threats to a more diverse set of threats, whether it be left-wing, right-wing or mixed ideologies, and a range of different threats that we are seeing, including an increased radicalisation of youth online. The threat landscape is certainly different than it was 10 years ago.

The Hon. NICHOLE OVERALL: Much more complex in all of that, and so difficult and challenging to deal with?

DAVID HUDSON: Much more. But we still see a lot of religiously based violent extremism as well. I've actually challenged our people: Do we find that a lot still because that's what we're good at looking for, because that's what we're used to looking for over the last 20 years? However, we're getting very adept at finding and detecting other threats within our community as well.

The Hon. NICHOLE OVERALL: Earlier this morning we talked about the figures for the Counter Terrorism and Special Tactics Command unit, and you advised me that the number is 792?

DAVID HUDSON: Yes, there's a number of different units under that, including the Security Management Unit, which I always forget, unfortunately—I only just recently inherited them back—the special constables that guard these premises and everywhere else.

The Hon. NICHOLE OVERALL: God bless them.

DAVID HUDSON: Yes, God bless them, but they're included in those numbers as well. The Tactical Operations Group, Public Order and Riot Squad, the investigative component and the intelligence function are the ones directed directly at the threats that we're talking about, and it's just probably 130 individuals that are focused on that.

The Hon. NICHOLE OVERALL: Okay, so the 792 is the holistic figure for all of those units?

DAVID HUDSON: The command, yes.

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The Hon. NICHOLE OVERALL: And that's the current strength?

DAVID HUDSON: Yes.

The Hon. NICHOLE OVERALL: What is the authorised strength?

DAVID HUDSON: They do have vacancies, but probably not as many vacancies as the front line does. Most of the vacancies within our organisation gravitate to the front line because, after their tenure has finished, people apply for progression to different areas of the organisation. Whilst some of those transfers are held up because of shortages in the front line, when there are classes that graduate from the academy they are released, so we do have vacancies.

The Hon. NICHOLE OVERALL: Do you have an idea of those numbers?

DAVID HUDSON: I don't have that in front of me. We're normally occupying 85 per cent full occupancy, but I'd have to check where we are currently.

The Hon. NICHOLE OVERALL: It would be helpful if you're able to do that as well, but that's where it's normally at. Given the divergence and the growing complexity around the situations that you're dealing with, if there are these vacancies, is anything being done specifically in attending to this and addressing how that might be better complemented in order to reach the authorised strength?

DAVID HUDSON: As I said, to fill those positions totally, you'd have to take them all off the front line.

The Hon. NICHOLE OVERALL: So they're essentially not taken from anywhere else except the front line?

DAVID HUDSON: Some transfer in from State Crime Command, and then the State Crime Command positions get filled by the front line.

The Hon. NICHOLE OVERALL: But quite difficult to fill.

DAVID HUDSON: There's a lot of churn throughout our organisation as people look for further development opportunities and different diverse careers within the organisation. One of the benefits of being in the police is the diverse careers that you can have, from forensics to investigative to general duties to dog unit to mounted unit to a variety of different things. People look for different things at different parts of their career. We don't have trouble recruiting individuals to the counter-terrorism command. But, obviously, we're recruiting off other units within the NSW Police Force.

There is always a staged release of individuals from the front line or from other commands, and that's managed. If there are disputes between commanders then there's a dispute panel that resolves those, but we don't have trouble filling vacancies or recruiting to the command. But there's always going to be churn going through it, which is healthy for the command as well.

The Hon. NICHOLE OVERALL: Thanks, Mr Hudson, I appreciate that. Back to you, if I can, please, Mr Thurtell. Still going on numbers, how many full-time equivalent police officers do we have in the New South Wales police as of today?

PETER THURTELL: I think those statistics were read out by the Minister earlier this morning. About 15,300, I think it was, full-time officers—actual officers, as opposed to authorised numbers. Yes, 15,962.

The Hon. NICHOLE OVERALL: Sorry, I'm just confirming that that whole figure is full-time equivalent—FTE?

PETER THURTELL: Yes.

The Hon. NICHOLE OVERALL: I just wanted to clarify that part of the information, thank you. How many new recruits were sworn into the New South Wales police last calendar year, 2024?

PETER THURTELL: It was approximately a thousand. Rashelle, is that right? About a thousand. I'll just clarify the exact number—735.

The Hon. NICHOLE OVERALL: How many officers left in 2024?

PETER THURTELL: Rashelle will get you the exact numbers maybe, but we have an attrition rate of approximately 7 per cent at the moment.

The Hon. NICHOLE OVERALL: Is that an increase? Is it stable?

PETER THURTELL: It's an increase on some previous years. I think it's starting to go down. But it's not unhealthy for an organisation to have an attrition rate of somewhere around 5 per cent or 6 per cent. We're in

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the ballpark of the attrition rate that a healthy organisation has, with people leaving and changing careers et cetera. I think at the moment it's approximately 7 per cent and falling slightly.

The Hon. NICHOLE OVERALL: That's the 2024 figure that you're looking at. Into 2025 as well, is it still around that 7 per cent mark?

PETER THURTELL: Yes.

The Hon. NICHOLE OVERALL: Are there specific regions or departments that are facing more acute shortages of police personnel?

PETER THURTELL: Sorry, could you repeat that?

The Hon. NICHOLE OVERALL: Specific regions or departments within the State that are feeling shortages more acutely?

PETER THURTELL: I think it's fair to say that the frontline commands are the ones that are feeling it the most because their workload—in fact, no workload has gone down. But our police districts, our police area commands, probably feel it the most acutely because they're the ones that provide that 24/7 police coverage right across the State. As for whether there are some commands that are experiencing it worse than others, yes, that is the case. There are some commands, particularly in police districts, that find it hard to attract officers—experienced officers—from within the organisation to go out to some of those more—

The Hon. NICHOLE OVERALL: Regional areas, specifically?

PETER THURTELL: Yes, some areas. We talked about Tenterfield this morning with three out of eight remaining unfilled, despite the fact that they've been advertised. There are examples like that of commands where those frontline police are probably bearing the majority of the burden.

The Hon. NICHOLE OVERALL: What's happening with smaller stations? I'll just go from my own area, Monaro, so Bungendore, Captains Flat, Nimmitabel et cetera. They only have one officer attached to those stations. Are we finding that, in regional and rural areas, stations are having to be closed because we don't have officers able to be attached?

PETER THURTELL: Mr Pisanos is in charge of regional New South Wales, so he might add something to this, but, as a general rule, those lock-up keeper positions, which is what you're referring to, come with a police residence. Young people are attracted to those because they come with a 3 per cent rent, which is effectively your accommodation has been provided for you. It's an opportunity for them to save some money and change their way they live down the track. As a general rule, those lock-up keeper positions are filled but I'm not suggesting that they're all 100 per cent filled all the time. There are obviously areas that struggle.

The Hon. NICHOLE OVERALL: I think there was quite some time where Delegate, for example, didn't have anyone and they were crossing over the border, so there were cross-jurisdictional problems with that as well. You'd suggest the same, Mr Pisanos, with how that's tracking?

PAUL PISANOS: Yes, I think that's a fair statement. There are 329 individual police station lock-ups across regional New South Wales.

The Hon. NICHOLE OVERALL: That's just regional?

PAUL PISANOS: Yes. It's a significant footprint. I think it's fair to say that it's well known among this group that it's based around a very old model where the police stations were roughly one day's horse ride apart. It's literally the footprint that we're still maintaining.

The Hon. NICHOLE OVERALL: I love the history, but—

PAUL PISANOS: It's a great history, but it doesn't help our communities. So what we do is we effectively deploy our police based around the risks, the workload. We offer the incentives—I know in some locations we're actually adding to the incentives money, further money, to what would otherwise be attached to them. That's within the scope of our HR command, and particularly our western region commander, to actually add additional cash incentives for getting people out to remote locations, as well as, as Mr Thurtell said, the rental advantages.

The Hon. NICHOLE OVERALL: So that's working, but obviously not as well as we would like it to be working.

PAUL PISANOS: It's subject to the same staff shortage as the whole organisation. We manage those deployments. I know that every time a class attests there's a lot of work goes into actually looking at the allocations. It's a really consultative process, more so now than ever. It's about really identifying where we need

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to get those police out to in terms of both metro and regional. So it's based on crime; community need; topical issues; Cop in your Home Town recruitment; First Nations recruitment, getting First Nations police—there are good numbers of First Nations police in every class—back to places that they want to work. It's very consultative, and a lot of science goes into where we're putting our police based around need. But sharing and clustering based around where community need is at the moment is really critical, working with our local mayors, our MPs et cetera. So there is a lot of thinking and a lot of work.

Your region commanders, assistant commissioners advocate really strongly—very passionately, in fact. It becomes horsetrading, "I want an extra five." "I'll give you five." It's an interesting process at the moment, but it's getting better. I think it's close to 5,000 hits in terms of recruitment—Rashelle, sorry for taking your thunder here—since 2023, when the actual offer of payment commenced. There are just under 5,000 individual hits and recruitment applications, as well as interest shown in policing. So it's a significant, significant piece of work there and it is a really good sign. And our professional mobility, as in people coming in from other jurisdictions, is rising due to the pay rises and everything like that. So it's pretty positive signs.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: A last question on numbers, probably to you, Ms Conroy. Are you able to give us the numbers of FTE working police, not authorised strength, per police district?

RASHELLE CONROY: Yes, I can. I can read that out at the region level, if you'd like?

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: Yes, that would be great. Thank you.

PETER THURTELL: That's 56 read-outs, do you realise?

RASHELLE CONROY: I can just read it out at the region level, if you'd like?

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: We'd like it per police district. Are you able to provide it on paper, perhaps? Is that possible?

RASHELLE CONROY: Yes.

Dr AMANDA COHN: I've got a couple of questions about Task Force Atlas. My first question was around recommendations 10 and 11, the unsolved homicides. Can you provide an update on where that work is up to?

PETER THURTELL: At the start of when Task Force Atlas was formed, there were 213 matters that were yet to be reviewed. A significant number of those have been reviewed. I do have the stats in here; I'll turn to those in a minute. At last count, three of those matters had been referred to the unsolved homicides unit for reinvestigation. I will get that, but a significant number of the 213 have been reviewed.

Dr AMANDA COHN: I appreciate you might be about to take numbers on notice, but how many of those 213 have yet to be examined?

PETER THURTELL: Yes, that's what I was saying. I'll get that for you in a minute.

Dr AMANDA COHN: I understand, as well, that Task Force Atlas is looking at training relating to the hate crime unit—specifically, how to identify a hate crime and when to engage with the hate crime unit. Can you provide an update on the status of that work?

PETER THURTELL: Yes. In conjunction with UTS, there was training established for the hate crime unit specific for officers within the organisation. I think, at last count, we'd put 100 officers through that significant four-day training. We are designing training for our officers in general and there is a component that will go in the student police officer training as well. We have created our LGBTQIA+ Consultative Committee, which has an assistant commissioner in charge, and they meet four times a year, similar to our other multicultural advisory committees and our Aboriginal consultative committees. So there's been a significant amount of training for our officers in relation to that hate crime.

Dr AMANDA COHN: Of those 100 who've completed the more extensive training program, how were those 100 officers identified?

PETER THURTELL: I think it was self-nomination.

DAVID HUDSON: Unsolved, too, were a priority.

Dr AMANDA COHN: Sorry, I didn't catch that.

DAVID HUDSON: For the hate crime course with UTS, it was the Unsolved Homicide Team and the Engagement and Hate Crime Unit and different components of the counterterrorism command. We've also had

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officers from interstate wanting to engage with it as well. They've registered for it. I think close to 200 have completed it now.

Dr AMANDA COHN: Is there any evaluation of success or otherwise of that training program, noting that it's very new?

DAVID HUDSON: There will be, after the first cohorts have completed it. We'll look at the impact that's had on the organisation. The hate crime training is significant across the organisation anyway. There's a package online that had to be completed by all officers within the organisation, which has been done last financial year. The UTS program is additional to that for those specialist areas that deal with this environment more frequently. Many officers from, say, the eastern suburbs of Sydney have also completed it because of their exposure to antisemitic behaviour or whatever through the normal course of their daily duties.

Dr AMANDA COHN: I'll stick with Task Force Atlas for now. There's obviously significant community interest in the progress of that work. I know there was a specific recommendation around the progress on some of the recommendations being made public earlier, and I was able to access that information on your website. More broadly, when will you report back to the public on the progress that's being made?

DAVID HUDSON: Mr Thurtell took the lead on that in his former role because of the independence to my commands, but I think it's government reporting back on it. We report to government on it.

PETER THURTELL: Yes, that's correct. There are independent reviews being conducted annually by somebody nominated by the Government. Can I just take you to one of your previous questions? Of the 213, 114 unsolved homicide cases have been assessed, and 29 of those have been assigned for reinvestigation. To date, 13,000 New South Wales police officers have completed the hate crime and awareness training, which is obviously online. As I said before and Mr Hudson confirmed there, 100 officers have completed the 12-week policing hate crime course through UTS. Obviously Task Force Atlas continues to operate and will continue for years to come to make sure that the recommendations of the special commission of inquiry are complied with and that our organisation doesn't lose focus.

Dr AMANDA COHN: Thank you. In my last 30 seconds, I asked the Minister this morning about the progress being made towards a health-led response to mental health emergencies. Notwithstanding that this may not be a police responsibility moving forward, I understand that there is a current New South Wales police mental health division. What are the priorities for change for that division at the moment?

DAVID HUDSON: The mental health command was established a little while ago—not quite 12 months ago—led by a superintendent, Kirsty Hales, who was the individual that went to the UK and identified different models. Probably the biggest progress so far is in relation to general training for all NSW Police Force staff, apart from engaging through the working groups with Health to develop a new model. The training to be delivered to all staff is quite revolutionary in relation to having lived experiences from individuals and having interviewed the families of people who have lost their lives from their engagement with police.

It is quite a strong message that's sent through to the individuals. We've presented it to the commissioner of the Law Enforcement Conduct Commission, who asked us to present it to the entire Law Enforcement Conduct Commission—Kirsty undertook that role—because of the message and the strength of that training. That's been delivered and rolled out to all of our staff across the commands, delivered by the education officers.

Dr AMANDA COHN: Thank you. I'm out of time.

The CHAIR: We'll now take a break and come back in 15 minutes.

(Short adjournment)

The CHAIR: Commissioner, we've heard most recently that the ISIS brides are now being smuggled back into Australia by the Federal Government. Do the New South Wales police have a role in this repatriation at all?

PETER THURTELL: Without deferring the question, I will hand over to Mr Hudson because he has had some communications in relation to that, if that's okay.

DAVID HUDSON: We are still working through that issue with the Commonwealth. The roles have yet to be finalised between what the New South Wales Government, including the NSW Police Force, and the Commonwealth's roles, will be. No doubt we will have a role, as will the broader New South Wales Government, as we have done with previous returning brides of foreign fighters and children of such.

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The CHAIR: Yes, my next question was going to be, if so, what role? There have certainly been things like this in the past. What sort of role did the New South Wales police fulfil in relation to these type of matters?

DAVID HUDSON: Security of their return, but in conjunction with the Australian Federal Police and other Commonwealth agencies. As I said, the roles of each agency have yet to be determined. If the AFP doesn't play as significant a role as they have previously, we will. We'll have to work that out. We've got some meetings next week in Canberra aligned with the Australia-New Zealand Counter-Terrorism Committee meeting, where I'll try and explore that further. Obviously, the New South Wales Government has a huge role with Justice, Health, Education and everyone else in the reintegration of these individuals back into New South Wales society, as we have done previously.

The CHAIR: That's right. Obviously, other branches of the New South Wales Government have a role. You'll probably have a role too. Would that role actually encompass surveillance as well?

DAVID HUDSON: Not necessarily. It depends on what threat is posed by these individuals. That is an assessment that's underway at the moment. Whether there are charges that should be preferred against individuals, that assessment's being made at the moment.

The CHAIR: That was going to be my next question. Are you aware of, and do New South Wales police have any role in, enforcing charges against them, if any?

DAVID HUDSON: Potentially, bearing in mind it's an offence to be in a conflict zone in Syria, where many of these individuals have been. Whether that's proven or not and whether we can prove that, and whether we can prove that they have previously been members of a terrorist organisation or are currently members of a terrorist organisation, I don't know. We'd need to work through all that. I don't think the repatriation is imminent. I think we have a little bit of time before it's proposed. I think it's caused by the closure of the internationally displaced persons camp in Syria by the Americans. It's been shut down, so occupants of that camp have to be moved, and the proposed individuals are Australian citizens.

The CHAIR: Maybe this is not a question for you. Commissioner, on a more mundane matter, if—and I suppose it happens all the time or on a pretty regular basis—New South Wales works for or with the Federal Police, do you actually get reimbursed by the Federal Government for time and materials?

PETER THURTELL: Yet again, I'm going to have to defer to Mr Hudson because there are some joint investigations from terrorist-related investigations et cetera where I think there's a joint funding arrangement. But, as a general rule, if we investigate a Federal offence, for example, no, we don't get reimbursed by the Commonwealth. If it's a terrorist-related investigation, I'll ask Mr Hudson to give information on that. But, as a general rule, no, unless there's some sort of emergency-related funding.

The CHAIR: Unless there's specific funding for that particular investigation that provides some budget for you that you can claim—that's what you're really saying, isn't it?

DAVID HUDSON: We don't charge the AFP for our time. I think, historically, there have been some charges for petrol for *The Nemesis*, our police boat, when they've used it exclusively for a Commonwealth operation and nothing to do with us. But that's a long time ago, I think.

The CHAIR: Getting back to our line of questioning earlier, talking about firearms owners again, are New South Wales police officers permitted to search a firearm owner's home at any time, day or night, to establish safe storage without proof of other criminal intent?

PETER THURTELL: As a general rule, no. We don't search somebody's home to establish safe storage. It's generally through negotiation of an arranged time and/or over electronic devices. But we don't go in and search someone's home for compliance with the Firearms Act without due cause.

The CHAIR: Is it the practice of New South Wales police to use highway patrol officers to persuade licensed firearms owners to gain access to inspect their firearm storage?

PETER THURTELL: In some regional areas, some of the firearms storage inspections may be assigned to highway patrol officers purely to conduct while they're out and about. But, as a general rule, most storage inspections aren't conducted by highway patrol. But I'm not saying that they don't conduct any.

The CHAIR: That would still be conducted under the same sort of general guidelines and rules that you mentioned earlier.

PETER THURTELL: Yes, exactly the same. They're police officers with the same powers, the same authority, the same compliance and the same policies.

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The Hon. MARK LATHAM: I come back to Mr Hudson on the question of antisemitism. The Minister earlier today said in relation to the involvement of the Iranian Government that she thought there were two incidents identified by the Federal authorities, but I saw a report that they left it open that there could be more than just the two. What sort of information can you provide the Committee in that regard? There's a foreign agent that seemingly pays no-hopers and desperates here to do these things on their behalf.

DAVID HUDSON: I think the incident that was nominated by the Director-General of ASIO, relevant to New South Wales, was the Lewis' Continental Kitchen, which he named—and, in addition to that, the synagogue in Melbourne. We don't have evidence—and bearing in mind that ASIO deal in a different environment than we do. We deal with evidence and put it before the court; they deal with intelligence assessments. We're proceeding with our charges. The attacks that were investigated under Pearl and Kissinger have matters before the courts, and we'll continue to prosecute those matters. But we're unaware of any other—or security agencies haven't declared any other incidents to us that are potentially the subject of their assessment.

The Hon. MARK LATHAM: With the Dural caravan hoax, was it ever established how many other activities, so-called attacks, were funded by this crim who is hiding out in Turkey? Certainly, in the media coverage of it—I remember saying to my eldest son at one point, "You could go over to Dover Heights or Bondi and just put a bit of random graffiti on, and they must sit back the next night and think, 'Oh, jeez, I'm the lead item on the news.'" In the psychology of some of these clowns, that's something they do. Did you ever establish, in the caravan inquiry and out of it, how much of that was happening—that people were just being paid to go to do these things, almost like an attention-seeking exercise, not genuine antisemitic ideology?

DAVID HUDSON: Our investigation would suggest that they were very well-coordinated through a group that was directed by the individual responsible, and who has admitted on television interviews he was responsible for the caravan. He was providing that information to the AFP as a source, until that source was discredited, as we've indicated previously in this room. But whilst he admitted in an ABC interview to being responsible for the caravan, it is our belief he was responsible for all of them.

The Hon. MARK LATHAM: For the purposes of your investigations and the classifications given to these various incidents, how do the police define antisemitic ideology?

DAVID HUDSON: Antisemitic ideology is a hatred of Israel and the Jewish people.

The Hon. MARK LATHAM: Does it have to go to Israel? You can have a geopolitical view of the Middle East that it would be a better place without Israel. It's not my view; I've ascribed to the opposite all my adult life. But does it have to go to Israel or just the Jewish people?

DAVID HUDSON: It depends. It's a very difficult definition. It's not an official definition, but antisemitism is a hatred of the Jewish people, which can extend to the State of Israel as well.

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: I'm not sure who to direct this to, so I will direct it generally and you tell me who to give it to.

PETER THURTELL: We'll redirect it if necessary.

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: I want to talk about the police's use of facial recognition technology, which we've discussed in previous estimates. In response to some questions I put on notice, I was told that although New South Wales police were using a commercial product from Cognitive Systems, there have been updates that the NSW Police Force didn't subscribe to. And then you said, "In February 2025, a decision was made to disable this capability within the suspect identification system." I understand that the Cognitec software is integrated into PhotoTrac. Can you tell me exactly how you can turn off that facial recognition component within the software?

PETER THURTELL: Unless Mr Hudson has an answer, I'd have to take that on notice.

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: Do you know if Cognitec technology is still being used in some form in the PhotoTrac system?

PETER THURTELL: No, I'd have to take that on notice as well.

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: I understand that in 2018 NSW Police Force employees that were attached to the Strategic Intelligence and Capability Command internally adapted an existing open-source facial recognition system called FaceNet, and the system, adapted for use by the facial recognition unit, was internally branded as NYX. Is there some form of facial recognition being used within FaceNet or the NYX systems within the Police Force?

PETER THURTELL: I apologise, but that's another one I'm going to have to take on notice.

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Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: Do you know, just on a high-level basis, if facial recognition is currently being used within the NSW Police Force in any form?

PETER THURTELL: We do at—do you want to answer that?

DAVID HUDSON: I can, Commissioner. We've used facial recognition capability within New South Wales police since 2012, I think, in different forms. It depends upon what you're talking about. The facial recognition unit will compare photographs to our criminal history photos—photographs taken at the time of charge—and we've had some success with that. For those old records—we don't run it against broader databases, only what we currently have on record from offender photographs.

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: I raised it a couple of years back because there had been research showing that Cognitec in particular had a racial bias built into it. That was the reason for asking about its use then. I know, from the answers that we were provided then, that New South Wales police were using it. I understand if you need to take this on notice, but are you able to let us know exactly why it was suspended? Was it because of the racial bias? Was it because you moved to a different product?

DAVID HUDSON: I think we moved to a different product. But you must bear in mind that whatever product is generated through facial recognition is not evidence; we use it as intelligence. There needs to be a human factor in it. It might give us investigative leads that need to be pursued, but it's not used as evidence before a court to say that photo and that CCTV capture is this person on our records, and therefore we prosecute that individual just based on that evidence. Obviously, it's a line of inquiry provided to investigators, which they can pursue.

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: Can you tell me about the police's use of Fivecast's ONYX platform?

PETER THURTELL: I can't, but we can take it on notice.

DAVID HUDSON: It's a product that the State Intelligence Command do use, but I'll have to get back with some specific details.

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: I understand that Fivecast ONYX is currently being used by the Trump administration to scrape and analyse open-source data, including social media, to assist ICE agents in detaining people that the Trump administration has decided should be detained. This is a predictive, broad analytical tool. Fivecast say that they have built it in collaboration with Australian authorities in order to build person-of-interest networks. Is that what the New South Wales police are using it for?

DAVID HUDSON: We use a range of products available in the intelligence function to generate intelligence and link individuals. But, as I said, like all intelligence, it's not used as evidence; it's used to give investigative direction to certain matters. We don't use capabilities without human intervention. It's part of our ethical framework. Whatever leads intelligence capabilities might deliver to us, they still need to be humanised through an investigative focus.

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: Did police have to get legal advice from the Premier's Department on the use of ONYX?

DAVID HUDSON: I'll have to take that on notice. I'm unaware.

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: I understand that New South Wales police are also using FaceNet, which is a military-grade, open-source intelligence platform used to detect sentiment and emotion, trawling through people's online activity in order to predict when they might commit a crime. Is that something that New South Wales police are using?

DAVID HUDSON: I think there are products that we have trialled in relation to trying to assess public sentiment in relation to protests and other matters, but I don't think we've landed on a product or a policy in relation to that.

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: That's interesting because I know we asked a couple of years ago about the use of predicting emotions in, I believe it was, the Sydney Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras. We asked and we got sort of told that perhaps it was being used there, and we did ask questions about whether it was being used. Do you remember if it was being used then? Maybe take it on notice.

DAVID HUDSON: As I said, we've trialled a number of different things at different times of our organisation's history in relation to getting products that can assist us in ensuring public safety. But I couldn't tell you which ones at what times at this stage.

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: But you're using Fivecast to predict protests?

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DAVID HUDSON: I'm not too sure what components of Fivecast we're using. The company produces various different capabilities, like most companies do in the intelligence field. I think we are a client of Fivecast, but I'd have to get back to you on the exact nature of that relationship.

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: I understand there has been quite a lot of criticism of the use of mood and sentiment analysis in surveilling protests and things, and that it's not actually a very good tool. I'd be interested to see, perhaps on notice, if you could let me know where it's being used and on what basis it's being used.

DAVID HUDSON: We can do that.

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: As you say, I'm sure it's not the only thing that you use before you take action, but it's interesting to know the extent it's being used.

DAVID HUDSON: Whatever we're trialling at different times or having a look at to see if it's beneficial to us, we would not be taking action based purely on an outcome from a technical product. As I said, there's human intervention in everything we do—a human lens placed on everything, including facial recognition and any other product.

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: Could you also let me know if the agreement that you have with Fivecast, if you are using Fivecast, also allows them to use the data that you are collecting in the use of that for their greater database, and what the privacy is around that?

DAVID HUDSON: I'd be surprised, but we can clarify that for you.

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: I come back to the domestic and family violence questions that I was asking earlier. Mr McKenna, we were talking about misidentification and I said I'd come back to you about that. I'm looking at the figures from the New South Wales Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research, who were saying that 64 per cent of women brought before the courts on DV charges between July 2022 and June 2023—so just that year—were previously known to be victims of DV assault. That doesn't indicate that they're possibly misidentified, but it is an alarming number of people, especially when you then pair it with the LECC report that talks about the misidentification of victims and the primary aggressor remaining an issue, and the DVDRT reports in relation to the misidentification of women who have then gone on to be victims of domestic homicide. What are the police doing to upskill police officers to ensure misidentification doesn't occur as commonly?

PETER McKENNA: First of all, DCJ has a working party on this that I've been liaising with. They concede that they still haven't been able to land on a definition of misidentification. They concede that the issue about retaliatory violence versus self-defence is still a live issue. They have given us some information, but it has been redacted to the point that we can't actually say that it is a case of misidentification or not. Despite all of that, our SOPs and our training—not only coercive control training, but also our DV fundamental training course—all have components of identifying the DV offender.

I suppose we don't use the term "primary aggressor". We don't use the term "misidentification". It's more about who is the actual DV offender in the situation, and it's about gathering all of the appropriate evidence at the time at the scene—whether that be physical or otherwise—to make sure we're doing a thorough investigation so we get it right.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: Acting Commissioner, I come back to the issue of prisoner transfers and police responsibility. I'm conscious this is an issue that we have raised on a number of occasions. Is it soluble or is the problem that Corrective Services don't have the staff to manage prisoners if they're, for example, at a week's hearing at a location that is a long way away from a Corrective Services facility?

PETER THURTELL: That's basically what it comes down to, yes. Corrective Services don't have as many locations as we do and don't have people at every court. Traditionally, they have relied on the NSW Police Force to assist in that role, but have acknowledged it's primarily their responsibility.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: Can we do anything to lift the burden on police? Is it being more keenly felt because it's occurring in areas where police strength is low, or is it also occurring in areas where police strength is at the authorised strength?

PETER THURTELL: The actual strength of the police district or police command is really irrelevant to the issue—apart from the fact that, as you've pointed out, it places a burden on them when they're short staffed, but that still places the burden regardless. In relation to whether it's better or worse at some locations, yes, it is worse at some locations because of it might be the frequency of hearings or the frequency at which police are engaged. The solution, obviously, is that Corrective Services take over or put more personnel towards the roles that they've acknowledged are primarily their roles.

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Part of the push has also been the fact that it's fair to say over the last 40-odd years or something the police have started to creep into every single nook and cranny because we're the only 24/7 organisation that can assist in things. We are relied upon heavily by a lot of organisations to do things. We're trying to back out of those sorts of things, particularly areas where it is somebody else's responsibility. We're trying to get out of that. As I've said before, with Corrective Services acknowledging that's primarily their role, we're hoping that they will take over more of that burden.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: So you're hopeful that there could be a solution worked out in, let's say, a year's time or something?

PETER THURTELL: Both DCJ and Corrective Services are committed to putting a business case forward for additional resources and funding for them to reach further into regional areas, in particular, to do those prisoner transportations and court guarding.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: The bail hearings via AVL, does that need to be included in that same business case? What's the impact of that on police resources if a person is apprehended and there's a bail application but they come in after the cut-off?

PETER THURTELL: That only started in July. It's a little bit early for us to judge the success or otherwise of the AVL centralised court. But, yes, there is a court cut-off. I don't have the stats up until present, but I remember in the first couple of weeks of the operation on it, there were effectively 16 requests for late admission into the court, and 11 of those were granted. So there were only five of the 16 that weren't granted that were obviously required to be kept in police custody overnight. As I said, I don't have the results, but there is facility for the police to make application to the registrar of the court to get late entry.

It's not as if the courts stop at midday; they just don't accept the applications. But there is a facility. And we do have, as Mr Hudson mentioned earlier, the assistant commissioner on that working group as well. She puts any concerns from the organisation to the working group. I haven't been briefed of late that there are any significant concerns at the moment, but it's still way too early to evaluate how well it's going to end up going.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: I'm hearing some concerns that, for example, in a place like Quirindi, where there is no AVL link, a prisoner with a bail application needs to be transported to Tamworth, where there is an AVL link. Does that create the same sort of burden on police that prisoner transfers create on police?

PETER THURTELL: Yes, it would do. Quirindi, you mean?

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: Quirindi, about an hour out of Tamworth.

PETER THURTELL: They obviously would—regardless of the AVL, if they had a prisoner they would have to take it to Tamworth. The AVL just means they'd take it to Tamworth for the AVL. As far as I'm aware, they don't have holding facilities.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: When you say that generally the police are trying to be able to focus on your core responsibility, is that the case with respect to the discussions that have begun about PACER or what a new model of mental health response might look like?

PETER THURTELL: Sorry, could you repeat that question?

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: I'm aware that there are discussions, I understand, between police and Health and perhaps other parties about the best response to persons exhibiting problems that are related to mental health. The current model is commonly PACER, but there's a discussion about a new model. Is that the philosophy of the police, that you'd like to be not the first responders to mental health crises?

PETER THURTELL: Certainly. I think it's well known that police should be the last person somebody with significant mental health issues should be dealing with unless, of course, they pose a risk to themselves or a risk to the community. Ideally, the police are used in fewer and fewer circumstances involving people with mental health issues. It's best for police and it's best for the person involved.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: As a practical thing, though, if you get a call for assistance because of a person who, I don't know, might be running around with a knife or something, how do you know it's a mental health issue and how do you know it's a policing issue? Or is that just an insoluble problem?

PETER THURTELL: We would respond to that regardless because it's either a safety issue for the community or a safety issue for the individuals. If Ambulance were sent to that, even under a new arrangement, we would still go to that to protect the ambulance officers, because we're the ones that are properly trained and equipped to respond to that sort of thing.

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The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: It always needs to be a combined response, but the issue is how that works between the agencies.

PETER THURTELL: Yes. It's about better assessing the actual individuals and what they're experiencing and what the incident is so that we go to those ones which you gave a good example of. We go to those sorts of things regardless, but the ones where somebody's just talking to themselves and wandering up and down the street or whatever, Ambulance would attend to those sorts of things and/or some other NSW Health provider.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: I've got a couple of questions about RBT. Who could answer those for me?

PAUL PISANOS: Depends what they are. Possibly me.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: Just wondering what percentage of—I'm sorry, this is RDT—random drug tests and random breath tests have returned positive results each year since 2020, if you've got those figures and what direction they're heading in.

PAUL PISANOS: If I can start with drug-involved fatal crashes, over the five-year average up to 2023, which is how we and Transport work across that five-year average, 24 per cent of fatalities had a drug-associated factor as being involved, so cannabis to the tune of 69 per cent; methamphetamine to 43 per cent; cocaine, 7 per cent; and ecstasy, 5 per cent. That's to that total of 24 per cent involvement in fatalities for that five-year average. Alcohol, obviously, played a significant role as well. Forty-one per cent of fatalities over that five-year average involved speeding. In terms of our RDT—random drug testing—we're tracking again towards two million-plus tests for this year. We're well on target, and we still have a strike rate of one in 10 tests are leading to a positive reading for some prohibited drug. That's the current statistics from Traffic and Highway Patrol, and Transport.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: Mr Pisanos, did you have the figures for alcohol-involved fatalities?

PAUL PISANOS: Yes, I do. I'm just going to have to skim my notes. I've got a bit of a summary here. Just give me a moment.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: I'm happy to get it on notice if that's more convenient.

PAUL PISANOS: I've definitely got it here. I can come back to you with it.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: The other thing—perhaps this is also on notice—is what are the KPIs or the benchmarks to evaluate the effectiveness of police road safety operations in New South Wales?

PAUL PISANOS: We have a multifaceted approach. RBT is one significant factor of what we do. We certainly work largely towards 3½ million tests—that's where we're tracking again—plus targeted speed enforcement, plus random drug testing, certainly following the intelligence around regional and metropolitan locations where we have hotspots for serious collisions and fatalities. One of the big things that we're seeing emerging as a theme is, generally, driver behaviours, particularly around novice drivers and young drivers in speeding. Some of the significant speeds we're seeing—that definitely forms part of our targeting in terms of the way we're enforcing, certainly recognising the strong general deterrence of random breath testing on the side of the road, but understanding that we're targeting certain locations. Seventy per cent of fatalities occur in regional and remote roads. We definitely have targeted enforcement in those locations to track those areas where we are seeing those serious collisions and fatalities.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: What's the ratio of highway patrol officers to vehicles on New South Wales roads and how has that changed? Are we trending up or trending down or static?

PAUL PISANOS: As of September 2025, we had 7,441,475 registered vehicles on New South Wales roads, which is an increase of 1½ million vehicles since 2022. That includes, in terms of New South Wales licence holders, 7,082,123 licence holders across the spectrum in New South Wales as of September 2025. That's an increase of 156,000 since—sorry, it's an increase of 439 licensed drivers, permit holders, heavy vehicle licence holders since 2022. The Highway Patrol Command—in terms of staffing, I'll come back to you in a moment but it's currently, like everywhere, carrying some vacancies. The command is spread out right across New South Wales, performing a whole range of tasks.

The Hon. NICHOLE OVERALL: Mr Thurtell, can you let us know how many probationary constables are leaving within the first 12 months?

PETER THURTELL: I can certainly take it on notice. Rashelle, do you know that?

RASHELLE CONROY: I don't have those in front of me.

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PETER THURTELL: We'll take it on notice and get back to you for sure.

The Hon. NICHOLE OVERALL: Thank you. When recruits are coming to the academy, is there an analysis done on where they're coming from, their previous backgrounds, if it's not school or uni graduates?

PETER THURTELL: We may have that. I'd have to get back to you as well, but you've only got to go to one of the graduation ceremonies to see the racial diversity of the people that are there.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: We love to see it. It's great to see that they are coming from backgrounds that are very diverse and a range of them. The question that I'm getting to with this, and coming back to your point about Corrective Services and the additional pressure of other roles on police—do you have an idea of how many former Corrective Services officers are moving into the police force?

PETER THURTELL: No. We'll take that on notice as well. I'm not sure it's even a statistic that we would capture. From my experience, not a whole lot.

The Hon. NICHOLE OVERALL: It's back in Queanbeyan, where I live. The regional media there is reporting on the fact that there do seem to be a number of Corrective Services officers moving into the academy now. Again, I'm not saying that that's a bad thing, but Corrective Services is also suffering significant staffing shortages as well. Where I'm going to with this is the additional impost that can then levy on the police. Specifically, the examples of regional prisons, like Goulburn, being locked down because of staff shortages in this regard. Can you tell us if that does impact the New South Wales police in any way, whether it is those prison transfers or holding prisoners longer et cetera?

PETER THURTELL: I know for a fact that Corrective Services, just like us, are struggling to recruit the numbers that they need, particularly in regional areas where people go off sick or whatever, and they can't support the role that they are supposed to do. Then, often, the police will be called upon to assist, whether it be prisoner transfers, prisoner guarding or whatever. Even just their absence at a police station, which is a holding area for Corrective Services, might mean that the police might have to care for the prisoners. It certainly impacts on us for sure.

The Hon. NICHOLE OVERALL: That's right. They're struggling, and police are also struggling. When you have the crossover, it's great. But it's still leaving gaps that need to be filled one way or another. You might be taking those on board by literally robbing Peter to pay Paul in some ways.

PETER THURTELL: Exactly right, and we're not the only organisation. The military as well—somebody who might have traditionally gone to the police might now go to the military. All those sorts of organisations—we're all fighting for a very limited resource pool.

The Hon. NICHOLE OVERALL: Mr Pisanos, could I just quickly come back to you, please. We mentioned earlier about the detection of weapons at schools specifically. Are there protocols in place between New South Wales police—the education Minister referenced Education—and the Department of Education for responding to potential or perceived threats or sightings when it comes to schools?

PAUL PISANOS: There is a protocol.

The Hon. NICHOLE OVERALL: There is. Can you tell us a little bit about that?

PAUL PISANOS: We second police officers to the School Safety and Response Unit. There is an escalation model that applies where there is direct contact across the police. Again, like many things based around the threat or the risk of a particular situation, it can culminate in a shutdown or lockdown of a school.

The Hon. NICHOLE OVERALL: Has that occurred in recent times? Let's say the last 12 months.

PAUL PISANOS: I'd have to get back to you. Certainly there is a history of schools being locked down and us being notified, but not necessarily police being part of lockdown decision-making. That is obviously made by the school leadership. Generally, we're notified through the MOU and through School Safety and Response to respond—or a 000 call—based around risk.

The Hon. NICHOLE OVERALL: I would be interested in hearing those figures of when that may have occurred or been—

PAUL PISANOS: Can you be more specific just so I know what to come back to you with? What are you actually after in terms of the number of lockdowns and over what period?

The Hon. NICHOLE OVERALL: Let's say 12 months.

PAUL PISANOS: For a particular reason?

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The Hon. NICHOLE OVERALL: Because of information that we're attempting to determine through this about the protocol between police and the Department of Education and how that might be undertaken. More specifically than that, are they consistent across all public and private schools, or do these protocols apply to public schools only?

PAUL PISANOS: It's a good question, I'll have to come back to you. I can certainly speak to private schools, but I think it might be more inclusive than that. I just need to come back to you.

The Hon. NICHOLE OVERALL: That would be great. Could you just refresh my memory from when we talked about it this morning? You suggested that there was an increase in occurrences of sightings—or what they believed were sightings—or potential threats when it came to weapons, whether it was knives, guns et cetera. That may be misidentified, but there is an increasing number of cases of that occurring.

PAUL PISANOS: I'm not sure if I mentioned an increase, but I certainly said there are instances that we've been informed of. That's throughout; that's not just now. There is a history of us being notified of matters involving risk at school—some of them may be armed—and police responding accordingly. I'm not sure as to what we are looking like over the last one year or two years to five years.

The Hon. NICHOLE OVERALL: Has that influenced the campaign launch that occurred today—it's where I'm going with this—about bringing awareness to schoolkids because there are growing concerns around this area?

PAUL PISANOS: It's well publicised that knife crimes, and young people carrying knives, machetes and that out in public places, is an issue. We've got the law for that reason, whether it's in school or outside of school. I think it's about an awareness campaign to a cohort of young people as to the dangers and risk of carrying weapons and the illegalities around carrying knives, machetes and other things around.

The CHAIR: Commissioner, do New South Wales police have any officers who identify as trans women?

PETER THURTELL: Good question. I'm not 100 per cent sure on that, but I can certainly find out. Are trans women—

The CHAIR: A biological man who is identifying or transitioning to be a woman.

PETER THURTELL: I'm not sure.

The CHAIR: Any sworn officers?

PETER THURTELL: I don't know of any off the top of my head.

DAVID HUDSON: We used to. I'm not sure about now.

The CHAIR: What about the opposite—identifying as trans men.

PETER THURTELL: I'm aware of one, but I'm not so sure if there are others. We'll have to take that on notice.

The CHAIR: One. Thank you. Are there any special arrangements made in relation to that person to do their duties?

PETER THURTELL: I'd have to take that on notice as well.

The CHAIR: Are there any applicants in the academy of either category at the moment?

PETER THURTELL: I'd have to take that on notice.

The CHAIR: Would a trans woman or a trans man be able to be recruited? Would they meet the physical requirements if they were coming in from the start?

PETER THURTELL: Yes, they would be able to be recruited. If they met the physical requirements, then I don't think there are any barriers to recruitment.

The CHAIR: If so, is there a quota for either group?

PETER THURTELL: No.

The CHAIR: Is there a quota for males versus females in general in the force?

PETER THURTELL: No, there's not a quota. Our female officers are the minority. We would like to recruit as many female officers as we can, but there is no quota per se. We strive to recruit as many of both.

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The CHAIR: Provided they meet the requirements of the force.

PETER THURTELL: Yes.

The CHAIR: Does the New South Wales police practise DEI?

PETER THURTELL: Sorry, what's DEI?

The CHAIR: Diversity, equity and inclusion policy.

PETER THURTELL: Yes, for sure.

The CHAIR: It does.

PETER THURTELL: Yes.

The CHAIR: You're failing the test for that then?

PETER THURTELL: What's the test?

The CHAIR: The test is that you should be a diverse organisation with fully equitable inclusion of all of the people you're talking about. You shouldn't have a preponderance of white males like I see sitting in front of me here now.

PETER THURTELL: As I said before, we strive to recruit a diverse range of people from diverse communities—as many men and women as we can get that are suitable for our organisation. We will recruit as many as we can.

The CHAIR: What about races—are there quotas for races?

PETER THURTELL: We don't have quotas on races. The NSW Police Force reflects the community. The diversity within the community is the diversity we want within the organisation as well.

The CHAIR: Are you achieving it? Have you got goals and timelines?

PETER THURTELL: We don't have specific quotas or goals of numbers of people from certain communities. As I said, any organisation that reflects the community and services the community needs to understand the communities that they come from. The way of doing that is recruiting a diverse range of people.

The Hon. MARK LATHAM: I'm directing this to the acting commissioner. We hear a lot of talk in this building about workload for teachers but, unfortunately, not as much conversation about the growing workload for police officers in New South Wales. I just wanted to get your assessment on this. Whether it's right or wrong, over the last 20 years, when politicians—and, to some extent, bureaucrats—have got a problem that is largely insoluble, a really difficult problem, there have been two dumping grounds. They say, "Schools or the police can go look after it," and give the impression publicly that something is being done or anything is being done. It's off the desk of the political leader and shoved out to schools or police to run various programs.

Your role now extends to social work, counselling, school programs, mental health, domestic violence, positive consent, toxic masculinity—to some extent—coercive control, hate speech, flags, political protests. Are we getting to a point now where it's time for the police to send a clear message that enough is enough? We're at the tipping point where, if this pattern of extracurricular activities continues to grow, we're going to radically diminish the proper role of the police in investigating crimes against property and person—the thing that the community would genuinely expect to be the core of your activities here in New South Wales.

PETER THURTELL: In terms of enough is enough, we don't use that terminology. What we say is that you can't arrest your way out of any social or community problem. This is a multi-agency approach. That's usually the best way to go in all approaches, and we like to engage with other government agencies and organisations to achieve that. Apart from arresting people, we can't solve society's problems, as an organisation, by ourselves.

The Hon. MARK LATHAM: Are you at a tipping point that you're getting away from your core functions? I mean, our old mates here, The Greens, would have you out hugging trees and guarding wombats and those sorts of things.

Ms CATE FAEHRMANN: Exactly.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: What a wonderful world that would be.

The CHAIR: Order!

The Hon. MARK LATHAM: Should you sign me up as your media officer to say, "Enough is enough"?

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Ms SUE HIGGINSON: We are on our way, Mr Latham.

The Hon. MARK LATHAM: You need that straight-talking approach to get the message clearly to the Cabinet.

The CHAIR: Order!

PETER THURTELL: As an executive we have been fairly forthright, I think, in saying that the NSW Police Force needs to concentrate on New South Wales police-related activities. Any of that activity that a bit of mission creep has—we've gone towards, we are trying to get back out of that. We've been upfront with the community about that. We've been supporting the association and they've been supporting us with that same messaging.

The Hon. MARK LATHAM: Good. You have my support, which is the death knell for the proposition, of course. We'll regroup and try again. On another workload matter, in the past couple of months some very disturbing reports have come across my desk of State electorate offices using the police in ways that are questionable. One was of the Premier's office sending police to knock on the door of a woman who was making insistent complaints about a workers compensation matter. She took this to be intimidation to stop her being what the electorate office might have seen as an over-persistent constituent. In the electorate of Sydney, there was a fair bit of evidence that the Surry Hills Police Station is kind of a private militia for the local member, such that any trial, social media comment, offensive word or hurt feeling is reported to the police. There are a whole stack of complaints along those lines.

Do we need some guidelines to say to MPs, "You only utilise the police essentially as a last resort, where there's a suspicion of a crime having been committed, not to fob off an over-persistent constituent, not to engage in reading every single thing on social media." If you read everything on social media, you wouldn't get out of bed, would you? You can go overboard in thinking that everything being said about you is a matter for the police. Do we need some guidelines to put a line under that? It might be a minority of MPs, but it must be a nuisance in certain police stations.

PETER THURTELL: It's not our job to establish guidelines for MPs or anyone else in the community. Our job is to establish guidelines for our officers, and we do have well-established guidelines for our officers as to what we respond to and what matters we would tell somebody is a police matter or another type of response from another agency. We do have those well-established guidelines. We've got training for our officers, and we have a hierarchy where if an officer is unsure they can go to a more senior officer and see whether it's a matter that the police should be responding to.

The Hon. MARK LATHAM: Have you spoken to the Minister about it? I think the police are in a very difficult position, because whether it's in the electorate of Sydney, Kogarah or anywhere else, they must have the feeling, "If I don't investigate what the politician wants me to, they'll probably complain to the Minister, or they'll go into Parliament and scream homophobia or some other phobia. We're treated in a negative fashion in that environment." The politicians have got the whip hand, haven't they? Isn't that a difficult catch 22 for the police to deal with?

PETER THURTELL: IN answer to two of your questions, no, I haven't spoken to the Minister about it. Yes, it may be, for a younger officer, that they might feel compelled to do something about a call. But as I said before, we've got a hierarchy from which they can seek advice and, at the end of the day, any response that they do in relation to a job has got to be in accordance with our policies and practices and the law. If somebody thinks that they can use the police as a tool for themselves, they're mistaken, because we might respond to one particular incident for them but it doesn't mean we're going to respond to every request that they make of us.

The Hon. MARK LATHAM: If you can keep a watching brief on this, I think it's a matter to be addressed in the future. Finally, Mr McKenna, you gave the police authority regarding the recent SO 52 call for papers of our Chamber concerning an incident of sexual assault in the Parliament building 10 years ago. How are these advices framed? In our parliamentary debate, we addressed the very clear precedent of the Don Harwin SO 52. Harwin was fined for breach of a criminal matter, a public health order. He appealed. It went to the DPP. Clearly, you might think, under the interpretation we had recently, this is administration of justice. The Harwin precedent wasn't addressed at all in the legal opinion that you sent back to us.

How do you deal with this inconsistency? Quite frankly, having moved the Harwin SO 52 and the recent one about Jamie Clements, I'm totally confused as to what administration of justice means. How is it that we got all the documents on the Harwin matter, just a couple of years ago, and none of the documents on this other one, even though, clearly, it's not as much the administration of justice as the first one?

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PETER McKENNA: We take each one on their own merits, Mr Latham. We get our own legal advice around what we provide and don't provide under the circumstances of each matter. I certainly wasn't in this role 10 years ago to say what was provided then. I can only go by what advice we get given as to what we provided currently.

The Hon. MARK LATHAM: Do your lawyers regard precedent as important?

PETER McKENNA: It would be a matter for the lawyers.

Ms CATE FAEHRMANN: Going back to music festivals, the Minister was talking about a three-stage process.

PETER THURTELL: The review process for user pays, you're talking about?

Ms CATE FAEHRMANN: That's right. Is the three-stage process new since the changes to the Act late last year or has it been the process for the past however many years?

PETER THURTELL: No, we initiated a review of our user charges policy.

Ms CATE FAEHRMANN: An internal review, recently?

PETER THURTELL: An internal review, and we've completely reworked our user charges policy. Of interest to you might be the fact that written specifically into the policy is minimum police numbers required in accordance with the identified risk for any event. I know you're interested in music festivals, but we talk about any user pays event. The three-tiered process is about if an event organiser wants to review the number of recommended police officers for a particular event, it starts at a local level, then goes to a regional level and then from there it goes to a New South Wales police internal review level. Then you've got the State on top of that—Mr Graham's panel that makes the decision on things.

Ms CATE FAEHRMANN: But in terms of the review, it can stop at the police level. Is that correct? I put a question on notice about this to the police and I got back an answer that seemed to be slightly contradictory to what was provided to me in the March budget estimates, so I just want to clarify the difference there.

PETER THURTELL: No problem.

Ms CATE FAEHRMANN: The question I asked in July this year, on notice, was in relation to music festivals which have had their user pays policing charges reviewed by the NSW Police Force since 1 July 2022. I wanted a list of which festivals were successful in having their user pays policing charges reviewed and by how much. The answer I got back was only one festival, the Listen Out Festival held on 6 October 2024. User pays policing charges were \$134,269.80. The review that was submitted said they didn't meet the requirements. But then in March, when this was discussed, I got the answer back saying to date there had been 10 reviews of user pays across the State, a couple of which were music festivals as well, so Juicy festival, Mode Festival, Subsonic and Stroud. I'm just wondering what the differences are. Firstly, do you know offhand, just to this question, why—

PETER THURTELL: Yes, I know all about it.

Ms CATE FAEHRMANN: Great, let's hear from you.

PETER THURTELL: You caught us on the hop a bit in March when you asked about the number of reviews and we sent the questions out, "How many reviews have you had?" et cetera, et cetera, and then the numbers came back. When we scrutinised them afterwards, they weren't reviews at all. They were business-as-usual communications between event organisers and the police, and didn't actually get classified as a review because that is business as usual. You've got to remember the guidelines for our officers—and we do have event organiser guidelines as well that talk about, "This is the process you can go through if you're not happy with the original decision of the police with the numbers of police."

Ms CATE FAEHRMANN: The formal appeal mechanism?

PETER THURTELL: Yes. So we decided that a review is not until it gets to that actual State-level review. The rest of it is business-as-usual negotiations.

Ms CATE FAEHRMANN: The question might be on notice then, because you seem to be indicating potentially that with the internal review and the change in the guidelines—is it?—around minimum police numbers for risks identified—

PETER THURTELL: In accordance with the risk, yes.

Ms CATE FAEHRMANN: Would it be fair to say that, since the reforms last year and this change, user-pays policing for festivals may be reducing the costs?

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PETER THURTELL: Yes, I think that's fair to say.

Ms CATE FAEHRMANN: It's a good message to send if that's the case.

PETER THURTELL: Yes, I think that's fair to say. I think before the guidelines were changed a command might have said, "Okay, so last year we had 100 officers and there was a crowd of 20,000 people. Let's go with 100 officers again this year."

Ms CATE FAEHRMANN: And it was designated subject—music festival?

PETER THURTELL: But now there's a strict criteria that they have to do the risk assessment et cetera—not that they didn't have to do one before, but they've got to reassess it every year in terms of the expected crowd and any anticipated risk. The risk of large crowd events that might have been there 10 years ago with threats of terrorism et cetera may be reduced now, so the officers of the commands are reducing their numbers et cetera. I'm not saying in every circumstance but, with that minimum policy, there is certainly an opportunity for reduced numbers of police in accordance with the risk.

Ms CATE FAEHRMANN: With events like the Randwick races, and there's an event coming up that I've seen some advertising for—I think it's Polo in the City or something coming up as well—

PETER THURTELL: That should be good.

Ms CATE FAEHRMANN: Are there assessments for that in terms of risk? For example, do you send the drug dogs to the Randwick races when they happen, because you'd certainly get some positive detections, I'd say, Acting Commissioner?

PETER THURTELL: A couple of things there: Firstly, you've got to remember, in organised events, they ask for us. We don't impose ourselves on anyone.

Ms CATE FAEHRMANN: The music festivals ask for you?

PETER THURTELL: They ask for us, yes, for sure. They say, "We need a policing presence here", and we do the risk and say, "This is how many police you need to mitigate the risk."

Ms CATE FAEHRMANN: Say the Mardi Gras afterparty asks for police out the front, they've got their own security—they pay for their own security, as do all the music festivals.

PETER THURTELL: Yes. But they also know that they need a policing component there in case there's any issues that need to be dealt with.

Ms CATE FAEHRMANN: But "know" is different to asking. You just said they ask. They submit a request?

PETER THURTELL: Yes, they put in an application.

Ms CATE FAEHRMANN: That's because they have to.

PETER THURTELL: They don't have to from a policing perspective, but in order to get their authorities quite often—for example, Sydney Olympic Park will say, "You need to show us your law enforcement plan et cetera", and then they will show them, "Right, we've got X number of police that are coming as well."

Ms CATE FAEHRMANN: At the races, with everybody consuming a hell of a lot more alcohol than they do at music festivals, to be honest—

PETER THURTELL: They ask for us as well.

Ms CATE FAEHRMANN: —and at the Mardi Gras afterparty, they ask and so you send the dogs into the races and you'll send the dogs into the Polo in the City as well?

PETER THURTELL: At Polo in the City and the races there's generally not drug detection dogs. Drug detection dogs are usually where the risk of supply of drugs is present.

Ms CATE FAEHRMANN: Why wouldn't it be present at the races?

PETER THURTELL: The risk is higher at a music festival. We know that. We've seen all the deaths and the charges and arrests for significant drug supply over the years.

Ms CATE FAEHRMANN: But you haven't even tried at the races, though.

PETER THURTELL: We may have in the past, yes. We've tried drug dog operations outside hotels and all sorts of things in the past. Not so prominent now, but we've certainly done it.

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Ms CATE FAEHRMANN: For example, Melbourne Cup—you don't think that that would be somewhere that you should be a little bit more—

PETER THURTELL: If we had intelligence—

The Hon. MARK LATHAM: The Melbourne Cup is in Melbourne.

Ms CATE FAEHRMANN: Don't they have something for the Melbourne Cup? I don't know. "Nup to the Cup" is what I say, but the Sydney version.

The Hon. MARK LATHAM: To help my colleague, Everest Day is the big one.

Ms CATE FAEHRMANN: Everest Day, there we go.

PETER THURTELL: If we had intelligence that there was likely drug supply happening at them, then we would do it. As I said, music festivals have showed us that that's where the risk is. But you'll be pleased to know this: We've introduced new guidelines around drug dog operations and our policing of music festivals.

Ms CATE FAEHRMANN: I think, with respect, Acting Commissioner, it's not necessarily supply that you're targeting at music festivals, and that's been the whole point, hasn't it? You're targeting small-time users, people who are going in to take, for example, MDMA, maybe a little bit of cocaine?

PETER THURTELL: No, that's not what we target. The drug detection dogs don't know the difference between 20 tablets and one, so sometimes people that are in possession of drugs get caught as well.

Ms CATE FAEHRMANN: The vast majority.

PETER THURTELL: But we really want to arrest those people that are there to supply prohibited drugs to music festival goers. And they're the ones that pose the risk to the goers, to the music festival attendees.

Ms CATE FAEHRMANN: Out of time, unfortunately.

The Hon. MARK LATHAM: Cate needs to come to the Everest Day and check it out—firsthand research.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: Mr Pisanos, you may or may not be able to help me with this question, but I understood you to be answering a question from my colleague the Hon. Nichole Overall in relation to weapons in schools in terms of police officers seconded to—I think you said it was a safe school command?

PAUL PISANOS: School Safety and Response Unit, I think. Yes.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: Does the School Safety and Response Unit have officers in schools or officers available to schools?

PAUL PISANOS: We have youth engagement officers attached to a youth command. Part of their charter is to work within schools delivering education, which is similar to the education package that's being delivered at the moment in terms of 20 schools. But there are police from police area commands and police districts that will respond to calls for assistance with issues in schools. The School Safety and Response Unit is effectively an escalation model that reports in to police to basically deal with more systemic things.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: The question I have is the extent to which police are involved at all. I'm not suggesting in this line of questioning that there should be criminal charges. I'm suggesting that there may be a need for investigations for the safety of the children involved and other children who may be involved. In connection with another inquiry, we heard significant evidence about a problem of inappropriate sexualised behaviours being exhibited by even very young children at school and two programs that are run—the Safe Wayz program for those children under 10 and the New Street Services for those between, I think, 10 and 17.

It's primarily a Health model, but I am wondering the extent to which police are involved because if you have a six-year-old exhibiting inappropriate sexual behaviours, one wonders the life experience of that six-year-old and the extent to which other factors should be being investigated for the protection of that child and any siblings—and often those inappropriate sexual behaviours are with other children—and the extent to which police are involved in any of that understandably very sensitive but, I think to be honest, probably very necessary investigation.

PAUL PISANOS: I would agree with you. I can't speak to the figures and how many, but certainly our child abuse squad, which is a specialist area that comes under Mr Hudson's remit. But police may initially be called if the school becomes aware of that or it's reported via a parent to the police by normal channels of reporting crime—in person, online or however. But those matters definitely will be taken seriously and escalated up, if

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required, to our specialist investigators. I couldn't agree more. Collaboration between us and Health and DCJ is incredibly important in those matters.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: Would police always be involved? I suppose my question perhaps is if an eight-year-old child is referred to a health model and the reason that the eight-year-old child is acting in that way is because of what they've been exposed to in their home life, so we can't perhaps rely on those who should be caring for that child to report to the police—

PAUL PISANOS: They're mandatory reporting protocols. You'd imagine the child wellbeing units and an escalation up through that process. Education are definitely a part of the child wellbeing unit model. So I would imagine a child-at-risk escalation, if it's made appropriately, should reach the police. I would agree, it's very serious. Can I correct, just quickly, some answers around the RBT-RDT with you at some point in time?

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: Yes, you could do it quickly now if that suits you.

PAUL PISANOS: You asked a question around alcohol involvement in terms of fatalities. It's actually 18 per cent. In terms of—

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: If I remember the figures correctly, drug-involved fatalities are higher than alcohol-involved fatalities.

PAUL PISANOS: Exactly right.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: Interesting.

PAUL PISANOS: So it's speeding, 41 per cent; illegal drugs, 24 per cent; alcohol, 18 per cent; fatigue, 17 per cent; and restraints, 14 per cent. That's over that five-year average.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: Sorry, what is "restraints"?

PETER THURTELL: Seatbelts.

PAUL PISANOS: Seatbelts, yes—non-wearing of restraints.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: Oh, not wearing seatbelts. Sorry, I went to a very different place there.

PAUL PISANOS: Can I just correct. Our RDT figures are around 231,000. That's random drug testing, and that's heading in an upward direction in terms of the frequency. RBT, we're currently at 2.54 million tests, which is up by about 400,000 tests on where we were at this time last year. So, again, RBT is heading in the right direction. It's a focus for us.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: Great.

The Hon. NICHOLE OVERALL: Just two quick ones before we might turn to some Hunter questions. A new police station in Tumbarumba—is that progressing?

PETER THURTELL: As far as I'm aware—Rashelle might be able to tell me—I don't think that we have any plans for a new police station in Tumbarumba. That's up the Snowy somewhere, isn't it?

The Hon. NICHOLE OVERALL: Yes, sort of past Tumut, where they have a prison. There was a request for a new police station, but you're not aware of that progressing.

PETER THURTELL: No.

The Hon. NICHOLE OVERALL: What about Revesby Police Station?

PETER THURTELL: Revesby Police Station is a different thing.

The Hon. NICHOLE OVERALL: It is.

PETER THURTELL: Revesby—I think there is a proposal by the Federal Government to resume that land. So we're waiting for all that to be finalised, I think.

The Hon. NICHOLE OVERALL: So you don't know at this point what's happening with that police station, whether it might be demolished or moved or upgraded?

PETER THURTELL: We did have an amount of money set aside to work on that police station, and I think there is some possibility of some work that will be done there. But, as I said, I don't think it's going to happen in the near future. Yes, "State electoral commitment to redesign the intersection may impact directly the police station." All I can say is that the discussions in relation to Revesby are ongoing.

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The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: Is there a timetable for the resolution of this? My recollection is that they've been ongoing for an extended period of time.

PETER THURTELL: Yes, that's correct.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: And working conditions are not very good in that station, are they?

PETER THURTELL: I don't know about working conditions. The facilities within the station could be improved, but there's probably not a lot of sense in spending money on something and then pulling it down.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: When did the possible Federal acquisition of the land become a live issue?

PETER THURTELL: Sorry, I did say Federal acquisition. Was it Federal or State? It might have been a State acquisition, sorry.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: When did that become a live issue? I don't remember hearing about that as an issue before.

PETER THURTELL: It was a few years ago. It was designed in a plan.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: When will that be resolved so that we get an answer to Revesby Police Station?

PETER THURTELL: I'm sorry, I can't give you a date on that.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: Perhaps we can ask a couple of questions about Newcastle. I understand that the estimated total cost of the new basketball stadium at New Lambton is \$82 million. Can you confirm if that's correct?

KATE MEAGHER: I'm going to have to take that on notice.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: Perhaps you can also take on notice the factors that have contributed to the increase in project costs from \$30 million to \$82 million over the past five years, or is that something you can help us with now?

KATE MEAGHER: No, I'm afraid I'm not briefed on that particular facility.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: There is a number of other questions about that, so perhaps they should all go on notice.

KATE MEAGHER: Do you mind? I'm sorry.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: No. Can you help us with ratepayer funds for CEO study leave? Apparently the City of Newcastle CEO received his full salary while undertaking two short courses at Stanford involving just 6½ hours of study per week.

KATE MEAGHER: The CEO of Newcastle council, did you say?

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: I understand it was the CEO of the City of Newcastle.

KATE MEAGHER: That might be a question better directed to the Office of Local Government.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: Can you help us in relation to the Broadmeadow precinct affordable housing and use of public land? How many of the proposed 3,200 homes in the Broadmeadow precinct are currently earmarked as affordable or social housing?

KATE MEAGHER: I'm just having a quick look at my note on that. I don't have a breakdown as to the number of affordable housing, the allocation for affordable housing, but very happy to take that on notice. Twenty thousand dwellings and 15,000 jobs is the vision, but, as I say—

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: You don't have the breakdown of affordable or social housing?

KATE MEAGHER: Sorry, no.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: There is a number of other questions in relation to that we'll also put on notice. Can you help us with the proposed sale of Warabrook road reserve land? I am wondering why the Government is proceeding with the sale of public land at Warabrook that was previously reserved for the Wallsend to Mayfield arterial corridor?

KATE MEAGHER: That may be a question better directed to the Roads portfolio, but I'm more than happy to go back through our regional coordination team to get an answer for you.

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The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: Yes, if you could. Can you confirm whether the Government has received formal requests from the Lake Macquarie City Council for funding or support to deliver the long-promised Cardiff Town Park?

KATE MEAGHER: I'll take that on notice too, Ms Carter.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: Thank you. There will be some other questions around some of those things.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: At any given time, when does a police officer wear plain clothes?

PETER THURTELL: What police officer are you talking about?

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: When would a police officer be wearing plain clothes on duty?

PETER THURTELL: That depends on their duty type. If we're talking about plain clothes—for example, a suit—somebody in a criminal investigation role would usually wear a suit. We do have people like, say, for example, our region enforcement squads, which might wear—I wouldn't say plain clothes; they might wear jeans and T-shirt so they fit in a little bit better. But our plain-clothes officers that we refer to as "plain clothes" are things like State Crime Command, your local detectives, counter-terrorism command. Those sorts of commands are generally plain-clothes officers.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: What is the percentage, usually, of plain clothes compared to uniformed police officers?

PETER THURTELL: In a PAC and PD, do you mean, or within the organisation?

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: Let's say within the organisation.

PETER THURTELL: There are 2½ thousand detectives out of an organisation of 18,000.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: There are nearly 16,000 full-time sworn officers?

PETER THURTELL: Human beings in place, yes.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: Human beings in place. Got it. Has there ever been any consideration—I'll just go back one step. You know how—the findings are quite clear now—that when a police uniform is present in response to a mental health incident, there's an escalation factor just by the presence of a uniform. Have there ever been any discussions about police officers not being in uniform to attend a mental health call-out? I accept that sometimes there's an urgency or there's a difficulty, but have there ever been any conversations or discussions about that possibility?

PETER THURTELL: Not as not as far as I'm aware. You've got to remember, we're a uniform organisation, predominantly, and the visibility of policing is half of what law enforcement's all about—as a deterrent and the fact that the community feels safer with a police presence and all that sort of thing. So no, as far as I'm aware. That would require—because most mental health incidents are attended by our general duties officers—officers to change clothes, go to the incident, then come back and change clothes again, or have a change of clothes with them. It's not really a practical solution.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: No, I understand that component of it. But has there been any thought given to—because, yes, there are 2,500 coppers that, deliberately for the purpose of their work, wear plain clothes or whatever that description is? I'm wondering, Deputy Commissioner Hudson, in terms of the mental health response discussions, whether this has come up at all about perhaps concealed weapons and plain clothes in order to take out that dreadful factor that seems so simple—that escalation factor of weapons and uniforms.

DAVID HUDSON: I think it's not just the presence of the attending police wearing the uniform, because ambulance officers wear a uniform as well. It's the way we deal with threat, it's the way we deal with people, it's the way we assess risk, which—

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: I think—sorry to interrupt—the difference is, though, paramedics don't have guns and tasers and handcuffs. It's a bit different.

The Hon. MARK LATHAM: Maybe the gun's the issue, but you need them. And tasers.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: It's a little bit different.

DAVID HUDSON: It's not necessarily the appointments that escalate the incident, or the presence of the appointments that a police officer wears; it's the way we interact with individuals. The way we are trained to interact with those individuals, the way we are trained to deal with threat and the way we perceive threat as opposed to other people in the community—that's part of police training. We respond on that basis.

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Ms SUE HIGGINSON: Is that what's coming through in terms of the consultation with the mental health police responses? I'm going back, literally, to the evidence. I know that Minister Catley referred to it in budget estimates in February last year, and I know that there is more and more material that's coming forward—that it is often the case that seeing the blue uniform escalates instead of de-escalates. Is there more consideration being given to that in this review?

DAVID HUDSON: Our considerations are that, because of the way we deal with threat, because of our training and because we can't train police in a totally different concept without compromising their safety in relation to mental health that might traverse into other operational scenarios, we shouldn't be doing it. That's our position.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: I understand that, but I'm talking about in the future. Your evidence was earlier, there will always be circumstances that you attend—i.e., you know somebody has a weapon—because they are, specifically, the most pointy situations where people are going to continue to get hurt and where a paramedic attends. We had it with Burling not long ago—that terrible incident—and the paramedics were clearly there, and then the police attended and then the chap's now dead. They're the kind of scenarios where—I suppose this is one view—perhaps if weapons were not so visible and there wasn't a uniform, that's a different type of policing, isn't it? It's more of an intelligence and a de-escalation, but it's clearly not being considered. Is that right?

DAVID HUDSON: Because of our safety requirements as well, police need access. If they're in that first-line response role, they should be wearing a protective vest, they should be wearing their appointments and they should have access to a taser because of their own safety.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: No, I'm not suggesting you wouldn't; I'm suggesting you could have those things in a different context. Anyway, it's just seems like such a—

DAVID HUDSON: Plain-clothes police are more in an investigative role rather than a response role.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: Yes, but do they carry a weapon? They do, don't they?

DAVID HUDSON: They carry a firearm and handcuffs, most usually.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: That's right. That's all. Can I ask—

DAVID HUDSON: Not tasers or spray, normally.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: Can I ask you where the beanbag situation's up to?

DAVID HUDSON: Yes, you can.

The CHAIR: It's full of beans.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: They kill people.

DAVID HUDSON: Beanbag use was reintroduced into the organisation last August, based on research conducted through the tactical operations group. Counterterrorism command, with the supplier with an independent expert, came back to the Commissioner's Executive Team on a number of occasions in relation to standard operating procedures. I think on 24 August last year it was presented at CET. There's a certain stand-off area that is required—three metres, from memory—and it was reintroduced into operational use into the organisation. It was considered that we were carrying a fair bit of risk by its suspension. There are certain incidents that the tactical operations group attends, such as individuals who douse themselves in petrol, where tasers were not appropriate for use, obviously, so CET deliberated on that and reintroduced beanbag rounds.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: I think I missed the part about the—is there a range now about—

DAVID HUDSON: Where practicable, there's a three-metre stand-off range. They should not be used within three metres. The actual provider has a zero stand-off that should be safe. That is their specification, and—

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: But we know that's not right.

DAVID HUDSON: That was my point, and CET's point. The ballisticsian that that we engaged to conduct the testing was of the same conclusion—that that would be like me sitting next to Mr Thurtell and pulling a double-barrel shotgun, no matter what's up the barrel. We just didn't agree with that so we've got a three-metre stand-off range at this stage, where practicable. Obviously, if an offender or an individual is engaging and approaching, that might infringe upon that three metres before a potential discharge. But we would prefer a three-metre stand-off range, where practicable, plus limited target zones as well.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: Can I just ask one quick thing? With that review, and your consideration about that three metres, was the Krista Kach scenario considered in that?

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DAVID HUDSON: That was the catalyst for it, obviously, and that was our thinking at the Commissioner's Executive Team.

The CHAIR: One quick question before we finish, where is the riot control truck?

DAVID HUDSON: The what, sorry?

The CHAIR: The riot control truck.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: It's out the back. Where's it garaged?

PETER THURTELL: The water cannon?

The CHAIR: The water cannon truck. The riot control truck.

DAVID HUDSON: We've got BearCats. The water cannon?

The CHAIR: Yes.

DAVID HUDSON: It's with Fire and Rescue.

The CHAIR: Is it likely to be deployed at any stage?

DAVID HUDSON: No, we offloaded that four or five years ago to—

The CHAIR: So it's no longer under your control?

DAVID HUDSON: The water cannon had never been used and was never likely to be used in this State. This came up at estimates a couple of years ago just after we gave it to Fire and Rescue. It was used in fires as a water tanker—bushfires down the South Coast. Information from the Fire and Rescue commissioner at the time was—

The CHAIR: I suppose it's been repainted red now?

DAVID HUDSON: It was, but it saved three lives because of the additional water it provided to a particular response down the South Coast.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: Ms Conroy, are you able to give us that list that you were going to read out? You're going to give me a paper copy of it or—

RASHELLE CONROY: Yes, I can give it to you. I'll just have to get an extra copy.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: Thank you.

The CHAIR: All right. I think that we've come to the end of our questioning. Thank you very much for coming today. There are obviously a number of questions that were taken on notice, and the secretariat will be in contact with you very soon to get the answers. Thanks very much for coming.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: Weren't they meant to have some Government time?

The Hon. PETER PRIMROSE: No, we're very satisfied with all the answers.

The CHAIR: The Government hasn't got any questions.

(The witnesses withdrew.)

The Committee proceeded to deliberate.