

# UNCORRECTED PROOF ISSUE

Wednesday 5 June 2019 - Estimates Committee B (Courtney)

## HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY

### ESTIMATES COMMITTEE B

Wednesday 5 June 2019

#### MEMBERS

Mr O'Byrne  
Mrs Rylah (Chair)  
Mr Tucker (Deputy Chair)  
Dr Woodruff

#### SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS

Mr Butler  
Dr Broad  
Ms Dow  
Ms O'Connor

#### IN ATTENDANCE

**Hon Sarah Courtney MP**, Minister for Building and Construction; Minister for Resources

#### Ministerial Office

**Mr Richard Wilson**, Chief of Staff  
**Mr Ben Waining**, Senior Adviser  
**Mrs Natalie Cameron**, Senior Adviser

#### Building and Construction

**Kathrine Morgan-Wicks**, Secretary, Department of Justice  
**Nick Evans**, Deputy Secretary, Department of Justice  
**Mark Cocker**, Chief Executive Officer, WorkSafe Tasmania, Department of Justice  
**Andrew Goldsworthy**, Acting Executive Director, Department of Justice

**Ross Thomas**, Deputy Registrar, Workers Rehabilitation and Compensation Tribunal,  
Department of Justice  
**Gavin Wailes**, Director, Finance

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**Natalie Boxall**, Executive Liaison Officer, Office of General Manager, Consumer Building and Occupational Services

**Trent Linton**, Ministerial Liaison Officer, Office of the Secretary, Department of Justice

## **Mineral Resources Tasmania**

**Kim Evans**, Secretary

**Bob Rutherford**, Deputy Secretary Industry and Business Development

**Kevin Robinson**, Director Mineral Resources Tasmania

**Brett Stewart**, General Manager, Strategy, Policy and Coordination

**Amanda Russell**, Deputy Secretary, Business Services

## **Resources Policy**

**Kim Evans**, Secretary

**Bob Rutherford**, Deputy Secretary Industry and Business Development

**Brett Stewart**, General Manager, Strategy, Policy and Coordination

**Alastair Morton**, Acting Director Forest Policy

**Penny Wells**, Chief Executive Officer Private Forests Tasmania

**Peter Volker**, Forest Practices Authority

**Amanda Russell**, Deputy Secretary, Business Services

## **Business Services**

**Amanda Russell**, Deputy Secretary, Business Services

**Glen Dean**, Director Finance

## **DIVISION 6**

(Department of Justice)

## **Output group 1**

### **Administration of Justice**

#### **1.10 Workers Rehabilitation and Compensation Tribunal**

**The committee met at 9 a.m.**

**CHAIR** (Mrs Rylah) - Good morning, everyone, welcome, minister to Committee B.

**Mc COURTNEY** - Thank you.

**CHAIR** - Minister, I ask you to introduce the staff at the table, and then I'll go through some procedural matters before we go into overview.

**Mc COURTNEY** - To my left we've got Kath Morgan-Wicks, to my right Mark Cocker, and then further to my left Nick Evans and Andrew Goldsworthy. Good morning. Thank you very much.

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**CHAIR** - The time schedule for the estimates of the Minister for Building and Construction is one hour followed by the estimates as the Minister for Resources, for three hours. Today we'll take our morning tea break at 11 am. We will all try to keep the tea break to five minutes and bring your cuppa back into the room so that we have the least amount of time added on.

Members are familiar with the practice of seeking additional information and questions on notice. They must be agreed to be taken on by the minister or the Chair and then the question is handed in writing to the secretary, and then they will be approved and away we go. Minister predominantly agrees to the questions taken on notice. Minister, over to you for overview.

**Ms COURTNEY** - I will provide an opening statement and I'll try to be brief. The Hodgman Liberal Government is absolutely committed to making it simpler, fairer and safer to do business in Tasmania. We have committed to focussing on building a strong culture of prevention, eliminating causes of work-related harm and advance workplace health, safety and wellbeing for all Tasmanian workers and families.

This year's budget supports this commitment by including funding for up to five additional WorkSafe Tasmania inspectors and providing a \$700 000 package of measures to increase quad bike safety for not just farm workplaces, but will increase safety for all recreational users of these vehicles. These affirmative actions will help to provide improved safety, health and return to work outcomes for Tasmanians, and reduce the number of unnecessary debts and serious injuries resulting from unsafe practices.

The Hodgman Liberal Government has been working hard to ensure that we have the right conditions in place to maintain positive momentum currently under way in the building and construction centre by stimulating more construction, creating more jobs and boosting the economy even further. We have a record investment of \$3.6 billion in infrastructure around Tasmania as part of our commitment to deliver the state's \$13 billion 10-year infrastructure pipeline.

We know that there is a need meet the increasing demand for skilled workers to deliver this infrastructure which is why we're investing an additional \$2.9 million for apprentices and training. We understand that there is a high demand for new housing which is why we are rolling out a multi-pronged approach to address the current housing shortage, including nearly \$200 million investment over eight years under the affordable housing strategy. These initiatives show that we are investing today to ensure the delivery of our long-term plan to grow the economy, create jobs and invest in the infrastructure. Tasmania needs that now and for tomorrow, and I do have further initiatives but I'll hand over because I know that we've only got an hour.

**Ms BUTLER** - Minister, it's my understanding that you are required to ensure all people receiving a Working with Vulnerable People Licence are appropriately licensed. The executive director is the registrar of this act. Under the Registration to Work with Vulnerable People Act, it is my understanding that all people undertaking work near children are required to have a Vulnerable People Licence. Are there any exemptions to this?

**Ms COURTNEY** - I'm not the responsible minister for working with vulnerable people.

**Ms BUTLER** - It does come under your portfolio as far as the licensing?

**Ms COURTNEY** - I'm not the responsible minister, however.

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**Ms BUTLER** - So do you actually have anything to do with the overseeing of the licensing?

**Ms COURTNEY** - No, I don't.

**Ms BUTLER** - Not at all? I'll move on to my second question. You would be aware of the building and construction training policy which ensures all government-funded capital and maintenance works contributes to the maintenance of skills within the building and construction industry. The policy requires a minimum of 20 per cent of the total labour hours worked on any Tasmanian government-funded project equal to or in excess of \$250 000 and they be undertaken by apprentices or trainees under a contract of training. Can you guarantee that this policy is currently adhered to across all capital and maintenance works on any Tasmanian government-funded projects?

**Ms COURTNEY** - This area that you're asking about is administered by Treasury and State Growth. It's not under my portfolio responsibilities.

**Ms BUTLER** - Minister, we're talking about compliance as well. Are you responsible for compliance and procurement with building and construction?

**Ms COURTNEY** - So building and construction, I look after the compliance side, but in terms of procurement, that's not a matter for my portfolio.

**Ms BUTLER** - So can you guarantee that work being undertaken on Tasmanian government-funded projects is compliant with the 20 per cent of the total labour hours worked?

**Ms COURTNEY** - I'm responsible for the licensing across all workplaces, so that's a licensing matter, but in terms of the procurement nature, that's not a matter for my portfolio.

**Ms BUTLER** - Minister, how do you ensure compliance to ensure that all contractors on government-contracted and subcontractor capital investment projects are qualified and therefore insurable?

**Ms COURTNEY** - We look after compliance. So we are responsible for the licensing of any of the people conducting work.

**Ms BUTLER** - And how do you ensure compliance to that licensing?

**Ms COURTNEY** - I might pass because that's more operational rather than a portfolio area.

**Mr EVANS** - We are responsible for the licensing of many of the trades that actually work on, whether they be government or private sector funded projects. Our role is to work with the contractors and others who are involved in those projects to ensure those licensing arrangements are met. We do that in a number of ways obviously by maintaining close liaison with those people, and if and when necessary actually checking the licences of people working on those sites.

**Ms BUTLER** - How do you control the compliance of subcontractors to licensing and accreditation requirements? How do you ensure that they are complying?

**Mr GOLDSWORTHY** - We run a planned audit program so that there are times where we will audit either administratively through paperwork to ensure that the people that are registered as

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being involved in a building project have the appropriate licences, and we also conduct on-site inspections. We actually check the people that are actually on-site have the appropriate licences.

**Ms BUTLER** - I understand this was originally a role of the Building Regulatory Advisory Committee which was cut in 2014. Is that correct?

**CHAIR** - Through the minister, please.

**Mr EVANS** - The committee didn't have an operational role so it wasn't responsible for the delegations under the act that are enforced through what is now CBAS. So the A stands for advisory, so there was a committee that gave advice but it had no role in enforcement of those provisions.

**Ms BUTLER** - Okay. So with the enforcement of compliance, who's responsible for the enforcement of compliance?

**Mr EVANS** - The Director of Occupation Licensing -

**Mr GOLDSWORTHY** - Would be the administrator of occupational licensing.

**Ms BUTLER** - Okay. Through the minister, has there been an increase in resources for staffing in consumer building and occupational services to undertake or ensure that compliance guidelines are being met?

**Ms COURTNEY** - I have confidence that they are being complied with, so there's been no suggestion made to me that they are not. In terms of resourcing, the secretary can speak to that.

**Ms MORGAN-WICKS** - In terms of resourcing in relation to compliance, there's been no significant change in relation to resourcing. The compliance is aided by assistance from the funds which are collected through the building and construction training levy, but certainly in relation to compliance I'm not aware of any significant change in resourcing.

**Ms BUTLER** - There's been an increase in building construction, a massive increase in building construction and government capital investment tenders and contracts, and therefore subcontractors, but there hasn't been an increase in resourcing to ensure compliance?

**Ms COURTNEY** - We are very confident that we're able to ensure that compliance is adhered to. I don't have concerns as the minister that we have constraints on resourcing which would limit our ability to do that work in a proper way.

**Ms BUTLER** - So there's no, there hasn't been an increase in resourcing to match the boost in contractors and subcontractors in compliance, so what checks do you do to make sure that they are compliant?

**Mr EVANS** - Andrew has already spoken to what the process is carried out through the audits and so on. It's important to recognise that these functions are not funded through the consolidated fund. They are actually funded by the licence fee paid by people who actually require a licence. That money from them is paid into a fund. If there has been a growth as you say, and we know that there has, then there is additional revenue comes to the fund from those functions. If additional resources are required they would be applied to that, so these aren't things which are actually funded

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through this budget or through the consolidated fund. They're actually funded through the licence fees.

**Dr WOODRUFF** - Minister, are you responsible for managing the residential tenancy commissioner?

**Ms COURTNEY** - Yes.

**Dr WOODRUFF** - And the actions of the residential tenancy commissioner under the Residential Tenancy Act 1997?

**Ms COURTNEY** - I'm responsible for the act.

**Dr WOODRUFF** - So that act in 1997 gave the commissioner additional powers including the power to make orders for repairs to determine whether rent increases were unreasonable and to ensure that properties met minimum standards. I'm reading from your department's report of the residential tenancy commissioner last year where the commissioner undertook 141 investigations in the 2017-18 year in response to a number of things. There were 14 complaints around breaches by an owner/agent involving minimum standard matters; 35 complaints and requests for resolution with respect to repairs and maintenance; 44 complaints concerning rent-related matters, non-lodgement of bond and miscellaneous matters; and 28 requests for an order that a rent increase was unreasonable. I want to ask you a question about each of those sections if that's okay. Of the 14 complainants that concerned breaches of minimum standards, what enforcement actions were taken? Was there, for example, a warning, a fine or a prosecution, which I think there are the three options under the act?

**Ms COURTNEY** - I'm not going to go into the detail of individual complaints and individual matters that were raised. What I will say is, we know that there are concerns around some aspects of this act. I would have to go back but my understanding is it was when we had a tranche of amendments that have gone through in the past, there was a commitment made to address further aspects of the act, and we're continuing to work through those aspects.

**Dr WOODRUFF** - Thank you. I'm not interested - I mean, I'm sure you're doing that work and that's good work, but I specifically have questions about the reports from last year's, and there were 14 complaints around the minimum standard matters. I'm asking you, not case by case, what enforcement actions were taken. Of those 14 how many received a warning; how many received a fine; and how many received a prosecution?

**Ms COURTNEY** - I can take that on notice. I don't have that level of detail.

**Dr WOODRUFF** - Okay, thank you. Of the 35 complaints about requests for repairs and maintenance, what percentage of those resulted in the owner or the agent having to complete the repair, and if the repair wasn't carried out, is that followed up? Is there enforcement action that the tenancy commissioner took?

**Ms COURTNEY** - We don't have details of individual cases that have been raised, so we don't have those here at the table.

**Dr WOODRUFF** - Sure. I expect that.

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**Ms COURTNEY** - But what I can commit to do is answer your questions as best that we're able to with the information that we do have, not here at the table, and get back to you and to take that on notice.

**Dr WOODRUFF** - Thank you, and of the 44 complainants around rent-related matters, non-lodgement of bond and miscellaneous matters, I take it you don't also have that information?

**Ms COURTNEY** - No.

**Dr WOODRUFF** - But could I also ask you to take that on notice too. The question I would like you to take on notice is what does rent-related matter and a miscellaneous matter mean under the report?

**Ms COURTNEY** - I will commit to get back to you with, as best we can, with the information that we are able to get for you.

**Dr WOODRUFF** - Thank you, and of the 28 unreasonable rent increase applications, what percentage were successful. So that's the fourth of those questions. I'll ask you to take that on notice.

**Ms COURTNEY** - And I will commit to get back as best we can with those.

**Dr WOODRUFF** - Thanks.

**Ms BUTLER** - Minister, if we could just go back to accreditation and licensing requirements of contractors. Can you guarantee that all subcontractors on capital investment government projects, so that's projects over \$250 000, have the appropriate accreditation and licensing?

**Ms COURTNEY** - We take all actions that we can to ensure that people are appropriately accredited.

**Ms BUTLER** - Can you guarantee that all subcontractors have the appropriate accreditation and licensing?

**Ms COURTNEY** - I can commit to you that the Government does everything possible to ensure that all contractors working on sites are accredited.

**Ms BUTLER** - Are you aware of any subcontractors working on government projects over \$250 000 that are subcontracted may not have the appropriate accreditation and licensing, therefore cannot be insured?

**Ms COURTNEY** - If I were personally aware of somebody that was not accredited properly, I would ensure that they were referred appropriately to be dealt with. As minister I want to ensure that everybody working on a government or non-government work site is accredited appropriately.

**Ms BUTLER** - Are you satisfied that the proper processes are in place to ensure that all subcontractors are appropriately accredited and licences certified to undertake the tasks that they're doing?

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**Ms COURTNEY** - We have strong processes in place to ensure compliance, but I can let the secretary expand further in terms of those.

**Ms MORGAN-WICKS** - In terms of government capital infrastructure projects and procurements, they are usually managed, for example, by a managing contractor of a contract. If they are large scale procurements or other contracts which require under the Treasurer's instructions then in accordance with procurement principles that a declaration be sought by the managing or head contractor as to compliance with all laws and legislation by any subcontractor who are appointed by them. It is a responsibility of the head or managing contractor to ensure that. The minister is not, however, responsible for every capital infrastructure project which is managed by each of the departments. The minister is responsible for the legislation which the licensing regime and frameworks set up.

**Ms BUTLER** - So excuse my ignorance, who would have ministerial responsibility to ensure all subcontractors on government projects over \$250 000 are properly accredited and licensed and certified to undertake the task they're doing? Which minister would have responsibility because it is a government project?

**Ms COURTNEY** - I have responsibility to ensure appropriate licensing and accreditation, and as the secretary has outlined, there are different processes with regards to procurement, depending on how those projects are procured.

**Ms BUTLER** - Are you aware of any subcontractors that have been undertaking work on government projects that are not appropriately accredited and licensed to undertake that work?

**Ms COURTNEY** - As I said before, if there was someone that I was aware of that was currently working that was not accredited - I'm not aware of anyone that is working unaccredited - I would raise that appropriately and have that matter dealt with.

**Ms BUTLER** - Would you be happy if I was to provide you with evidence of that?

**Ms COURTNEY** - If you have evidence in any situation where there is somebody that's working without appropriate accreditation, I would welcome that information so that that can be dealt with.

**Ms BUTLER** - It's my understanding this is quite an historic issue with subcontractors and I'm just interested to know whether you have been advised of this problem with procedure.

**Ms COURTNEY** - I am not going to go into historic claims and hypotheticals. If there is a specific scenario that you are aware of you can raise it today, or if you want to, in terms of privacy reasons, you can always write to me and I'll make sure that that matter is dealt with. I can provide you information around anything past, but I don't have information about -

**Ms BUTLER** - Are you satisfied that the current procedures in place to ensure that subcontractors are appropriately certified and licensed, and therefore insured, is compliant; is professional?

**Ms COURTNEY** - We have strong practices and I have confidence in the way that they are adhered to by my department.

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**Dr WOODRUFF** - In regard to the Residential Tenancy Commissioner, minister, prior to the reforms in 2013, any tenant who was not able to have their landlord or agent carry out repairs to their property was required to make an application to the Magistrates' Court to have the matter heard. As well, there was no ability to challenge a landlord's proposed rent increase and there were no minimum standards for properties at that time.

By legislatively granting the Residential Tenancy Commission the power to investigate and where appropriate order landlords or agents to carry out repairs, and to adjudicate the unreasonable rent increases, and to make sure that rental properties meet minimum standards, the Residential Tenancy Commissioner would have required additional resources. What extra resources, including staff, have been allocated by your department to the Residential Tenancy Commissioner to carry out and enforce provisions of the act given the quantum of cases that you can remember from my previous question? Would you please tell me the amounts and the number of staff in what periods, the last three years, please?

**Ms COURTNEY** - My advice is there has been no additional resourcing.

**Dr WOODRUFF** - Since when?

**Ms COURTNEY** - Since you said to the 2013 -

**Dr WOODRUFF** - Nothing?

**Ms COURTNEY** - No.

**Dr WOODRUFF** - Has there been a change in the number of cases that the Residential Tenancy Commissioner has been required to respond to?

**Ms COURTNEY** - I don't have the information before me in terms of historical data.

**Dr WOODRUFF** - From 2013 to the present, could we please have the number of cases - complaints or requests - that have been by year requested for attention by the Residential Tenancy Commissioner, so we can have a sense of -

**Ms COURTNEY** - We have this year and last year, if that's of help.

**Dr WOODRUFF** - Yes, that would be good now; if I could put the rest on notice.

**Mr GOLDSWORTHY** - Yes, the unreasonable rent increases, so we had 35 applications this year compared to 27 last year in the previous 12 months. There's not a significant increase over that -

**Dr WOODRUFF** - Unreasonable -

**Mr GOLDSWORTHY** - Or unreasonable rent increases.

**Dr WOODRUFF** - Okay, and what about application around repairs and maintenance?

**Mr GOLDSWORTHY** - I don't have the numbers for the previous year for that.

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**Dr WOODRUFF** - Or breaches of agents' or owners' standards?

**Mr GOLDSWORTHY** - I only have the table -

**Dr WOODRUFF** - Could I put those four areas that I referred to before on notice, those four separate areas of the complaints to see whether those figures have changed, and also the staffing numbers and total amount, you said it stayed the same, to the tenancy commissioner over that period.

**Ms COURTNEY** - Yes.

**Dr WOODRUFF** - Thank you.

**Ms DOW** - Minister, my question is in relation to WorkSafe Tasmania and I'm wondering if you could provide the committee with the review of the regulator report that was completed some time ago, and give us some understanding of when it will be made public, please.

**Ms COURTNEY** - My advice is that report is still with the board. I can get the secretary to comment further on that.

**Ms DOW** - Thank you.

**Ms MORGAN-WICKS** - Through my role as chair of the WorkCover Board, that report was initially received by the WorkCover Board late last year and has been considered at several WorkCover Board meetings since that time. We are just finalising the WorkCover Board response and thus our recommendations to the minister in relation to that report. It has generally done a review of the regulator in terms of functions and capacity and in particular having a look at the WorkSafe Inspectorate and focussing on the level of inspector skills, and looking at interjurisdictional comparisons across Australia. You may be aware that several WorkSafe entities and regulatory roles have been reviewed across Australia. The WorkCover Board felt it was timely to institute such a review and was very pleased to receive it, so those recommendations will be shortly going to the minister.

**Ms DOW** - Through you, minister. Can you then confirm when it will be released publicly?

**Ms COURTNEY** - No, I'm not going to make a commitment on when that will happen.

**Ms DOW** - Can you also tell me whether there's any reduction, any reference within that around the reduction in inspector numbers?

**Ms COURTNEY** - I have yet to receive advice on that, so considering that that's still with the board, I can't comment.

**Ms DOW** - Can you advise the committee how much WorkSafe Tasmania has in existing retained revenue, identifying that money that was part of the HIH collapse and other retained funds, please?

**Ms MORGAN-WICKS** - Through the minister. Following the collapse of the HIH Group in March 2001, all policy holders, as you'll be aware, were required to pay a special contribution to the nominal insurer to meet the HIH liabilities. In terms of funds that have been transferred or

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deemed as excess, we had three payments that have actually gone to the fund, so in September 2014 there was a payment of \$3 999 555.70. There was a further notification of excess of \$1.3 million or thereabouts, and again in November 2015 there was another excess of \$1 million that was transferred to the nominal insurer.

**Ms DOW** - And through you, minister. What is that funding being used for currently? How is it being extended? For what activities?

**Ms MORGAN-WICKS** - If I may also add to the previous question as it sits, the number is \$4.7 million that is currently in that fund today. All requests to expend funds from the trust fund must be approved by me as secretary of the Department of Justice and must clearly demonstrate that the specific purpose of the funds is to promote workplace safety.

To date, approval has been extended to the use of \$219 239 for reviewing mine safety laws; \$161 789.82 for procuring a specialised IT system to support inspectorate activities which are currently being developed with a vendor known as Itree; \$106 893.35 on developing an inspectorate's critical competency, so in terms of training and development in terms of investigation compliance; and in particular preparing briefs of evidence for the Director of Public Prosecutions in relation to incident investigation and prosecution; and we have \$500 000 that has been dedicated to improving quad bike safety on farm work sites, so which included, as the minister has recently announced, a rebate scheme for farmers.

**Ms DOW** - One last question, Chair. What part of the \$450 million efficiency dividend will be applied to WorkSafe Tasmania?

**Ms COURTNEY** - Thank you for that question. This has been asked of many of my colleagues so far, and I know it has been outlined by the Treasurer as well as my other parliamentary colleagues. We are going to be looking at consultants, advertising, promotion and travel transport, type of vacancy control and natural attrition, and returns from government businesses, and as has been outlined by the Treasurer, we're working through this process, and no specific allocations have been made, and we'll work through that over the coming weeks.

**Dr WOODRUFF** - Minister what do you think your portfolios are with respect to the changing climate? How do you think your portfolio activities are affected by changing climate?

**Ms COURTNEY** - I thank the member for that question, but with regards to whole-of-government climate change policy, that's best directed to minister Archer.

**Dr WOODRUFF** - Do you have any specific focus or activities of your portfolio looking at the impacts of climate change and any requirements to reduce our emissions from the building and construction sector?

**Ms COURTNEY** - There will be a range of initiatives, and we know within building and construction there are a range of initiatives that are being progressed at a national level through different ministers around the country and -

**Dr WOODRUFF** - I'm talking to you at this level, as the minister responsible for building and construction.

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**Ms COURTNEY** - Yes, and as the minister responsible for building and construction, we look at this from a national approach and so we will continue to work with other jurisdictions with regards to particularly housing.

**Dr WOODRUFF** - So you're not doing anything about cross-laminated timbers, looking at our pine reserves-

**Ms COURTNEY** - Yes, but we're not in that portfolio responsibility. If you're talking about the actual production of cross-laminated timber, that will be in resources.

**Dr WOODRUFF** - No, I'm not talking about that.

**Ms COURTNEY** - In terms of building and construction -

**Dr WOODRUFF** - I'm talking about whether people in Tasmania have access to the sorts of building materials that we will need to use more of in the future such as cross-laminated timber to replace concrete? Wouldn't you like to know, as minister, whether people can have access to a resource like that that's made and manufactured in Tasmania and that we have, for example, sufficient pine resource.

**Ms COURTNEY** - Thank you for the question. In regard to climate change and the potential impact on the building and construction minister, I'm working with ministers across Australia with regards to both the COAG Energy Council as well as the building minister's forum to make sure that we have an agreed trajectory for low energy buildings. I understand that the BMF has asked that the Australian Building Codes Board provide further advice on this to make sure that we are doing it in collaboration with industry to make sure that we've got a holistic review, and also to make sure that different climates are taken into account and different needs of different communities.

**Mr TUCKER** - Minister, the Hodgman Government has led the nation in its reforms that recognise the impact that work-related trauma can have on employees. Can you update the committee on the status of the reforms to the Workers Rehabilitation and Compensation Act 1988 that now include a presumption in respect of post-traumatic stress disorder for public sector workers?

**Ms COURTNEY** - Thank you for the question, Mr Tucker. The Hodgman Liberal Government is paving the way to ensuring that there is proper recognition of the debilitating mental condition known as post-traumatic stress disorder. Tasmania is the first jurisdiction in Australia to enact legislation to provide a rebuttal presumption that the cause of PTSD is work-related for the purposes of workers' compensation. As the bill passed through both houses unamended, and received Royal Assent this week, the presumption is now enforced I am pleased to inform the committee.

This nation-leading legislation makes it easier for all public sector workers, employees of government business enterprises and state-owned companies, and volunteer first responders to access work-related compensation for PTSD. I am immensely proud that we have taken affirmative action to better support public sector workers and reduce the stigma surrounding PTSD. It is important to note that we met our commitment to undertake immediate action to ensure the presumptions apply as soon as practicable.

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As at 30 October 2018, the presumption has applied by the way of an administrative employment direction issued by the head of the state service directing all government agencies, government business enterprises and state-owned companies to adopt the presumption when assessing any PTSD-related claim for compensation. These changes are of particular benefit to Tasmania's hard-working paramedics, police officers, firefighters, correctional officers and other emergency service workers who keep our community safe in sometimes traumatic and trying circumstances.

As a community we depend on those who put themselves on the line for others and as a government we are working to make sure we look after them in return. Paramedics, police, fire fighters, prison guards and other emergency service workers keep our community safe in often stressful and traumatic situations. We know from listening and working with our first responders that they are regularly confronted by tragedies and horrifying scenes that are not forgotten when they return home at the end of their shifts. We understand that PTSD can be difficult to diagnose and may be secondary to initial injury. It may also be an underlying factor resulting from prolonged exposure to incidents over an extended period which can be the case with emergency service personnel and first responders.

Due to changes the government has put in place, government agencies have to prove that a diagnosis of PTSD is not work-related in order to refute the claim. While Tasmania's workers' compensation system already has a very high acceptance rate for PTSD-related claims, the reversal of the onus of proof will make it easier and remove any barriers for public servants suffering from PTSD to make a claim and have it accepted. This important change is a demonstration of our support for public sector workers, and the government stands behind those who suffer due to traumatic circumstances -

**Ms BUTLER** - Three minutes.

**Ms COURTNEY** - which have arisen during the course of their public service.

**Ms BUTLER** - Three minutes.

**CHAIR** - Yes, I heard you.

**Ms BUTLER** - Thank you.

**CHAIR** - The minister still has the call. Have you finished, minister?

**Ms COURTNEY** - No, that's fine.

**CHAIR** - Ms Butler, you have the call.

**Ms BUTLER** - Thank you. Minister, can you please provide a specific breakdown of the number of consultants engaged by Consumer Building and Occupational Services?

**Ms COURTNEY** - We can provide it in terms of the agency level.

**Ms MORGAN-WICKS** - Through you, minister. The total cost of consultancies for the Department of Justice from 1 July 2018 to 31 March 2019 was \$1 599 132.

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**Ms BUTLER** - Is there a further breakdown of how many of those consultants were specifically engaged by Consumer Building and Occupational Services?

**Ms COURTNEY** - We will seek to provide that on notice.

**Ms BUTLER** - Okay. Can you also provide a breakdown of the total costs of all those consultants within Consumer Building and Occupational Services, so not just the overall cost which we've just been provided with by Justice.

**Ms COURTNEY** - Isn't that what we just said we would -

**Ms BUTLER** - No, that was for Justice. I'm interested in if you can also break it down to -

**Ms COURTNEY** - Yes, so for CBOS. We will see if we can provide that.

**Ms BUTLER** - That would be great.

**Ms MORGAN-WICKS** - We can provide some further details, through the minister, in terms of a breakdown of the consultancies of the Department of Justice, CBOS itself would have a very small proportion of that \$1.5 million. The majority of the consultancies that the department actually engages is in relation to building and construction and goods and services, so relating to our capital infrastructure program.

**Ms BUTLER** - Would you also be able to provide information in relation to the whereabouts of those consultants, which ones were Tasmanian consultants and which ones were from -

**CHAIR** - The whereabouts? Can you clarify what you're asking for?

**Ms BUTLER** - How many consultants are Tasmanian.

**CHAIR** - Where are they domiciled?

**Ms MORGAN-WICKS** - Sorry, we've just undertaken further inquiries, so in relation to the \$1.5 million we have one consultant for CBOS which is in the cost of \$12 000.

**Ms BUTLER** - Can you confirm that they're local?

**Ms MORGAN-WICKS** - Yes, that's David Ponting.

**Ms BUTLER** - Excellent. Thank you. Could you provide me with the number of RTIs received in relation to building and occupational services?

**Ms MORGAN-WICKS** - I believe we can find RTIs across the agency.

**Ms BUTLER** - The whole agency would be great. Thank you.

**Ms COURTNEY** - I'll have to take that information on notice. That will have to vary on the number of RTIs.

**Ms BUTLER** - And the average time to -

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**CHAIR** - Just a moment, please. Minister, you can provide information at the end of the day as opposed to having to put it on notice, I'll just remind you of that.

**Mc COURTNEY** - Good. Many of these we'll be able to get to.

**Ms MORGAN-WICKS** - Thank you, Chair.

**CHAIR** - And also the average time -

**Dr WOODRUFF** - I have been very patient, Chair. Labor has had Anita Dow and then -

**CHAIR** - Yes.

**Dr WOODRUFF** - I haven't had a question for a very long time.

**CHAIR** - You've had 13 questions, Labor has had 26, so, and you know the ratio, so I'm sorry.

**Ms BUTLER** - The average time to accept or reject an assessable RTI.

**Ms COURTNEY** - If you're looking at the whole of agency it might be better to ask minister Archer this as the Minister for Justice and we're talking about the Department of Justice, so I'd suggest that you direct that to Ms Archer.

**Ms BUTLER** - Also in relation to CBOS, the average time to accept or reject an RTI.

**Ms COURTNEY** - In relation to CBOS, I can seek what information we do have available.

**Ms DOW** - My question, minister, is in relation again to the review of the WorkCover regulatory report. Can you please provide the committee with a copy of all matters referred to the WorkCover Board for review?

**Ms COURTNEY** - My understanding is there have been three directions and requests and some of them were made prior to me being minister. I understand one was with regards to older workers - sorry, I will go backwards. There's the presumption in respect to PTSD. There's also been one with regards to step down, that was discussed only quite recently in the Chamber. And there was one that was preceding me as minister with regards to older workers and their workers' compensation entitlements.

**Ms DOW** - Are you in a position to provide copies of those?

**Ms COURTNEY** - No, I'm not going to be tabling those.

**Dr WOODRUFF** - Minister, I understand that there's plans to revise the Australian Construction Code to significantly strengthen the existing requirements for building energy efficiency and I assume the Tasmanian government's been involved in those conversations. What's our position on the progress made so far?

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**Ms COURTNEY** - With regards to progress as I outlined earlier, we're working through the COAG Energy Council and also the BMF in terms of the work that's been undertaken by the advisors towards that. I can seek further advice on where we're going there.

**Mr GOLDSWORTHY** - Minister, [inaudible] has directed the Australian Building Codes to undertake a project to determine what changes are required to the National Construction Code in order to achieve the energy efficiency trajectory that has been set by the COAG Energy Council. So that board is undertaking that project at the moment.

**Dr WOODRUFF** - Thank you. There have been various reviews of the efficiency - building energy efficient standard designs and these reviews in the past have highlighted that there's been a lack of enforcement across states in Australia to make sure that buildings are built as they're designed and according to the star rating. Given Tasmania has a really cold climate and it makes a big difference to people if their houses are designed properly to be energy efficient, and it reduces the cost a lot, what enforcement activities are you taking to make sure that the houses built in Tasmania are designed to the six-star standard that they're actually required to be?

**Mr GOLDSWORTHY** - It is inherent within the framework that we have in place in Tasmania. There is a requirement for all buildings designed to be independently checked and certified to ensure that they're compliant with the requirements of the National Construction Code. This includes the energy efficiency to six-star rating. That compliance is then checked through the build process by a series of inspections by building surveyors, and then under our audit program we periodically check the work of the building surveyors and through documentation and physical on-site audits.

**Dr WOODRUFF** - Are you aware, minister, of the reviews about the lack of enforcements under this process. There are really huge gaps happening around Australia and in Tasmania. I've heard of cases where buildings are simply not being built with the level of detail required to achieve the energy efficiencies to reduce the cost of heating houses. Are you taking some particular audit - you've mentioned an audit, could you put more detail on that? Have you identified problems and whether they need to be rectified?

**Ms COURTNEY** - I'm not quite sure what report you're referring to, but let me be clear that Tasmania is leading the way across Australia in terms of compliance and enforcement of the National Construction Code.

**Dr WOODRUFF** - Where does it say that?

**Ms COURTNEY** - The Shergold Weir Report has a number of recommendations to improve compliance enforcement with the National Construction Code. Tasmania has already implemented the majority of these recommendations through the Building Act 2016 and the Occupational Licensing Act 2005. We are leading the way and not a lot of other jurisdictions are working with us and they are looking to use about our reforms. We are leading the nation.

**Ms DOW** - Does the government intend to introduce industrial manslaughter legislation?

**Ms COURTNEY** - That's being worked through at the national level and I'll give you some more information. As a Government we take workplace safety seriously, and we want to make sure that there is no workplace injury and particularly no workplace death because the impact it has on people and their families is horrendous. The Tasmanian government has committed to maintaining

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harmonised WHS laws to achieve national uniformity to the WHS regulatory framework. These laws provide for a balanced and nationally consistent framework to secure the health and safety and welfare of workers. SafeWork Australia members received a final report of the 2018 independent review of the model WHS laws in December 2018.

The report details 34 recommendations including a proposal that the model laws be amended to provide for a new offence for industrial manslaughter resulting from gross negligence causing death. Some of the report recommendations will be subject to further analysis through the regulatory impact statement before WHS ministers respond to this report and my understanding is, the responsible ministers will review the report later in 2019.

**Ms DOW** - So when could we expect to know?

**Ms COURTNEY** - I'm not going to pre-empt what those discussions are going to be, but we are making sure that they're working in a nationally harmonised way. I wouldn't want to make a commitment now before I've had the opportunity to have those conversations with my peers.

**Ms DOW** - How many cases of silicosis have been identified in Tasmania?

**CHAIR** - Do you need a time frame that you're looking at? Since forever or?

**Ms DOW** - In the last five years, that would be interesting.

**Ms COURTNEY** - My advice is there have been five workers who have made claims against Tasmania's compensation system relating to silicosis since October 2018.

**Ms DOW** - Thank you.

**Ms BUTLER** - The Government has extended the first home owner grant of \$20 000 until 30 June 2020 which is expected to support ongoing demand for newly constructed homes by first home buyers. I note the changing phraseology between the \$20 000 first home owner grant and the first home builder boost for \$20 000. Why did the name change?

**Ms COURTNEY** - This is a matter for the Treasurer. This is a grant that's made through Treasury so you will have to direct terminology around the grant to the Treasurer.

**Ms BUTLER** - Does the scheme have the same governance conditions as the originally named grant? Are you aware of that?

**Ms COURTNEY** - We don't administer the scheme. It is done by Treasury so you will have to ask the Treasurer.

**Ms BUTLER** - Looking under the grants and subsidies for that scheme, there has been a reduction which is quite significant of that scheme. Do you anticipate the demand for newly constructed homes, first home owners, will decline in 2021?

**Ms COURTNEY** - In terms of the actual administration of that, that is for the Treasurer. The process is managed by Treasury so I can't provide you with information, that will have to be directed to the Treasurer.

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**Ms BUTLER** - Would you be able to explain your responsibility in relation to that grant?

**Ms COURTNEY** - My responsibilities are making sure that from a compliance perspective we have builders that are working that are compliant with all legislation. Where it has been outlined, we ensure that the buildings which are being built are compliant with relevant legislation. The actual administration of that, that's a matter for the Treasurer.

**Ms BUTLER** - With stamp duty for the first home buyers, with the provision of 50 per cent concessional stamp duty for first home buyers on premises of up to \$400 000, the Government will be extending that eligible period. Do you know what the uptake has been of that program and how it relates to your portfolio?

**Ms COURTNEY** - That's a matter for Treasurer in terms of the administration, the numbers of applications.

**Ms BUTLER** - There's also a reduction in that grant as well. Do you have any understanding of why, and why it would be reduced when it is meant to support the construction of up to 2000 new properties?

**Ms COURTNEY** - I'm not going to speculate on data that is administered and produced by a different agency and a different minister.

**Ms BUTLER** - But you have been announcing this as a program run by you to support the building construction.

**Ms COURTNEY** - No, the program is not run by me. It is run by the Treasurer.

**Ms BUTLER** - But you have been responsible for -

**Ms COURTNEY** - It supports the building and construction industry and we know that the latest ABS stats continue to show that we've got confidence in growth in terms of the number of first home builders and anecdotally out on the ground when I'm visiting developers and looking at new sites that are being opened up, on the ground I'm not seeing any of that demand waning.

**Ms BUTLER** - Minister, there's a reduction of almost \$1.3 million in that actual funding so why would there be such a significant reduction when it is meant to support construction of up to 2000 new properties.

**Ms COURTNEY** - In terms of a program that is administered by a different minister and a different agency, you'll have to speak to the appropriate minister.

**CHAIR** - I'm moving the call to Dr Woodruff. We need to stay on the subject that we are examining today.

**Dr WOODRUFF** - Minister, WorkSafe Tasmania receives unexplained funding reduction in the year 2021-22. Can you explain what that is about?

**Ms COURTNEY** - I will get the secretary to answer.

**Ms MORGAN-WICKS** - Through the minister, in relation to 4.1 WorkSafe Tasmania in table 6.2 of the budget papers, we do see what is a reduction on the papers in 2021- 22. It's to do with the actual allocation of the nominal insurer expenditure. I mentioned in a previous question the payments going in as deemed excess to the department since 2015. At that point in time a decision was made to allocate nominally the expenditure across the board estimates, and what we actually see in this line is \$600 000 per year which had been allocated to as expenditure to WorkSafe Tasmania at that time in agreement with Treasury. Now what has been determined in this budget year is to actually, for the additional five WorkSafe inspectors to have an allocation of that \$600 000 which needs to continue through as that expenditure. That's actually going to be a change to the expenditure that's agreed with Treasury in this financial year.

**Dr WOODRUFF** - The 2021-22?

**Ms MORGAN-WICKS** - Yes. A variation is actually sitting in our budget information management system to provide for the additional five WorkSafe inspectors. That will come through and be confirmed as part of the mid-year estimates.

**Dr WOODRUFF** - So in 2013-14, talking about the rates of serious injuries that occurred, they were 8.6 per 1000 employees, but the latest figures show that the injury rate is 13.1 per 1000 employees and the return to work rate has also started to drop down to 79 per cent where it was 81 per cent the previous year. Your budget, minister, has decreased from \$18 million in 2013-14 to just \$12.5 million in 2015-16 which was a massive cut when your Government came in, and down to \$10.9 million in 2019-20. You continue to cut the budget to WorkSafe Tasmania and it's not really a surprise, is it, that the key performance indicators are slipping, they're going backwards and how are you going to keep improving or how are you going to turn that around with the future cuts that seem to be in place under your government.

**Ms COURTNEY** - I reject first of all the assertion that there's going to be future cuts, that's not the case.

**Dr WOODRUFF** - There has been because you're going to take 0.75 per cent of budget of every department, so that is a cut.

**CHAIR** - Order. Allow the minister to answer, Dr Woodruff.

**Ms COURTNEY** - I reject the fact that there are cuts in the future.

**Dr WOODRUFF** - No cuts to WorkSafe from the efficiency dividend?

**Ms COURTNEY** - As has been outlined in my opening statement, we have allocated additional resources for more inspectors into WorkSafe.

**Dr WOODRUFF** - How do you deal with the fact that the budget has dropped dramatically from \$18 million down to \$10 million? The key performance indicators are dropping. You're clearly not putting enough into WorkSafe.

**Ms COURTNEY** - The secretary has already outlined where we are in terms of the current budget papers and looking forward. I have outlined in my opening statement, we have allocated additional resources to ensure that we have more inspectors available within Tasmania, and I think the secretary has some more to add.

**Ms MORGAN-WICKS** - In terms of 2013-14 budget for WorkSafe, at that time it also had funding for electrical and gas safety which has actually been transferred to CBOS.

**Dr WOODRUFF** - And how much money is that?

**Ms MORGAN-WICKS** - Through you minister. We will have that for you.

**Ms DOW** - Minister, what is the progress of the review into extending presumptive PTSD to the private sector?

**Ms COURTNEY** - As I outlined earlier, that has been referred to the WorkCover Board, and I don't know whether the chair is able to provide anything further, but they have a time frame. I will get advice once they have finished their deliberations. I'm not sure whether the chair would like to say anything further or can say anything further.

**Ms MORGAN-WICKS** - Thank you, minister. The WorkCover Board has split the further work basically into two sections. At the moment we are procuring an expert in relation to the consultation and further work on the private sector and to further analyse the data that we have in relation to workers' compensation claims raising the issue of PTSD in relation to private sector claims. We are also working through with the goal of working towards our WorkSafe month, the very popular WorkSafe month which will occur in October. So later this year, in particular, looking at a PTSD conference, and offering in terms of the diagnosis, further education and training, particularly directed at medical professionals in relation to consistency in diagnosis et cetera. Our rehab and compensation committee has been working very hard on that program and also the resources and education materials required.

**Ms DOW** - When can we expect to see that report concluded?

**Ms COURTNEY** - It's not about seeing the report concluded. I expect that I will get advice as minister by the end of the calendar year. That is what I'm anticipating.

**Ms DOW** - Thank you.

**Ms BUTLER** - In light of the recent budget cuts that will have to go across agencies, we were just talking earlier in the committee about whether CBOS is adequately resourced to check and monitor compliance. Will you be looking at targeting any of those workers for the cuts, or will you guarantee that their jobs will be safe because they're already under resourced?

**Ms COURTNEY** - I reject the statement that they're already under resourced. As I said earlier, I have confidence in CBOS to deliver and as has been outlined earlier, there is funding mechanisms through the nature of the activity that also changes the funding mechanism for that area as well. The Government is working through a process with regard to the deficiency dividend and we will work through that process over the coming weeks.

**Ms BUTLER** - Does that mean that prior to this surge in building, you were over resourced in those areas? Your resources haven't changed, so there's been a surge, yet your workforce is relatively the same. You haven't increased the resources in that area, so were you over-resourced previously?

**CHAIR** - I wish to advise that the time for the examination of this area of the budget has concluded. If we could change, please, to the resource sector.

**Ms BUTLER** - Thank you.

**CHAIR** - Thank you to the officers at the table for their contribution.

## **DIVISION 11**

### **Department of State Growth**

#### **Output Group 4**

#### **Resources Police and Regulatory Service**

**CHAIR** - Are we right to go, minister?

**Ms COURTNEY** - Yes, thank you.

**CHAIR** - We shall resume our hearing. Minister, would you kindly introduce the staff at the table with their name and title?

**Ms COURTNEY** - Yes. I'll have the Secretary introduce the others because I always seem to get the titles wrong. To my right, I have the Secretary, Kim Evans.

**Mr EVANS** - I'm joined by Bob Rutherford on the minister's left, Bob's the Deputy Secretary of Industry and Business Development, and Kevin Robinson, the Director of Mineral Resources Tasmania.

**CHAIR** - Welcome. Minister, would you like to do an overview statement?

**Ms COURTNEY** - Tasmania's resources sectors are the pillars of our economy and are fundamentally important to regional communities. Without the approximately 9000 direct jobs the sectors provide, many of our regional towns would struggle to survive. Nine thousand families directly rely on forestry or mining for their living and wellbeing. These jobs in those sectors put money in the pockets of Tasmanians and food on the table. They support businesses, communities and particularly these mutual areas. In fact, together, forestry, mining and mineral processing are worth more than \$4 billion a year to Tasmania.

I'd like to start by noting the impact on the forestry sector of the bushfires that struck our state earlier this year. For a sector that's based on trees and wood, bushfires can spell disaster and we did see significant damage to our forest, both native and plantation. We also saw impact on forestry businesses, employers, exporters as facilities were burned and operations were halted. I'm very pleased that we have a resilient sector. It always has been and it always will be. Operations are getting back to normal and recovery efforts are making a real difference and I'm proud to take this opportunity to acknowledge the exceptional firefighting response from all the members of the forestry community, government and private, large and small. Our level of cooperation and skill was inspiring and highlighted to me the strength and resilience of the Tasmanian spirit and the strength and resilience of the industry. Forestry's a vital sector of our economy, particularly in regional communities. Forestry generates full time jobs at a higher rate than any other sector of our economy. With 83 per cent of those employed in the industry working full time, compared to 60 per

cent of the broader workforce in Tasmania and this is why forestry is important to our regions. Regions misfortunes and well-being rely on the strength of this sector. It is why we are pushing ahead with our plan to double its value to \$1.2 billion a year by 2036.

We've been working to build confidence in the forestry sector and to drive growth and create jobs. We've seen an increased investment production, exports and employment. There are currently around 5700 direct and indirect jobs from forestry in Tasmania. This group is even higher when you look at employment in secondary markets such as special timbers used in the production of craft wood products, furniture and boats. We've seen a significant increase in the production of wood fire from Tasmanian forests, up 70 per cent in 2017-18 from the production in 2013-14. Similarly, the logs harvested has seen an 87 per cent increase in the values we are experiencing in our lowest year in 2012-13. Last year, the total private forest harvest rose for the sixth consecutive year, eclipsing last year's record high increasing a further nine per cent on the previous year to supply a new record of \$4.25 million tonnes of logs to market.

This is four times the volume produced from the private forests in 2011-12 and takes a private forest share of the total harvest and volume of resources in Tasmania to 74 per cent and we will continue working closely with the Australian Government and industry to deliver. With regards to mining and mineral processing, like forestry, it's critical to the economy and the cornerstone industry in this state. Last full financial year saw mining and mineral processing contribute almost \$3 billion to the state's economy an increase of \$560 million on the previous year. I'm happy to report this level of activity has been maintained so far this calendar year, signalling a strong final outcome for the 2018-19. Mining and mineral processing keep more than 5600 Tasmanians directly in jobs and contributes millions of dollars a year in royalties straight into our economy. Importantly, these jobs are mostly in regional areas, are highly skilled and are well-paid, providing advanced career paths for many Tasmanian men and women.

I will leave my other comments because I know that members are keen to start questions.

**CHAIR** - So we'll run through until 11 a.m. and then we'll have a break. Dr Broad.

**Dr BROAD** - Minister, do you have any updates on a potential opening of mines in Tasmania, Queenstown?

**Ms COURTNEY** - Thank you, Dr Broad, I know this one is very close to your heart, considering that it is in Braddon and I understand you've visited recently as I have, too. I've been across a number of times and met directly with management. Most recently in the last couple of weeks.

As we're aware, it remains on care and maintenance after ceasing operations in 2013. We remain very hopeful of the restart. I can't provide a specific date; however, the Government has obviously provided a substantial assistance package in the past to provide a number of works at the site. We've also provided commitments for restart and other support that we will provide the company, and I can reassure you and I can reassure members of the community that both personally, through my office and through the department, we're engaging regularly with management locally, but also internationally to be able to provide the certainty that we need for the community. Also I reiterate the Government's absolute support for this project.

**Dr BROAD** - Minister, in last year's budget there was a note about a \$25 million support package. This budget it's not present. It is not mentioned. Instead it is discussed as a \$3.5 million

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provision but it's lumped into other grants and subsidies, rather than being a line item. Can you please explain what's going on there? What's happened to that \$25 million provision mentioned in last year's budget?

**Ms COURTNEY** - I will just have to get last year's budget papers. Sorry, I've just got to get the right one.

**Dr BROAD** - The headline in Budget Paper 1.

**Ms COURTNEY** - Are you talking about in Budget Paper 1 from last year, the support to grow the Tasmanian economy?

**Dr BROAD** - Yes.

**Ms COURTNEY** - Yes, it is used as an example. In some instances, there are offers of support made by the Government that may be taken up if certain conditions are satisfied. Then in terms of this budget, although it's not framed up in the same area, it does recognise within Government risks and I'd have to find the right budget paper for it. It does recognise that there are a number of commitments that have been made by Government. I don't believe it's specifically named up, but when it was named up last year, it was simply used as an example of one of the ones that could be used in the future.

**Dr BROAD** - So does that commitment stand, the \$25 million?

**Ms COURTNEY** - The commitment absolutely stands.

**Dr BROAD** - So, we have last year's budget - there was a provision for the restart of Avebury. That was a line item, \$3.5 million. There is no provision for that in this year's budget. Does that commitment still stand and do you have a time line on the restart of Avebury?

**Ms COURTNEY** - My understanding is the commitment still stands and -

**Dr BROAD** - There was provision in last year's budget and there's not in this year. Last year's budget, p.61, Budget Paper 1, State Grown - Dundas Mining 1.2, 1.2, 1.1.

**Ms COURTNEY** - It still stands and we're working with the company.

**Dr BROAD** - Is there any guidance on a potential restart for Avebury?

**Ms COURTNEY** - I'm not going to pre-empt when it may or may not start. As a Government, we're very hopeful and we provide this type of support because we want to see these initiatives working and employing Tasmanians, but in terms of anticipating a precise start date, we can't do that.

**Dr BROAD** - But the provision remains?

**Ms COURTNEY** - My understanding is that the provision remains.

**Dr BROAD** - Have you sought to insert yourself in the debate in the dispute between Dundas Mining and the West Coast Council?

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**Ms COURTNEY** - Conversations between any mining proponent and a local council is a matter between them and the local council.

**Dr BROAD** - But you haven't had any involvement or any role in mediation, et cetera, in that dispute?

**Ms COURTNEY** - It's not my role to mediate between a company and another level of company.

**Dr BROAD** - Right. No involvement.

**Dr WOODRUFF** - Minister, has Venture Minerals planning permits issued in September 2013 expired.?

**Ms COURTNEY** - My advice is they have not expired.

**Dr WOODRUFF** - What's the basis for that advice? I understand that they were required to substantially commence works within two years and as of 6 April 2014, they had only cleared 1.2 per cent of the land that needed to be cleared as part of the commencement for the project, so nothing has happened since then. That's the information that we have. So how can you have advice, on what basis is that advice that it has been substantially commenced?

**Ms COURTNEY** - Well, in terms of the application of that, that's a matter for the appropriate people within the department, so I will have them answer.

**Mr ROBINSON** - The situation for Venture Minerals, as you realise, was there was a deferral to the commencement of operations due to legal issues and through that period of time they were unable to commence mining to any extent through that. Therefore, they were unable to commence mining whilst that judicial review was going on.

At the same time, and over that period of time, that period took a considerable number of years and the commodity prices over that period also reduced to a point in which Venture Minerals needed to put the operation into care and maintenance, and I believe that they are currently looking at the situation for reopening.

**Dr WOODRUFF** - So this has been a matter that Save the Tarkine has referred to the Australian Securities Investment Commission and the Australian Stock Exchange to investigate whether their company has appropriately released information in their annual report about the risk to the commencement of that project. Things have changed substantially in the Tankine since 2013. There's been bushfires in that area. The Tasmanian devil facial tumour disease cases of that eco system changes have occurred in the area. There are real questions about whether such a permit could be issued at the moment. We're just concerned that your government is not being open about the advice that something substantial has occurred in this case.

**Ms COURTNEY** - That was quite a wide-ranging question. With regards to any actions -

**Dr WOODRUFF** - Concern that your lack of openness, I will sum it up to that, we're concerned that you're running cover for Venture Minerals, you clearly have not been able to -

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**CHAIR** - Order. Dr Woodruff, allow the minister to answer your question.

**Dr WOODRUFF** - Substantially start and appear to be in breach, and the planning has actually expired.

**Ms COURTNEY** - I don't need to run cover for any private company, thank you. What I can say is that the Government wants to ensure that we continue to have regions of Tasmania that are multi-use areas available for multi-use. With regard to planning matters -

**Dr WOODRUFF** - You can't have a mine in an area that should be a national park. That's the bottom line.

**CHAIR** - Dr Woodruff, order.

**Ms COURTNEY** - Dr Woodruff, you make a number of statements -

**Dr WOODRUFF** - Particularly not the sort of -

**Ms COURTNEY** - I'm still trying to ascertain the question within all of those. We started with ASIC and any -

**Dr WOODRUFF** - Can you please give the advice that shows that -

**CHAIR** - Dr Woodruff, order.

**Ms COURTNEY** - investigation or otherwise between ASIC and the company is a matter for them. As has already been outlined by the department on the left, they've provided an update and the mining lease is in good standing. I don't -

**Dr WOODRUFF** - They would need to go back to the Commonwealth, wouldn't they, if the lease had expired? If the approval planning permits had expired, they'd have to go back to the Commonwealth Minister for the Environment to re-apply to mine in that area.

**CHAIR** - That's a statement and not a question.

**Ms COURTNEY** - I'm not going to speculate on what someone -

**CHAIR** - Dr Broad, you have the call.

**Dr BROAD** - Thank you. Minister, the ABS stats indicate that mineral exploration in Tasmania has declined in the last 12 months from \$6.4 million to \$5 million a quarter. Can you explain why mineral exploration has dropped by some 22 per cent in the past 12 months?

**Ms COURTNEY** - We know that exploration is a really important precursor for mining development and that's why we are developing and that's why we have the EDGI grant scheme to ensure that people are doing exploration work, and -

**CHAIR** - Minister, could you define the acronym, please?

**Ms COURTNEY** - Oh, it's one of those - Exploration Drilling Grant Initiative.

**Mr BROAD** - How long has that grant been in place?

**Ms COURTNEY** - I will give you the details of that grant. I was across on the west coast only recently and had the opportunity to see one of the drill rigs in action. It's a very worthwhile initiative and it was actually great in that circumstance to meet the proponents and have them tell me first-hand how important initiatives such as this are for looking at new greenfields exploration because we know have a strong future in mining and mineral resources on the west coast. The EDGI, that Exploration Drilling Grant Initiative, we have committed \$2 million over four years, so that's 2018 to 2022, to the Exploration Drilling Grant Initiative.

**Dr BROAD** - How much, sorry?

**Ms COURTNEY** - Two million dollars. With the aim of increasing greenfield's exploration expenditure by 60 per cent. Over the last decade, all other Australian jurisdictions have done some similar things and we understand that the cost benefit ratio is about 23 to 1, so it's a great initiative. It's been taken up and we are very hopeful that through this we're going to see further expenditure.

**Dr BROAD** - But you didn't answer the question. Why do you think the mineral exploration has declined by 22 per cent over the past year?

**Ms COURTNEY** - I reject the assertion that it's going down.

**Dr BROAD** - It is.

**Ms COURTNEY** - In the 18 months to the March 2019, Tasmanian exploration expenditure was \$32.9 million, up 40 per cent on the pre-setting period.

**Dr BROAD** - This is from ABS catalogue number 841210 and that shows that mineral exploration has declined 22 per cent over the past year. Furthermore, that catalogue also demonstrates how mineral exploration has declined from \$10 million per quarter down to \$5 million. So, in fact it's hard -

**CHAIR** - This is not a debate. Do you have a question?

**Dr BROAD** - Yes. Where's the explanation? Why has there been such a decline?

**Ms COURTNEY** - The ABS data indicate that overall exploration expenditure for the calendar year 2018 was \$21.5 million, 1.4 per cent higher than the calendar year 2017 and greenfield expenditure was \$1.9 million, an increase of 5 per cent in the previous period.

**Dr BROAD** - So how does that compare to, for example, 2013-14?

**Ms COURTNEY** - I don't have the -

**Dr BROAD** - Well, I have. It shows a significant decline. Like, it's halved.

**Ms COURTNEY** - Without the data in front of me, Dr Broad, I cannot respond to that assertion. What I am saying is ABS indicate that overall exploration expenditure for the calendar

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year 2018 was \$21.5 million which is 1.4 per cent higher than the calendar year 2017, and greenfield expenditure was \$1.9 million, an increase of 5 per cent in the previous period.

**Dr BROAD** - But December to December is down 22 per cent.

**Ms COURTNEY** - Dr Broad, you're looking at data that I don't have before me. What I am saying is, as I can read it once for you, ABS indicate that overall exploration expenditure for the calendar year 2018 was \$21.5 million, 1.4 per cent higher than the calendar year 2017, and greenfield expenditure was 1.9 million, an increase of 5 per cent in the previous period.

**CHAIR** - Yes, I'm more than happy for the director to talk to this?

**Mr ROBINSON** - Through you, minister, as we all know, the commodity sector is subject to vagaries of commodity prices and also the investment climate market for exploration at the time. It is an area where there is risk and so therefore, it depends upon what the investment sector is willing to pay. The ups and downs of the amount of exploration that goes into the industry can therefore relate to what the commodities that are in favour and also the pricing of those commodities. I can't say that - what the commodity prices were in 2013-14. I can get that information if required.

**Dr BROAD** - There was a high Australian dollar too -

**Mr ROBINSON** - You're correct in that the Australian dollar does have a very large impact to our Australian miners because all commodities are sold in US dollars. So, we've been really focused much more on what's happening in the last couple of years, with regard to exploration and the impacts of the Australian dollar on commodity prices rather than what's happened earlier on. Some six years ago.

**Dr BROAD** - Minister, if we turn our minds back to 2013-14, there was a high Australian dollar and relatively tough international conditions and commodity prices, and yet we had higher exploration rates than we do now, with a relatively low Australian dollar and a relatively better commodity price. Can you explain why we've seen a significant decline in mineral exploration over that period?

**Ms COURTNEY** - As has just been outlined, there is a range of factors that influence exploration. By the very nature of it, it tends to be quite a lumpy data series, as you would be aware and the government, as I said before, understands the importance of exploration which is why we have this initiative and the initiative has been very successful.

**Dr BROAD** - Is there an admission that mining exploration has declined to an extent that the industry needs support to encourage further drilling?

**Ms COURTNEY** - No, what it is is the Government looks to programs and initiatives that will support mining. We know that mining investment is competitive. It's competitive across different jurisdictions and it's competitive in Australia. We want to send a clear message to investors and companies that Tasmania is open for business, that we will support you and we will partner with you to make sure that you are successful here. So this initiative, as I outlined earlier, is not a unique initiative but we want to make sure that we're doing everything we can as a Government to encourage investment here, particularly in the mining and minerals resources space.

**Dr BROAD** - Are you concerned about the current level of mineral exploration?

**Ms COURTNEY** - I'm excited by the take up in grants that we have.

**Dr BROAD** - What about in terms of the actual mineral exploration that's going on at the moment compared to what it was four and five years ago?

**Ms COURTNEY** - As has been outlined already by representatives, this is a lumpy data series. It's inherently lumpy. There are a number of factors that are at play and the Government is committed to a strong industry, which is why we're committed to these grants. The secretary has more to add.

**Mr EVANS** - I was just going to add that the EDGI program is really about greenfields. So we're not concerned about overall exploration but we do see it's vital to ensuring project development necessary for the long-term future of the mineral resources industry to have greenfields exploration. This program is specifically targeted at new greenfields exploration.

**Dr WOODRUFF** - Minister, how many Tasmanian devil fatalities have been caused by mining companies in the Tarkine in the last three years?

**Ms COURTNEY** - That's not a matter for my portfolio.

**Dr WOODRUFF** - I think they're required to report. It's part of the mining permits for different companies.

**Ms COURTNEY** - No, that's not reported through us. My advice is that information is available through the Department of Environment. My understanding is that's done through DPIWE, and perhaps the Commonwealth as well, but that's not reported through me. I'm getting advice it is the EPA.

**Dr WOODRUFF** - Thank you. What is happening with the Shree Mining rehabilitation of that site, it's essentially a toxic waste site that the company can't afford to rehabilitate. Where is that up to? And how much money has the Government spent in the last year on that, please?

**Ms COURTNEY** - In terms of the details of the rehabilitation, I might send across a table of the details, but we know that there is a process underway with regard to the Nelson Bay River iron ore. Perhaps you can provide an update, Kevin?

**Mr ROBINSON** - Yes, through you, minister, the situation with Shree, as you may be aware, they've re-listed on the Australian Stock Exchange very recently. Shree has two permits or applications in with the EPA and one of those applications, I understand, has lapsed and they are following on with another application. That's really a matter for the EPA to discuss. From what's happening with the issue it is potentially acid forming material, and other material at site, again, that's in discussion with the EPA.

**Dr WOODRUFF** - Are you saying that your department has no responsibility or no jurisdiction at all over the rehabilitation of mining sites?

**Ms COURTNEY** - As has been outlined, there is a range of responsibilities given to the EPA and that's a matter for them.

## UNCORRECTED PROOF ISSUE

**Dr WOODRUFF** - Shree has relisted on the ASX, does that mean that they're open to putting up business or making an application again in Tasmania?

**Ms COURTNEY** - What Shree does in the future is a matter for them and any future applications will go through any usual processes. I am not going to pre-empt something that may happen from a private company in the future.

**Dr WOODRUFF** - But has the Government made a policy decision not to take an application from a company like Shree which has obviously demonstrated it's incapable of looking after the environment and doing the work they promised to do and putting the money aside to do it?

**Ms COURTNEY** - That's a statement from you.

**Dr WOODRUFF** - No, it's a question.

**Ms COURTNEY** - It was a statement.

**Dr WOODRUFF** - No, have you developed a policy position not to receive an application from the company, that company?

**Ms COURTNEY** - The Government will receive any applications that are made and we'll look at it more appropriately -

**Dr WOODRUFF** - Would you throw it straight in the bin or would you assess it?

**CHAIR** - Order.

**Ms COURTNEY** - Legislation.

**Dr WOODRUFF** - So you don't actually care at all whether companies have demonstrated they're incapable of looking after the environment and even fulfilling the terms of the contract.

**Ms COURTNEY** - There are a range of processes and I'd like to make it clear, that application processes are done independently from me as minister, and so they go through the appropriate processes.

**Dr WOODRUFF** - Minister, are we open to any environmental vandal company that wants to set up in Tasmania, as long as they've got the word 'mining' somewhere in the heading or do we actually look at the sort of work the company's doing. Select the ones that are able to perform and to rehabilitate the environment as they say they will?

**Ms COURTNEY** - We are unashamedly open for business in Tasmania.

**Dr WOODRUFF** - To anyone?

**Ms COURTNEY** - We have very strict environment standards.

**Dr WOODRUFF** - We don't because looks what's happened. It's a toxic site.

**CHAIR** - Order. Allow the minister to finish her answer.

## UNCORRECTED PROOF ISSUE

**Dr WOODRUFF** - It is an acid forming toxic site.

**CHAIR** - Order, Dr Woodruff.

**Dr WOODRUFF** - It is a disgrace.

**CHAIR** - Order.

**Ms COURTNEY** - I'm not quite sure what the question was in there, Dr Woodruff, but as I've outlined companies can make applications as they do, and they will be assessed in accordance with the law.

**Dr WOODRUFF** - So you don't care if the company just gives the finger to the standards that are required. Doesn't put the money aside. Doesn't do the work to rehabilitate the environment. You just take another application and assess it as though it was just business as usual?

**Ms COURTNEY** - I don't assess the applications.

**Dr WOODRUFF** - Well, whoever does that work.

**Ms COURTNEY** - The appropriate body looks at the application and adheres to the appropriate laws that are applicable.

**Dr WOODRUFF** - Would you take account of the past actions of a company like Shree if they made an application to you in the future and consider it to be so beyond any reasonable standard of operations that we shouldn't allow them in Tasmania which has a clean, green brand and it goes against every single thing that we're trying to present about how we care about the environment in Tasmania?

**CHAIR** - Thank you for your question, Dr Woodruff. Please now allow the minister to answer.

**Ms COURTNEY** - The factors that are taken into consideration by independent authorities, whether that's through the MRT process, whether that's through the EPA, that's a matter for them and to do so in compliance with legislation. I'm not going to somehow ministerially interfere with independent processes.

**Dr WOODRUFF** - Why did you bother to be a minister if you actually wouldn't stand for anything?

**CHAIR** - Dr Broad, if you have the call.

**Dr BROAD** - Thank you. What is the estimated outcome for this current financial year for a royalty income?

**Ms COURTNEY** - It is forecast that in 2018-19 Tasmania should collect \$34.1 million in royalties. Tasmania is forecast to collect \$33 million in the 2019-20 financial year.

## UNCORRECTED PROOF ISSUE

**Dr BROAD** - So over the forward Estimates we see that once again MRT or there is a projection there on that line royalty income line item, a reduction in royalties over time. Can you just explain what's going on there?

**Ms COURTNEY** - I know that this is a topic that comes up many in past years with estimates and there is an answer that has often been provided that I can't imagine would differ from the department about how those forecasts are made. My understanding is that they're made on a very conservative basis. I'll look towards Kevin because I think he has more detail on the methodology.

**Mr ROBINSON** - Thank you, minister. When we look at the royalties and we do our assessments going forward, we consider a lot of analysis involving consultation with the larger royalty producers throughout Tasmania, the Department of the Treasury. We look at the forecasts going forward for the Commonwealth Office of the Chief Economist. We take that into account. In that particular case they're forecasting a 25 per cent decrease in commodity prices over the period of the estimates of which 10 of the 25 per cent relates to a slowdown in China. That's again considered, and then we do our forecasts. We like to, I guess, look at things in a way where we potentially under-estimate and over-deliver, and that's what we have achieved in past years.

**Dr BROAD** - Is the spending on mineral exploration part of that calculation?

**Mr ROBINSON** - No. You don't look at proven resources and so on and drilling activity in calculating potential royalties.

**Ms COURTNEY** - The royalties, the process has been outlined.

**Dr BROAD** - How many tenements are currently non-compliant?

**Ms COURTNEY** - I will see whether the director has that information. I can float that on notice.

**Dr BROAD** - What would any non-compliances involve, do you think?

**Ms COURTNEY** - I can't speculate without that information here. Without the number here, I'm not going to speculate what they might be. It is impossible, I'm afraid.

**Dr BROAD** - It's a bit difficult to interrogate what's going on with mineral tenements if I can't get answers to the first question.

**Mr RUTHERFORD** - Through you, minister, we will clarify the question. Non-compliant with respect to royalties?

**Dr BROAD** - No, with respect to the requirements of maintaining a mineral tenement.

**Mr RUTHERFORD** - Oh, okay. Sorry, it's just an important clarification for us. Thank you.

**Dr BROAD** - So do you have an update, minister.

**Ms COURTNEY** - On the non-compliant?

**Dr BROAD** - Yes.

**Ms COURTNEY** - I have the number of mining leases that are currently available in Tasmania. There are currently 518 current mining leases as at 17 April 2019, and that covers 58 337 hectares. In terms of non-compliance, we'd have to seek that advice.

**Dr BROAD** - Is MRT currently in dispute with any tenement holders?

**Ms COURTNEY** - Not that I'm aware of.

**Mr RUTHERFORD** - MRT is always in discussion with a number of the tenement holders but we're not aware of any dispute.

**Dr BROAD** - Is there a mining company or associated entities that hold a significant number of tenements? There's been one thing that's been discussed within the industry - an intensification of ownership of mineral tenements. Is that a concern which has been expressed to you, minister?

**Ms COURTNEY** - I'm not aware of concerns around intensification of ownership.

**Dr BROAD** - In single or related entities?

**Mr RUTHERFORD** - We are aware that changes of ownership have led to a number of tenements being owned by one single entity. We tend to approach those questions - because these can be purchased on market they inherit the full obligations of the licence that was given to the original tenement holder and so there are a number of predominantly - and hence your concern, I assume - in the north-west and west of Tasmania, and when that happens we monitor issues of meeting the requirements of the licences.

**Dr BROAD** - That single entity you refer to, what percentage of tenements would they own?

**Mr RUTHERFORD** - Of exploration licences, it's about 30 per cent.

**Dr BROAD** - One entity owns 30 per cent.

**Mr RUTHERFORD** - It is a little difficult to say owns, because it's an -

**Dr BROAD** - Yes, it has obligations for, or in control of -

**Mr RUTHERFORD** - As you know, company structures can be involved.

**Dr BROAD** - Yes, so would the Foreign Investment Review Board have any role in monitoring issues such as an intensification of ownerships of things like mineral exploration.

**Ms COURTNEY** - My understanding is that Foreign Investment Review Board - and this is my understanding and not obviously being the minister responsible - being a federal responsibility looks at acquisitions, and particularly acquisitions of land, but also a range of competitive issues. That's a matter for the Foreign Investment Review Board. I'm not going to comment on them.

**Ms O'CONNOR** - Chair.

**CHAIR** - Yes, Ms O'Connor.

## UNCORRECTED PROOF ISSUE

**Ms O'CONNOR** - Thank you. Minister, I want to turn to forestry now -

**Ms COURTNEY** - If you don't mind, the committee had resolved earlier to deal with mining first while we have the appropriate advice.

**Ms O'CONNOR** - At what point will we move to forestry?

**CHAIR** - When the committee agrees that we've finished with mining.

**Ms O'CONNOR** - Is the committee going to sit in mining through until 1 o'clock? Is that the choice of -?

**CHAIR** - No, that's not what I just said. We are dealing with mining until the committee agrees that we go into forestry, so that we just haven't -

**Ms COURTNEY** - It was suggested to me by the committee and I was happy to go with where the committee wanted to go. I will be happy to answer and to move across when the committee decides on that.

**Ms O'CONNOR** - Can I seek your guidance, Chair -

**CHAIR** - Let me ask Dr Broad -

**Ms O'CONNOR** - Can I seek your guidance, Chair, on when forestry questions will be permitted?

**CHAIR** - Yes.

**Ms O'CONNOR** - Given that we're in overview which is normally the time you can ask a range of questions.

**CHAIR** - Yes, we have discussed that before, Ms O'Connor, so I'll just chat to Dr Broad. Have you got many -

**Dr BROAD** - Yes, we still have more, probably another half an hour.

**Ms O'CONNOR** - Half an hour because you don't want to talk about forestry because -

**Dr BROAD** - No, we do.

**Ms COURTNEY** - No, we do. Of course, we do.

**CHAIR** - As I did yesterday, I'm prepared to give an undertaking that at quarter past 11 we'll go across to forestry. Is that okay with Labor?

**Dr BROAD** - It sounds reasonable.

**Ms O'CONNOR** - Quarter past 11?

## UNCORRECTED PROOF ISSUE

**CHAIR** - Yes, and that may mean we have to come back later on, but we'll go across at that time. Is that okay?

**Ms O'CONNOR** - That's fine. I will defer the questions to Labor on mining at the moment.

**Ms DOW** - Yes, thanks, Chair. My question is in relation to MMG at Rosebery, and recently they advertised for a mine closure adviser, and I know also recently they undertook some investigation on a social impact assessment following the closure of the mine. They sought input from the community about the value of the mine and its co-contribution to essential services within the town, but also about what the future might look like for that town following the closure of MMG. My question is whether you participated as one of the interviewees through that consultancy that was undertaken by MMG.

**Ms COURTNEY** - No, I wasn't a participant in that.

**Ms DOW** - Were you aware of the closure adviser advertisement, or have you had any ongoing discussions with MMG about their potential closure and the possible impacts on that regional community?

**Ms COURTNEY** - The director has had conversations with them, I understand, so I can ask him to expand.

**Mr ROBINSON** - Thank you, minister. Mines, as you know, have defined reserves, and relative to their production rate that defines the mine life going forward. As one of the requirements of holding the mining licences, they need to maintain a closure plan, and in the case of Rosebery they're doing very active exploration, but at the same time they do a five-year mine closure plan, but what they were advertising for was purely in line with the normal ongoing practice of maintaining a closure plan whilst also maintaining normal production and exploration. I'm happy to say that we have actually intensified the exploration process and I was at Rosebery just a short time ago and they were actually putting a number of people on, and pleasingly they started putting on apprentices as well.

**Ms COURTNEY** - I visited very recently and when I was speaking to management about their plans around planning for closure, this effectively has been a rolling process for a number of years now. They are being prudent in their planning and so this is not unexpected, and we're hopeful, and indeed I expect the company is hopeful, that this will be an ongoing process. It's just a matter of being prudent about what their known quantities there. It is important to recognise that they have had a five-year plan such as this, and have been refreshing it over a significant period of time.

**Dr BROAD** - Minister, could you just outline a breakdown of MRT staff across their locations?

**Ms COURTNEY** - My advice is that 12 positions are located at MRT Burnie office, along with the Office of the Director of Mines and a further two positions are to be filled in this location. There are 26.4 FTEs at Rosney and the Mornington Core Library, with a further 9.8 FTEs being state-wide positions.

**Dr BROAD** - Sorry, 9.8 state-wide, so what's the total FTE?

**CHAIR** - Thirty-six, 45.8 FTE.

## UNCORRECTED PROOF ISSUE

**Dr BROAD** - Yes. Are there only two positions still outstanding to be filled?

**Ms COURTNEY** - That's my understanding.

**Dr BROAD** - So if I recall from Estimates last year, there were positions to be filled in Burnie last year. Are these in addition to that or hadn't the positions been filled?

**Ms COURTNEY** - These are part of that, so my understanding is what was said last year was that there would be up to five and it has - on top of the 10 that were there, so there are obviously two more considering there are 12 now there, and there are two further positions to be filled.

**Dr BROAD** - Is there difficulty filling those positions?

**Ms COURTNEY** - They are to be filled at the moment, but that hasn't -

**Dr BROAD** - How long have they been open for?

**Ms COURTNEY** - I'll have to seek advice on how they've been -

**Mr ROBINSON** - Through the minister. The situation at Burnie is that we've recently put on a new position. We had no issues. It was actually a person who was from the north-west coast who moved to Hobart and then wanted to come back to the north-west coast. We're looking to do another position later in this year which was a position which is currently occupied in Hobart which will be relocated to Burnie.

**Dr BROAD** - So out of their current staff in Burnie, how many of those originally relocated from Hobart?

**Mr EVANS** - One as I understand.

**Dr BROAD** - Just one.

**Mr EVANS** - One person moved, but that subsequently -

**Dr BROAD** - Returned. So that's the -

**Mr EVANS** - Retired.

**Dr BROAD** - Retired or -

**Mr EVANS** - Resigned or retired.

**Dr BROAD** - Resigned, okay. So, there was one relocation.

**Mr EVANS** - It's important to note that with the relocation the government was clear that there would be no one -

**Ms COURTNEY** - Forced relocations.

## UNCORRECTED PROOF ISSUE

**Mr EVANS** - Yes, force to relocate, so we have taken the opportunity as vacancies arise, or if we can redeploy staff in the south to other positions to create positions in the north-west.

**Dr BROAD** - So in that regards, had there been positions filled, vacated and filled in the south of the state?

**Mr EVANS** - Yes, there would be, because, and this goes back four years, so we unveiled the plan four years ago, and we've reported on its implementation at every budget estimate since. You will recall from last year and the previous year. It's been made clear that the Core Library and the functions associated with the Core Library would remain in Hobart, and other functions which were not related to the Core Library would be relocated to the north-west. That's the basic principle. It made good sense because it enabled us to keep the Core Library where it is, where there are benefits in terms of the relationship with codes and the university.

So as positions become vacant in Hobart, they are assessed as to whether they are integral to the future functioning of the Core Library. If they are related to the Core Library then they would be filled in Hobart. If they are not essential to the Core Library, then they would be moved to the north-west coast which is the example that Mr Robinson just gave. Funding for the relocation of MRT ends in 2019-20 financial year. Does that mean that the program has ended?

**Mr EVANS** - Essentially, yes.

**Ms COURTNEY** - The stages are completed.

**Dr BROAD** - How much has it cost to relocate? Do you have a cost estimate of how much it costs to relocate a staff member from the south to the north?

**Ms COURTNEY** - There has only been one as has been outlined to Mr Evans.

**Dr BROAD** - Yes, how much did it cost to relocate them?

**Ms COURTNEY** - I don't know whether we have that specific role.

**Mr EVANS** - They would get the normal sorts of relocation expenses that come with, for any position in the state service.

**Dr BROAD** - But you don't have an estimate?

**Mr EVANS** - I don't have the exact number.

**Dr BROAD** - Right, okay.

**Ms O'CONNOR** - I've got a quick question, Chair, on mining.

**Ms O'CONNOR** - Minister, can you advise what transition plans the Government has in place for coal workers in Tasmania who are at risk from losing their jobs through the continued crash in the global coal market and coal investments? Has the Government approached or been approached by any of the coal mining companies in Tasmania associated with Fingal and Cornwall?

## UNCORRECTED PROOF ISSUE

**Ms COURTNEY** - With regards to specific companies that you're talking about, I have not had any approaches and it's important to note that my understanding is that the coal that's produced in Tasmania isn't actually exported. It's used domestically within the state for cement making so there's a range of different factors that are different to global conditions that determine the viability of coal within Tasmania.

**Ms O'CONNOR** - So you have no concern about the transition of those workers' jobs and inevitably the cement works will have to change its energy production methods, so do you have no concerns about those coal miners' job security, their future transition into cleaner sectors?

**Ms COURTNEY** - Having had the ability to visit some of the big, particularly biggest cement manufacturer and considering our infrastructure pipeline, considering the goals we have around building and construction, these are critical raw feeds into those processes. So my expectation that both the need for coal -

**Ms O'CONNOR** - What do you mean critical raw feeds?

**Ms COURTNEY** - In terms of coal being used in the cement process in Tasmania as it currently is, and the fact that we have a strong infrastructure investment timeline, and so there will be strong demand -

**Ms O'CONNOR** - What's that got to do with coal workers?

**Ms COURTNEY** - There will be strong demand for the product.

**Ms O'CONNOR** - For the coal that comes out of Fingal and Cornwall, you think - are you happy to have an industry that's dependent on coal in Tasmania -

**Ms COURTNEY** - I have an -

**Ms O'CONNOR** - over the long term -

**Ms COURTNEY** - I have an expectation that through our infrastructure pipeline we will have continuing demand for cement products in Tasmania. As I said before it's my understanding that the coal produced in Tasmania in the Fingal Valley is a feed product into that within the state, and so therefore they are considering the demand that is in there in both the private sector, but also through government investment in infrastructure, that that will continue.

**Ms O'CONNOR** - Do you think in an age of accelerating climate change where we are at currently 415 parts per million of CO<sub>2</sub> in the atmosphere that we should be regarding coal mining as a long-term employment sector?

**Ms COURTNEY** - If you would like to direct questions around emissions, that's best to minister Archer, the minister responsible. As the minister responsible for both mining and building and construction we have a range of policies and we have a significant investment in our budget and infrastructure and so I would expect that demand for cement will continue to be strong in Tasmania. I have an expectation that the demand for the feed products that go into that, and the jobs that it supports in regional areas, will continue to be demanded and supported through that.

**CHAIR** - Dr Broad, you have the call.

**Ms O'CONNOR** - How many jobs are there in the Fingal and Cornwall coal mines?

**CHAIR** - Dr Broad has the call. Dr Broad has the call.

**Ms O'CONNOR** - On the rotation that would be incorrect, Chair, but -

**CHAIR** - No, that is not incorrect, Ms O'Connor.

**Dr BROAD** - Minister, can you outline the steps you've taken to give -

**Ms O'CONNOR** - It is.

**CHAIR** - No.

**Dr BROAD** - I suppose the TEMCO the best chance of remaining open?

**Ms COURTNEY** - Yes, and I thank you for that question, Dr Broad. It's something that's very close to my heart considering it's both in my electorate but also part of this industry, and I know that the Treasurer outlined our engagement with the company. So far we have met with them, and they are working through a process, as was outlined by the Treasurer and we have said to them we're fully engaged with them and we will provide support as and when requested but we have not had any direct request for support as far as I am aware.

**Dr BROAD** - Right, so no requests around any - okay.

**Ms COURTNEY** - Dr Broad, we understand the importance of this for local employment for its place within industry in Tasmania so I can assure you that the Treasurer and I, along with the Premier, and indeed minister Barnett, will continue to work closely with the company to provide any support that's required.

**Ms DOW** - Minister, I would just like to draw your attention to infrastructure and the importance of investment in infrastructure and how that relates to the success of the mining industry in Tasmania. Specifically, I am talking about the Burnie Port. There is a master plan for the Burnie Port, and during the federal election there were a number of commitments made from either side of politics around investment in improving infrastructure.

One of those was in regard to deepening of the port. Has your Government made a commitment to invest in the Burnie Port, and what is the time line for investment alongside that master plan? There are no time frames indicated within the master plan, or no allocation of funding. Can you provide to me today what you are committed to investing in the Burnie Port and what that investment looks like over the next five years?

**Ms COURTNEY** - I was very pleased that we had a coalition victory federally recently, and this has provided certainty to industry broadly across Tasmania. In all my industries, whether it's building and construction, the certainty around tax rulings for home owners, whether that's in mining and minerals, or whether that's in forestry, because there were obvious concerns about Labor's policy with regards to forestry. A coalition win has been very welcome. We know what that means there has been a commitment made with regards to building a new loader facility at the

port. With regards to the master plan and the outline of that, that's a matter for Jeremy Rockliff as the responsible minister.

**Ms DOW** - Surely you must be in conversations with him about the importance of investment in that infrastructure for those that you represent through your portfolio?

**Ms COURTNEY** - Absolutely, it's something that we engage across portfolios regularly. I engage with all the other ministers, and particularly around a portfolio such as mines that intersects with other ministerial portfolios and I always advocate strongly for it. Mr Rockliff is both the responsible minister, but also a member for Braddon and is fully aware of Burnie Port. If you have any questions around the master plan or funding or the pathway forward I would suggest you direct those to minister Rockliff.

**Ms DOW** - What sort of additional investment would you like to see?

**Ms COURTNEY** - That's a matter for minister Rockliff as the appropriate minister.

**Dr BROAD** - As relates specifically to your portfolio.

**Ms COURTNEY** - As I said, I welcome the investment, the commitment that was made federally through the election for the new loader facility. That is welcome and it has been welcomed by industry. With regard to further investment in the port facility itself, that's a matter for minister Rockliff.

**Dr BROAD** - In relation to that, if a project like Regatta was to start, wouldn't the current configuration -

**CHAIR** - It's turned 11 o'clock. Would you like to hold that question for us, for our return? We will break now, suspend for five minutes. If I could have everyone back quickly so we can go across to mining at 11.15.

**The committee suspended from 11.00 a.m. to 11.07 a.m.**

**CHAIR** - We'll resume the hearing. Dr Broad, do you want to finish your question?

**Dr BROAD** - Yes, please. Capacity constraints at the Burnie Port have been flagged as an issue in terms of the viability of increased volumes through the port, so for example if the Regatta project gets up, there's no way the port can currently handle any additional volumes of that magnitude, so have you had any discussions with TasPorts yourself, or are you deferring that to the portfolio minister?

**Ms COURTNEY** - I am not going to speculate on any particular project that may or may not get up. As a Government, we want to see increased investment and we want to see increased products going off our wharfs and if that's the port of Burnie and there is a significant increase in volume, then that will be worked through appropriately with the portfolio minister. But I'm not going to speculate.

## UNCORRECTED PROOF ISSUE

**Dr BROAD** - Have people raised capacity constraints of the port with you personally, as an issue?

**Ms COURTNEY** - What I am saying is the port as it is now, considering the three port that is there, is very capable of being able to deliver for industry and then if we have further investment I welcome that as - I'm sure there's many members around the table would welcome that and the jobs that they will create particularly around the West Coast of Tasmania. So I'm not going to speculate on a particular project or the quantum that may come from this project. I can assure you that should projects progress and should there be a significant increase in product going across that port, if there's a step change and there needs to be investment, then that's something the Government will consider. I'm not going to pre-empt what may or may not happen in a portfolio responsibility that's not mine.

**Dr BROAD** - The question was in terms of has capacity constrains ever been important and raised with you as an issue that would potentially impede mining projects getting up?

**Ms COURTNEY** - I'm not concerned about the capacity -

**Dr BROAD** - Has it been raised with you?

**Ms COURTNEY** - At the Port of Burnie I have had regular discussions with a lot of stakeholders around how the Government can better meet their needs -

**Dr BROAD** - Is that a yes or a no.

**Ms COURTNEY** - That's a discussion around a range of infrastructure areas. I talk to stakeholders in both mining and forestry about the Port of Burnie, I talk to them about TasRail, I talk to them around other power and other infrastructure aspects of it, and -

**Dr BROAD** - Why don't you just say yes?

**Ms COURTNEY** - I'm not concerned about capacity being constrained.

**Ms DOW** - What are some of those examples of issues that have been raised with you then, in relation to the port and its capacity?

**Ms COURTNEY** - I have no concerns around the port as it is. I welcome the mineral loader. Each individual company will continue to work constructively with TasPorts as they have done in the past.

**Dr BROAD** - So it hasn't been raised? Or it has been raised?

**Ms COURTNEY** - What I'm saying is that stakeholders discuss a number of things with me as minister and I -

**Ms DOW** - But you can't provide any examples.

**Dr BROAD** - Why don't you just say yes - or no? It's a fairly simple question. There's no need to be evasive.

## UNCORRECTED PROOF ISSUE

**Ms COURTNEY** - No, it's standard operating procedure.

**Ms DOW** - And it's an important investment.

**Dr BROAD** - Have people raised capacity constraints at the port with you? It's a pretty simple question. It's a yes or a no, isn't it?

**Ms COURTNEY** - What I am saying is, stakeholders talk to me about a range of aspects of their companies and, as a minister, I'll always be responsive if they have got concerns around -

**Dr BROAD** - Why won't you answer the question? It's a simple question.

**Ms COURTNEY** - around capacity.

**Dr BROAD** - It just belies common sense.

**Ms COURTNEY** - I've made it very clear that I don't have concerns -

**CHAIR** - Can I just remind you that we are examining Estimates of the Resource portfolio? Stay with the issues that are within the budget papers, please.

**Ms O'CONNOR** - Perhaps the minister could be directed to answer the questions with a measure of honesty.

**Dr BROAD** - Answer the question, yes. It's a simple - have people raised capacity constraints at the Burnie port with you. It's a simple yes or no.

**Ms COURTNEY** - I've answered it I think four times now, Dr Broad.

**Dr BROAD** - Well, has FORICO expressed issues about capacity constraints of the port?

**Ms COURTNEY** - I'm not going to go into individual conversations that I have had privately. Companies provide me with updates -

**Dr BROAD** - I asked a global question and you wouldn't answer the global question which wouldn't have to identify anybody.

**Ms COURTNEY** - As I have said, Dr Broad, I think four times now, I've had conversations with a range of companies across our resources in both mining and minerals and forestry on a range of issues. I have no concerns about constraints at the port of Burnie. If we have a step change or increase in the volume that's going across that port, then that is something that we'll work through with the Infrastructure minister and with TasPorts as we do with any increases or with any changes in infrastructure needs in Tasmania.

**Ms DOW** - Minister, are you concerned that within that master plan there aren't any time frames for investment?

**Ms COURTNEY** - As I've already said the master plan is a matter for Mr Rockliff and if you have any concerns or have any questions around the master plan that needs to be directed to Mr Rockliff.

**CHAIR.** Minister, the bush fires that ravaged Tasmania in early 2019 had a significant impact on the state's production forest as well as the -

**Ms O'CONNOR** - Point of order.

**CHAIR** - Yes?

**Ms O'CONNOR** - Can I confirm that we have now moved into forestry and that Mr Tucker has just arrived at the table and started asking a forestry Dorothy Dixier?

**CHAIR** - Yes. Mr Tucker, can I ask you to -

**Ms O'CONNOR** - It's actually 11.15.

**CHAIR** - Yes, it is 11.15. You can come back to mining later if you so require? Yes, I'll take that as a yes. Minister, could we change your staff over, so that we can go to forestry, please? Then, Mr Tucker, you have the call.

### **Forestry**

**CHAIR** - Minister, could you introduce the people with their name and title, please?

**Ms COURTNEY** - We only have one addition at the table. Alistair Morton, the acting Director of Forestry Policy.

**CHAIR** - Thank you very much.

**Mr TUCKER** - Thank you. Minister, the bushfires that ravaged Tasmania in early 2019 had a significant impact on the state's production forest as well as the businesses and workers who make this great industry what it is. Can you update committee on the response to the fires from the industry?

**Ms COURTNEY** - Thank you, Mr Tucker. And as members would be aware, the impact of the bush fires has been significant and as I did before, I would like to again take a moment to express my appreciation for all those involved and their enormous efforts to date in working to manage the fires and the recovery process and the coordinated effort to assist affected land owners and businesses.

I'm advised that the most recent figures indicate that just over 200 000 hectares has been impacted by bushfires this season. Of this, about 40 000 hectares is permanent timber production zone land. Most of the fires were a result of 2500 dry lightning strikes on 15 January 2019. I've been advised that assessing the impact the bushfires on forest assets has commenced but has not yet been completed. A preliminary understanding of the impacts on PTPZ lands has been based on satellite imagery, on ground work is continuing to validate and assess this impact over the coming months. On ground work is continuing and I hopefully get more information on that. And that will form the management plans.

Over 600 hectares of forests less than 10 years old impacted by the fires have been sewn with eucalyptus seed to assist the regeneration of the forest. Salvage operations in impacted plantations

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will commence in the near future. I have witnessed in Southern Tasmania the level of significant damage which has occurred to the wood processing companies at Southwood and have been informed of the damage to the Heart Tahune Airwalk.

One of the tenants at Southwood, Neville Smith Forest Products is back in full production. I'm also optimistic about Tar recommencing operations. While timber harvesting operations were suspended in the fire impacted areas, these harvesting operations have now recommenced in non-fire affected areas to sustainably supply timber to customers. This has required STT to reschedule harvesting into areas not impacted by bushfires.

I'd like to note my appreciation for those who have helped coordinate the recovery operations and particularly the efforts of the affected landowners and businesses. The government is developing a coordinated and integrated response to assist the industry in its recovery and key actions relevant to the forestry industry. The bushfire recovery taskforce is overseeing the medium and long-term recovery from the bushfires, a forest industry bushfire recovery plan is being coordinated by the Department of State Growth. Bushfire recovery business grants and loan schemes have been announced and the Department of State Growth is working closely with affected workers to ensure that they are reskilled and redeployed.

**Ms O'CONNOR** - Can you confirm that Forestry Tasmania, or the entity that's been incorrectly described and named Sustainable Timbers Tasmania, is still logging high conservation value forests?

**Ms COURTNEY** - If you'd like to ask me questions about STT, I respectfully suggest you wait until later in the year for Estimates with regards to GBES.

**Ms O'CONNOR** - Minister, no. This is the Resources portfolio and it is a matter of record that the Forest Stewardship Certification auditors were in the state last week assessing STT's pitch for FSC certification. This relates to forestry policy and policy is your responsibility. Can you confirm that it is policy that the Sustainable Timbers Tasmania is logging all growth forests?

**Ms COURTNEY** - In terms of STT, as I said, that is a matter for them for later in the year, but as you've said, I welcome FSCs engagement in Tasmania over the last two weeks and the role that we played working with them.

**Ms O'CONNOR** - Can you confirm that you met with the FSC auditors last week?

**Ms COURTNEY** - Yes, I have and I was really pleased to be able to do that because we are a strong supporter of the forestry industry and we understand the benefits which could be brought into the public forest sector through the gaining of FSC.

**Ms O'CONNOR** - Were you frank with the FSC auditors as we were when we met with them, about the fact that Sustainable Timbers Tasmania is currently logging high conservation value forests as a matter of Government policy?

**Ms COURTNEY** - I had a very productive meeting with the auditors. That is a matter for them now in terms of the processes that they will have underway. The Government, and my understanding from the statements that have been made in my conversations with the board of STT, is absolutely committed to achieving FSC. It's not an easy thing to achieve, nor should it be. And we accept that.

## UNCORRECTED PROOF ISSUE

**Ms O'CONNOR** - Particularly when you're still logging HCV forests.

**Dr BROAD** - Gee.

**Ms O'CONNOR** - Well, no. Just no.

**CHAIR** - Excuse me, it's my call. Ms O'Connor, you have the call for the moment.

**Ms O'CONNOR** - Thank you very much. Minister, there is a publicly available definition of high conservation value forests that the Forest Stewardship Council has online. I'm not going to read you through it, but the first part is forest that contained globally nationally and regionally significant concentrations of biodiversity values. Within the permanent timber production zone land, there are 34 000 hectares of old growth forest which has been set aside for logging and that doesn't include the old growth forest that's in formal reserves. It is a matter of Government policy that logging in old growth forests continues. Why should Sustainable Timbers Tasmania, so called, receive FSC certification when they're still responsible for that sort of logging? So that's a 600-year-old tree in the lower sticks that was logged by your GBE as a matter of your Government's forest policy. How do you respond to that evidence of old growth logging?

**Ms COURTNEY** - Thank you for the question. As I have outlined, in your rather long question around this issue, we are very supportive of STT's efforts with regards to FSC certification. It is something that -

**Ms O'CONNOR** - Point of order, Chair. I have asked the minister to confirm that old growth logging high conservation daily forest logging continues in Tasmania. Could you please ask her to answer the question?

**CHAIR** - Thank you for your point of order. It's not a point of order. The minister will answer as she sees fit. Minister, please continue your answer.

**Ms COURTNEY** - I'm conscious that I'm not going to go into talking about STT's operations in detail, but I am advised that I have the understanding that STT has phased out clear felling of old coups containing old growth forest consistent with Sustainable Timber Tasmania's announcement in July 2015.

**Ms O'CONNOR** - You can use whatever sophistry you like about clear-felling old growth, but the fact is that the logging of old growth forests continues, does it not?

**Ms COURTNEY** - As I have said, STT's practices are a matter for them and I am -

**Ms O'CONNOR** - This is about Government policy for which you are responsible.

**CHAIR** - Please don't interrupt, Ms O'Connor. No, Ms O'Connor, please don't interrupt. You've asked the minister a question, she's trying to answer. Please allow her to answer and then I'm giving the call to Dr Broad.

**Ms O'CONNOR** - It's a straightforward proposition, Chair. It is Government policy -

**CHAIR** - I don't mind whether it's straight - Order, Ms O'Connor.

**Ms O'CONNOR** - that STT continues to log old growth forests, isn't it?

**CHAIR** - Ms O'Connor, order.

**Ms O'CONNOR** - Isn't it?

**Ms COURTNEY** - Matters for STT in terms of how they conduct their businesses are a matter for them and I am more than happy

**Ms O'CONNOR** - Are you denying they log in HCV forests?

**CHAIR** - Order, Ms O'Connor. I warn you.

**Ms O'CONNOR** - The minister hasn't answered the question.

**CHAIR** - Order.

**Ms COURTNEY** - Ms O'Connor, I have answered the question and as I have said, that matters relating to STT can be addressed later in the year during their GBEs.

**Ms O'CONNOR** - You can't stonewall with every question on the operation of Forestry Tasmania. This is not going to work for you.

**Dr BROAD** - What impacts will the fires have on contract and volumes in short, medium and in the long term?

**Ms COURTNEY** - In terms of the impact of fires, as I was outlining earlier in my earlier question to Mr Tucker, there is a range of work that's still being done in terms of assessing and validating the impact with regards to wood supplies from STT to particular companies. That is a matter between STT and their companies.

**Dr BROAD** - Is there any idea on the short-term? You've already talked about salvage. So you must have some idea of the issues at least in the short term?

**Ms COURTNEY** - I know that STT is reprofiling in their harvesting plans to ensure that they can provide wood. The fact that we had seen the Neville Smith Facility down at Southwood is back up and running, I think it's only in the last fortnight, is really exciting. My understanding is from STT that log supply will be able to continue to be met.

**Dr BROAD** - So the timber that's potentially being salvaged, is that going to be stored or is that going to be processed, do you imagine?

**Ms COURTNEY** - So the salvage operations, and again, this is an STT operational matter, so in terms of STTs salvage matters, that's a matter for them. I know that there's a lot of salvage operations currently undergoing in the private forest estates at the moment and we're seeing some of that product, indeed, from the private forests going over the Hobart wall.

## UNCORRECTED PROOF ISSUE

**Dr BROAD** - So the Neville Smith has started again, which is obviously a very good thing. Are they looking to catch up in terms of their contracted volumes? Say, operating at a greater pace to make up for the lost time?

**Ms COURTNEY** - Yes, and first of all, I want to welcome the fact that they are up and operating and the way that they have done this really quickly is a great credit to their company and have kept all their staff on during this time. In terms of their wood supply agreement that is between them and STT, so in terms of whether there has been requests for reprofiling, that's a matter between STT and Neville Smith.

**Dr BROAD** - So is there also - you don't have a timeline, no doubt on a potential Ta Ann opening?

**Ms COURTNEY** - I personally, and the department meet with Ta Ann on a regular basis and I'm very hopeful that they're working through a range of things internally and that's a matter of them but we're working closely with them.

**Dr BROAD** - Has wood supply been an issue that they've raised?

**Ms COURTNEY** - I can't comment on what they've raised with STT, but I have an expectation that all companies that are impacted by the bushfires in those areas will be having conversations with STT around wood supply. But from what I have seen, there has been, in terms of STT's plans, they have made decisions, my understanding is to be able to meet their wood supply obligations. But in terms of operation for STT, I can't go into detail because I don't have STT here today.

**Dr BROAD** - Yes, so Ta Ann obviously in Smithton is still operational and no doubt some staff have been shifted from the south to north, at least temporarily. Has there been some reprofiling of timber supply from the north to the south? From the south to the north to enable Ta Ann and Smithton to operate at a greater capacity?

**Ms COURTNEY** - I can't comment on contracts between STT and -

**Dr BROAD** - That may have required a policy change if the timber supply was increased in the north and decreased in the south.

**Ms COURTNEY** - In terms of the contracts, the nature of the contracts that STT have with various companies, there's obviously confidentiality around those, but they are also a matter between STT and those companies, so without STT here to be able to offer the appropriate advice, it's not appropriate for me to comment on. I'm sorry, Dr Broad.

**Dr BROAD** - As a Government, are you still committed to STT obtaining FSC certification?

**Ms COURTNEY** - Yes, I am very committed. It would be wonderful to have certification. We know that FSC certification is challenging. We know that it has a high bar and that's as it should be.

**Dr BROAD** - Where is the ongoing funding to -

**Ms O'CONNOR** - Your Government's policy is undermining the chances of getting FSC.

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**CHAIR** - Order, Ms O'Connor.

**Dr BROAD** - Is there ongoing funding from Government for STT to secure FSC certification?

**Ms COURTNEY** - This is a project that STT have been showing leadership in and as a Government, we're very supportive of their efforts to obtain FSC.

**Dr BROAD** - In the past, wasn't there Government funds allocated for STT to undertake the process of receiving an FSC certification?

**Ms COURTNEY** - Not that I'm aware of -

**Dr BROAD** - But there was in the past?

**Mr MORTON** - Through you, minister, I'm not sure about the past, but I can certainly say that now there isn't.

**Ms O'CONNOR** - It is interesting, minister, that a series of questions that Dr Broad asked you about STT, you were able to answer. But when we're asking you about STTs ongoing logging of old growth high conservation forests, you try to avoid answering questions. Can you confirm -

**CHAIR** - Do we have a question, Ms O'Connor?

**Ms COURTNEY** - Ms O'Connor, as was just said to Dr Broad -

**Ms O'CONNOR** - I haven't asked the question yet, please?

**Ms COURTNEY** - there were a range of aspects that I couldn't answer -

**Ms O'CONNOR** - I haven't asked the question yet.

**Ms COURTNEY** - that I couldn't answer for Dr Broad either. I welcome to have those questions later in the year.

**Ms O'CONNOR** - Can you confirm it is the matter it is a matter of Government policy that the logging of high conservation value forests continues?

**Ms COURTNEY** - Thank you, Ms O'Connor. As has been said before, in terms of the practices of STT, that is a matter for them.

**Ms O'CONNOR** - Well, Minister, can you confirm that the policy settings of your Government including the legislation that you have brought through this parliament are to allow Sustainable Timbers Tasmania so-called to continue to log 600 year old trees in the Lower Sticks to continue to log high conservation value forests in the Central Highlands. Can you confirm that the logging of high conservation value forests continues under your ministerialship? Do you not know the answer to this?

**CHAIR** - Order.

## UNCORRECTED PROOF ISSUE

**Ms COURTNEY** - No, but I've tried to answer on a number of occasions, so I'm trying to assist the committee by -

**Ms O'CONNOR** - You've tried not to answer on a number of occasions.

**CHAIR** - Order, Ms O'Connor.

**Ms COURTNEY** - to provide more information with regards to how we manage our forests and as you are aware, we have a range of ways that we do that and we've got the RFA that was indeed extended in August 2017, and this has delivered on its key objectives of enabling the forest industry to operate responsibly and competitively in global markets.

**Ms O'CONNOR** - Point of order, Chair. Standing order 48, relevance. I haven't asked about the regional forest agreement. I've asked about government policy that enables the continued logging of high conservation value forests.

**CHAIR** - Thank you for your point of order. As you know I do not know where the minister is going to go with her answer. Can I direct the minister to answer, please?

**Ms COURTNEY** - The RFA that was extended in August 2017 sets the policy context of -

**Ms O'CONNOR** - Minister. Old growth logging. On your watch.

**CHAIR** - Order. Ms O'Connor, if you ask a question and you want me to give you the call you will be respectful and allow the minister to finish her answer without interruption, please.

**Ms COURTNEY** - As I was saying, the RFA that was extended in August 2017 sets the framework for the management of our forests in a sustainable way and that is how I expect and that is how STT continues to work within those forests.

**Ms O'CONNOR** - Can you confirm that truckloads with large old trees that have been harvested are coming out of the Central Highlands in the southern forests?

**Ms COURTNEY** - With regards to what is on a truck coming out of the coupe, I cannot confirm what is on or off one of those trucks, Ms O'Connor. I have every expectation that any wood that is harvested in Tasmania is done so in accordance with our very stringent and world-leading forest policies.

**Ms O'CONNOR** - Last question, Chair, on this subject. They're not world-leading forest policies, because your GBE has not been able to obtain FSC certification. Minister, do you support the logging of high conservation value forests and of old growth trees?

**Ms COURTNEY** - I support the forest practices that we have in Tasmania as they start -

**Ms O'CONNOR** - Have you been able to get FSC?

**Ms COURTNEY** - Ms O'Connor, as you know, we're going through a process at the moment and the Government is fully supportive of STT's efforts to obtain FSC certification. We will continue to work with them. I have confidence in our forest practices in Tasmania and the way that we manage them.

**Dr BROAD** - Minister, why has the Government abandoned the search for a southern export solution?

**Ms COURTNEY** - Thank you, Dr Broad. With regards to a southern export solution, I think it is prudent advice not to forget the reason why there have been challenges around this is because of the fact that under a Labor-Greens government, access to port facilities were shut down and -

**Ms O'CONNOR** - That was Gunns selling Triabunna

**Dr BROAD** - That was a private transaction.

**Ms O'CONNOR** - That was a private company's decision to sell a piece of its infrastructure.

**CHAIR** - Order. If you ask a question allow the minister to answer.

**Ms COURTNEY** - I don't think it'd be refuted at the table that the demise of the industry happened under the Labor-Greens governments as -

**Dr BROAD** - Just answer the question.

**Ms COURTNEY** - particularly the Greens -

**Ms O'CONNOR** - The industry actually came to the environmental movement begging for cooperative help.

**CHAIR** - Order.

**Ms COURTNEY** - as this important piece of infrastructure was dismantled.

**Dr BROAD** - You know you can try to troll us, but can you just answer the question? Why has the Government abandoned the search for a southern export solution?

**Ms COURTNEY** - The Government is continuing to work with stakeholders and I announced a range of initiatives earlier in the year on the Port of Hobart. My predecessor had commissioned a report from Evan Rowley. There were a number of findings for that and we have responded to that. In that report, he confirmed there are currently no commercially suitable sites for a new southern export port south of Hobart, so we commissioned that piece of work.

We have provided industry the certainty by committing to long-term access to the Port of Hobart and we have also committed to a range of infrastructure upgrades for TasRail, so that we can be transporting wood and wood products as efficiently as possible to the north of the state.

**Dr BROAD** - The federal Labor Party committed to an upgrade of the Plenty Link Road in the recent election. There was no such commitment from the federal Liberals and there's no money in the Budget for this project. Why have you abandoned the idea of upgrading the Plenty Link Road?

**Ms COURTNEY** - The Plenty Link Road will continue to be considered as part of the wider infrastructure investment for the Government and in terms of transport solutions it is not off the table. It was very pleasing that as we heard earlier that the Coalition Government was successful

because in terms of the forestry industry, we know that there's no greater support of the forestry industry than a federal Coalition Government.

I welcome the fact that Senator John O'Duniam is now the representative for that. To have a Tasmanian representing that once again is a good thing for Tasmania and I hope that you welcome the fact that there is a government federally that is supportive of this industry.

**Dr BROAD** - Given the importance stated in the Rowley report of the Plenty Link Road, why is there no money in this Budget or across the forward Estimates to fund an upgrade of the Plenty Link Road?

**Ms COURTNEY** - We will continue to consider road infrastructure into the future. We know that we have seen a significant amount of damage to the southern forests and so while we're working through that and we're working through, particularly the damaged infrastructure that we've seen at Southwood, it would not be prudent of the government until we had clarity on all of that, to make any firm commitments. I welcome Evan Rowley's report and the work that he has done with industry to provide this information and we will continue to work with participants all around the state but particularly the southern forests and in one of the aspects that have been called for by industry was a commitment to the port of Hobart and this has been given industry certainty. It's given industry certainty to invest so that they can export their products from Hobart into the future.

**Dr BROAD** - There was no money in the budget for any of the infrastructure upgrades as recommended in the Rowley report.

**Ms COURTNEY** - We have provided funding for upgrades at Parattah including a weigh bridge and there are a number of other commitments that have been made via minister Rockliff with regard to rail infrastructure and in looking at rolling stock, and underground loading facilities. It's great to see and I've met with TasRail to discuss their exciting plans and this is a good thing for industry.

**Dr BROAD** - The Rowley report called for a new industry domestic processing plan. That was the key finding number 1 and it said that this must be given the highest priority. Have you progressed this?

**Ms COURTNEY** - Mr Rowley identified that there wasn't a viable southern port facility to be explored. There are a number of recommendations and we're working through some of those recommendations with industry.

**Dr BROAD** - What about in particular, the call for a new forest industry domestic processing plan. Have you actioned any or made any progress on that urgent priority?

**Ms COURTNEY** - As I've said, Dr Broad, particularly, if we're talking about the southern parts of the industry, there has been a great deal of uncertainty over the past five months with the bushfires and we will continue to work with industry and now that Neville Smith is up and running and there are a number of proposals, and we will work with the private operators and we'll work with Ta Ann.

**Mr TUCKER** - Minister, the opposition forestry deal destroyed the jobs of many people in Tasmania -

**Ms O'CONNOR** - Point of order, Chair. Mr Tucker is misleading the table. That is a false assertion.

**CHAIR** - It is not a point of order.

**Ms O'CONNOR** - It is a false assertion.

**CHAIR** - Ms O'Connor, if you're questioning the Chair, I would caution you on that. It is not a point of order. Mr Tucker continue.

**Mr TUCKER** - Thank you. Minister, what is the government doing to support and encourage the support and growth of the forestry industry in Tasmania?

**Ms COURTNEY** - Thank you, Mr Tucker. The Hodgman government has a range of programs and initiatives in place to promote and support our world class forestry industry. These include an important trade investment mission to Japan led by the Premier, and our state's contribution of \$2 million to the National Institute of Forest Products Innovation or NIFP and a wood encouragement policy which encourages the use of locally grown timber particularly in the building industry. As I mentioned, the Premier led a trade investment mission to Japan from 4 to 8 March 2019. Tasmanian trade strategy 2019 to 2025 includes a program for the forestry biomass and mining industries centred in Tokyo between 6 and 8 March. One key objective of the mission includes a strengthening of mutual understanding of our resources sector between Tasmania and one of its key trading partners Japan.

The mission was also critical to supporting businesses in the Tasmanian resources and primary industry sector in establishing and maintaining a relationship with traditional and potential new Japanese markets. The resources component of the mission included a Tasmanian forestry presentation dinner attended by representatives from a range of Japanese forestry, biomass energy and related businesses meeting with the Japan ministry of agriculture, fisheries and forestry. It provided an opportunity for the Premier to discuss collaborative working arrangements between our two governments and to ensure that trade investment and training primary production continues to be for the mutual benefit of both regions.

A resources seminar led by the Coordinator-General outlining opportunities for investment in the Tasmanian resources sector including mineral exploration and mining, forestry and bioenergy. There were a number of meetings with Japanese mining and exploration interests, and Tasmanian forest enterprises meeting with Japanese investors. In addition to the involvement of private Forest Tasmania, two Tasmanian forestry enterprises participated in the Tasmanian trade mission to Japan and both businesses have reported positive benefits from participation in the mission.

In relation to NIFP the government has committed \$2 million over four years to the contribution of the Australian government's research hub in Launceston. Two NIFP hubs have been established nationally, one in Mount Gambier in South Australia and the other hosted by the School of Architecture and Design at UTAS in Launceston. The hub will foster collaboration, support, research and boost innovation across the industry from timber processing and advance manufacturing and other value adding. The wood encouragement policy was developed by the Hodgman government to encourage the use of locally produced wood where it represents value for money, provides quality and functionality and complies with the buy local policy.

**CHAIR** - Three minutes.

**Ms COURTNEY** - I'm pleased to see that local architects and designers are embracing this policy and I am sure we will see an increasing amount of wood use both in structural material in commercial buildings and in decorative finishes.

**Ms O'CONNOR** - Minister, as you know, the 356 000 hectares of recognised high conservation value forest which your government has falsely tagged future potential production forest, has come online for logging as of next April. Have you set aside funding to enable logging operations in those high conservation value forests to commence in April?

**Ms COURTNEY** - Are you talking about the FPPF land, Ms O'Connor?

**Ms O'CONNOR** - Obviously that was in my question.

**Ms COURTNEY** - No.

**Ms O'CONNOR** - So there's no funding allocated to opening up those forests to logging from April?

**Ms COURTNEY** - No.

**Ms O'CONNOR** - Is it your intention that those forests will be logged from April next year?

**Ms COURTNEY** - The intention of future potential production forest is to be available in the future at an appropriate time, and it's a matter for the government to work through with industry. I know the member is very aware, there are a range of for conversion or exchange, it does need to go through both Houses of parliament so that does need to occur, so there's a range of checks and balances on that, and no decision has been made.

**Ms O'CONNOR** - Minister, have you received any expressions of interest or applications from timber companies to log in the 356 000 hectares of high conservation value forest?

**Ms COURTNEY** - I'm not aware of any specific applications as such. I've had conversations with companies around a range of our aspirations, but in terms of when the government may or may not bring this matter before parliament, that will be considered in due course.

**CHAIR** - Dr Broad.

**Ms O'CONNOR** - Just to clarify. Well, Chair, I'm on the brink of dissenting from your ruling. I just asked three questions. You let Labor ask 12 questions 15 minutes ago. I will dissent from your ruling if you keep doing this and shutting us down.

**CHAIR** - By all means.

**Ms O'CONNOR** - When we are asking forestry questions. That was three questions.

**CHAIR** - Yes. I have given the call to Dr Broad. You are welcome to dissent from my ruling if that is how you wish. I am endeavouring to be as fair as I can.

## UNCORRECTED PROOF ISSUE

**Ms O'CONNOR** - There is a completely unfair allocation of questions. You are trying to shut the Greens down asking questions about high conservation value forests. That's what is happening here.

**CHAIR** - I think you are taking this personally. I have given the call to Dr Broad.

**Ms O'CONNOR** - I'm just going to get some advice. I'm dissenting from your ruling.

**Dr BROAD** - Minister, are you concerned that in the Budget was raised the prospect of an investor land tax which may be applied to primary production land, including forestry?

**Ms COURTNEY** - Thank you for that.

**Ms O'CONNOR** - See these are like Dorothy Dixes. You two, you've got the same forest policy basically.

**CHAIR** - Ms O'Connor, please, settle down.

**Ms O'CONNOR** - As soon as the heat comes on over unsustainable logging of high conservation value forest you two parties cosy up together because you're complicit in the destruction of high conservation value forests in Tasmania.

**Ms COURTNEY** - Thank you, Dr Broad. I know that this was a matter that was dealt with yesterday by the Treasurer who's responsible for tax within Tasmania and it is a Treasury matter. However, as the Treasurer outlined yesterday, we're working through a quote process. Other states have similar taxes and we have seen that this does not damper investor interest and we will work through to get the settings appropriately.

**Dr BROAD** - Have you had any consultations or discussions with companies in relation to this?

**Ms COURTNEY** - I'm not going into discussions that I have with individual companies, Dr Broad. In terms of how this tax works and consultation that the Treasurer has done, being a Treasury policy, I suggest that you speak to the Treasurer.

**Dr BROAD** - Given that this is your portfolio, have you had any discussions with Forico relating to land tax?

**Ms O'CONNOR** - Chair, there have been three questions asked while you've been talking -

**Ms COURTNEY** - The Treasurer has outlined yesterday that there will be a range of consultations that will happen over the coming months.

**Dr BROAD** - It doesn't concern you that they may be hit with land tax?

**Ms O'CONNOR** - Five questions.

**Ms COURTNEY** - I have enormous faith in the Treasurer to be able to manage Tasmania's budget responsibly.

**Dr BROAD** - That's not my question.

**Ms COURTNEY** - To ensure that we have the correct settings, and as the Treasurer said yesterday, he'll be working through that process Forico are aware that they may be subject to land tax.

**Ms O'CONNOR** - Six questions.

**Ms COURTNEY** -As I've said Dr Broad, I'm not going to go into individual conversations or engagement with individual companies. The Treasurer has said that he will undergo a range of consultations over the coming weeks.

**Dr BROAD** - So no discussions?

**Ms COURTNEY** -As I said, the Treasurer has already outlined that he will undergo a number of conversations and consultations over the coming weeks.

**Dr BROAD** - Is the Government meeting its agreed volumes of special species timber?

**Ms O'CONNOR** - Eight questions.

**Ms COURTNEY** - In terms of the Government and special species, so as the member will be aware, we released our first special species management plan in -

**Ms O'CONNOR** - It is rainforest logging, it is not special species

**CHAIR** - Order

**Ms COURTNEY** - 2017. It sets out a clear management framework for special species.

**Ms O'CONNOR** - Rain forest logging.

**Ms COURTNEY** - In line with Tasmania's robust forest managements system. DPIPW is responsible for the issuing of permits for harvesting on reserve land, other than the requirements under the forest practices system. I am not sure whether there can be more information provided.

**Dr BROAD** - Great volumes was the question.

**Mr MORTON** - Through you, minister. Traditionally I suppose special species timber volumes that come off the public production forest or the permanent timber production zone, as STT transitions into regrowth and plantation, the volumes are declining. That has been recognised that that's going to occur and was one of the key reasons for the special species management plan occurring. There was a recognition that those volumes for special species timbers were going to continue to decline as STT transition into those other kinds and that new sources, were needed to be found to sustain the industry.

**Dr BROAD** - Is the Government meeting its special species timber targets, the agreed volumes. Has it found other avenues to fill that supply for need?

**Ms O'CONNOR** - Ten questions. Don't you know your portfolio?

**CHAIR** - Order.

**Dr BROAD** - Can we take that on notice?

**Ms COURTNEY** - I'm sorry, Dr Broad, in terms of the agreed volume of special species timber, can you clarify what you're referring to?

**Dr BROAD** - Wasn't there an agreement on supply volumes for special species timber?

**Ms COURTNEY** - Yes. I'll have to go to STT to seek specific advice.

**Dr BROAD** - Can you take it on notice?

**Ms COURTNEY** - I'm being told that there's no specific target or agreed volume that has been set. I will take on notice to see if there's further information we can provide, but I can't take on notice stuff that is for STT.

**CHAIR** - Excuse me, minister. I have just been asked by Hansard if the committee members could stop talking please, they are having difficulty hearing while the minister is speaking.

**Dr BROAD** - Well, we'll put that on notice.

**Ms COURTNEY** - I will be able to provide what I have available but I can't provide the information that pertains to STT.

**Dr BROAD** - Okay. Thank you.

**CHAIR** - Ms O'Connor, are you seeking the call?

**Ms O'CONNOR** - Well, of course. Thank you. Minister, can you confirm or are you able to tell the committee how many permits have been issued for rainforest logging inside reserves?

**Ms COURTNEY** - None to date.

**Ms O'CONNOR** - So there's been no applications under your so-called special species management?

**Ms COURTNEY** - Oh, under special species? No, not that I'm aware of.

**Ms O'CONNOR** - In reserves?

**Ms COURTNEY** - Not that I'm aware of. My advice is no.

**Ms O'CONNOR** - Minister, in relation to the 356 000 hectares of high conservation value forest, given that you're trying to falsely portray a picture of sustainability for Sustainable Timbers Tasmania by removing the FPPF forest from their technical administration, will you engage a private company to oversee the production that would come out of those high conservation value forests?

## UNCORRECTED PROOF ISSUE

**Ms COURTNEY** - I'm not going to commit to engage a private consultant on something that we may do in the future, Ms O'Connor.

**Ms O'CONNOR** - Can you perhaps enlighten the committee, given that April 2020 is now less than a year away, what is your thinking as minister about the administrative arrangements for the 356 000 hectares of high conservation value forest which STT marks down as informal reserves for the purposes of its FFC application?

**Ms COURTNEY** - With regards to what the Government may or may not do in the future, as I said before, no decision has been made on the FPPF land so I can't pre-empt what we might do in the future.

**Ms O'CONNOR** - So Forestry Tasmania, or STT as you falsely called it, won't be administering production that comes out of those forests?

**Ms COURTNEY** - I'm not going to pre-empt, as you know very well in terms of a process for converting or exchanging this land, there is a process that needs to be undertaken involving both Houses of parliament. From the Government's perspective no decision has been made with regards to this land and the future plans for it.

**Ms O'CONNOR** - Do you agree that the 356 000 hectares being set aside as reserves or in the case of STT's application for forest stewardship certification, is a very important part of STT's application for FFC and that they would like the auditors to understand that those forest won't be logged?

**Ms COURTNEY** - I can't comment on the deliberations of the FFC audit committee and the STT.

**Ms O'CONNOR** - No, that wasn't the question.

**Ms COURTNEY** - I can't comment on their engagement with FFC. That's a matter between STT and the FFC. I met with the auditors as the responsible minister as we outlined earlier, as I understand that you met with him as well.

**Ms O'CONNOR** - Did you tell them you were still logging old growth?

**Ms COURTNEY** - Ms O'Connor, I had a very good conversation with FFC.

**Ms O'CONNOR** - So did we.

**Ms COURTNEY** - I highlighted government support for the forestry industry in Tasmania and I know that STT has done an enormous amount of work over the past few years in the lead up to this audit and we'll wait and see how the process goes.

**Ms O'CONNOR** - Last question on this line of questioning. Has the STT board approached you and urged you, as minister, not to allow the logging of the 356 000 hectares because it is central to STT's application for forest stewardship certification?

**Ms COURTNEY** - The Government has no plans around FPPF land.

## UNCORRECTED PROOF ISSUE

**Ms O'CONNOR** - Yes, you do. They've opened up the logging from April next year.

**CHAIR** - Order. Ms O'Connor, if you ask the question, allow the minister to answer.

**Ms COURTNEY** - As I said, in response to an earlier question, I have had no specific requests or proposals with regards to this land.

**Ms O'CONNOR** - But if those forests are opened up for logging from April next year and they are recognised as high conservation value forests, do you accept that will be the death blow for STT's application for forest stewardship certification because it would be government policy allowing for further increased logging of high conservation value forest?

**Ms COURTNEY** - I said before, the Government has no plans with regards to that forest.

**Ms O'CONNOR** - Yes, you do. You've legislated for them to be logged.

**CHAIR** - Order, Ms O'Connor.

**Ms COURTNEY** - And with regards to the auditors, I have every expectation that they will work through this process appropriately. I can't comment on the auditor's view of a range of things.

**Ms O'CONNOR** - It is not the auditor's view. The auditor will take the microscope to Government policy and it is Government policy to allow for the logging of high conservation value forest and not to have in place threatened species management plans.

**CHAIR** - Do you have a question?

**Ms COURTNEY** - Sorry, is there a question there?

**Ms O'CONNOR** - Can you confirm that it is Government policy to continue to log in high conservation value forests and Government policy has led to underfunded or not funded or out of date threatened species management plans?

**Ms COURTNEY** - As I outlined, I think it was in one of your first or second lines of questioning, our forest management is underpinned by the RFA as well as our forest practices, and -

**Ms O'CONNOR** - Which has been recognised for driving biodiversity loss ever since it was enacted.

**Ms COURTNEY** - Environment values. I can't comment -

**Ms O'CONNOR** - Trashing environment values.

**Ms COURTNEY** - I'm not going to comment on how FFC does their audit. That's a matter for them, and I'm sure that later in the year STT will be more than happy to talk in depth about the process and what they have done to date.

**Ms O'CONNOR** - Well, the last Estimates, just so you know, you did call those 356 000 hectares of high conservation value forest a wood bank.

**CHAIR** - Yes, Mr Tucker.

**Mr TUCKER** - Minister, the private forest estate is expanding across Tasmania. Can you update the committee on this growth and explain the role that Private Forests Tasmania plays in the industry?

**Ms COURTNEY** - Thank you. I appreciate the question, Mr Tucker. The government supports forestry in Tasmania and is committed to ensuring a forest industry including the private forestry sector continues to grow. We are committed to a strong and sustainable forest sector in Tasmania which will provide industry the certainty and confidence needed to make long term investment decisions.

This includes being committed to providing the right investment climate. This will allow the industry to grow and achieve the goal of increasing the value in Tasmania to \$1.2 billion by 2036. In understanding the sector, it is important to also understand that private forests now dominate our productive capacity and this capacity is growing. The private plantation sector in Tasmania supplies two main products. The eucalypt which is a hardwood primarily for pulpwood production and radiata pine primarily managed for saw log production and pulp for newsprint.

The total private forest estate in Tasmania is 1.1 million hectares which is approximately 33 per cent of the total reported forest estate in Tasmania. The private forest estate contributes to the total Tasmanian Forest Reproduction and has increased to 74 per cent in 2017-18, up from 58 per cent in 2013-14. In 2017-18, 4.11 million tonnes of wood were harvested from private plantations, markets for private hardwood plantations are predominantly pulpwood markets in Japan and China.

PFT is the only government funded authority established in Australia to promote, foster and assist the private forestry sector on forestry matters. PFT has developed a strategic plan in consultation with stakeholders including across government, forest grow association, industry associations, land owners, and a variety of other private forestry organisations and individuals. The strategic plan incorporates all key themes and includes as a key priority to expand commercial private forest estate in Tasmania. To achieve this objective, the authority has developed an investment strategy which includes significant target investment of a proportion of its cash reserves of \$500 000 per year for the next three years into expanding the extent and value of the private forest resource.

The priority has been developed and will be reviewed annually to take account of changing needs within the sector and in the Tasmanian community in general. PFT intends to implement the strategy in a number of targeted ways including the identification and removal of barriers to the establishment of private forests; work to develop and promote the integration of trees on the farms; work with industry to assist with the continuation of the move to greater value than the states within the state for forest products; and foster industry innovation that supports growth in the private forests.

Further to the state plan to support plantations on private land, the Australian Government has launched -

**Ms O'CONNOR** - Three minutes.

**CHAIR** - Minister, could you wind up, please?

**Ms COURTNEY** - Yes, I can. I've got a range of other initiatives in regard to the federal government and what they are doing, but I do thank the member for his question.

**Mr TUCKER** - Thank you.

**Dr BROAD** - Has the Government sought any funds as part of disaster relief provisions to recover costs associated with forestry timber losses?

**Ms COURTNEY** - Yes, my understanding is, Dr Broad, this type of funding is through the Premier's portfolio.

**Dr BROAD** - Okay. Is the Government meeting its agreed volumes of saw log?

**Ms O'CONNOR** - Tedious repetition.

**Dr BROAD** - No, that was about special species. This is about saw log. There is a difference.

**Ms COURTNEY** - So in terms of?

**Dr BROAD** - Agreed contract and supply volumes.

**Ms COURTNEY** - Agreed contract and supply volumes? I don't have any advice otherwise, but my understanding is yes.

**Dr BROAD** - So where's the data on that?

**Ms COURTNEY** - With regards to STT and the provision of contracts with regard to conformance with legislation, that's a matter for STT. I'd have to get a price from them.

**Ms O'CONNOR** - They regularly don't meet quota which was detailed in a letter from the board to the previous minister.

**Ms DOW** - Minister, during the recent federal election, a \$12.5 million regional forestry hub which you alluded to in your Dorothy Dixier before, but you provide a lot of detail. It was announced with the north-west coast. Up until now, there's been no announcement about where that will be and any real detail about what will happen within that hub. Could you please provide me with some more specific details about it?

**Ms COURTNEY** - Yes, I can and I don't know if I have the specific information in terms of that, because it is a federal initiative but the hub that is the north-west hub, my understanding, it is being administered by the network, Forest Products Network Tasmania, the FPNT. I met with Therese Taylor, the executive officer and they are liaising with industries. I understand they have set up a steering group with regard to that funding and we'll be continuing to consult with industry. I welcome that initiative. It was great to be able to join Prime Minister Scott Morrison and the then minister responsible, Richard Colbeck, for the announcement up on the north-west earlier this year. It's a good initiative and the state Government welcomes that investment and we look forward to the issues that come out of it.

**Ms DOW** - Where will it be built and when?

**Ms COURTNEY** - This is a question that's probably directed federally, because it's not my money, it's federal money. The hub is not a physical building somewhere with a front door. The hub is a collaborative project that will bring together levels of government with industry to look at ways that we can streamline, how we can work within Tasmania, what can be approved. So I'm afraid I don't have the details with me now. It's not my policy area but perhaps after Estimates if you wrote to me I could source all the information and provide it to you with a meaningful update.

**Ms DOW** - I might pop it on notice then. Just one last question.

**Ms COURTNEY** - I'll try to seek it on notice, but it's not my responsibility. It's not within the Budget. It's a federal government initiative so I would suggest the best thing to do would actually be write to me because that way we can source that information. It's not within our budget but I'd be happy to seek more information and be able to provide it.

**Ms DOW** - My last question is in relation to skills and training funding for - I know we've moved out of minerals, but forestry was also a component of it - the north-west generation Job Ready package which you announced with the former prime minister Malcolm Turnbull in Circular Head during the federal by-election. I wondered whether, through the mechanism of this new hub, which is more a network rather than an actual, physical presence, is some of that funding being allocated to skills and training around the forest industry and minerals industry related to that and if not, where is that? How is that being auspiced? I understand Skills Tasmania is coordinating it but what can be expect to see on the ground as a result of that funding?

**Ms COURTNEY** - So from the funding that was announced during the by-election?

**Ms DOW** - Yes.

**Ms COURTNEY** - Considering that that was federal funding that was announced, that's not a matter for my portfolio responsibilities and it's not a matter for the budget. You would have to speak to minister Rockliff about that.

**Ms O'CONNOR** - Minister, in December last year in GBE estimates, you describe the 356 000 hectares as something that had been legislated through this parliament to be a wood bank for the future. Do you stand by that statement?

**Ms COURTNEY** - Yes, I do. It's a future potential production forest.

**Ms O'CONNOR** - How can it be a part of Forestry Tasmania's bid for forest stewardship certification and in fact designated as informal reserves as well as something that you want to log when it would mean logging a high conversation value forest in places like the Southern Forests, the Tasman Peninsula, Wielangta, the North-East, the Great Western Tiers, the Tarkine.

**Ms COURTNEY** - Ms O'Connor, I can't comment on STT's bid, as you say, for FSC. That's a matter between STT and the auditors in terms of that process.

**Ms O'CONNOR** - It's not entirely.

**Ms COURTNEY** - As a minister, as I've said before, I met with them which was a good opportunity to have a talk about the Government's support for the forestry sector in Tasmania.

## UNCORRECTED PROOF ISSUE

**Ms O'CONNOR** - But that's not what the auditors want to hear.

**Ms COURTNEY** - Actually, Ms O'Connor, I responded to all the questions the auditors gave me and I talked meaningfully about this industry and how proud our Government is of it.

**Ms O'CONNOR** - How did you explain to the auditors the two of your Government's policies that led to old growth logging, that is, the logging of rainforest species in regional reserves, and the future potential logging of the 356 000 hectares of acknowledged high conservation value forest?

**Ms COURTNEY** - When I met with the FSC auditors I answered everything that was asked of me openly and honestly, Ms O'Connor.

**Ms O'CONNOR** - Did they ask you if it's Government logging policy to log high conservation value forest?

**Ms COURTNEY** - I don't have notes from my meeting. I can't remember everything that they asked me at the time. To be honest, Ms O'Connor, I didn't take specific notes of a meeting, but I met with them and it was a very productive meeting, I thought, and I answered all the questions openly and honestly.

**Ms O'CONNOR** - Can you confirm that STT has received a draft audit report from the Forest Stewardship Council team?

**Ms COURTNEY** - That's a matter for STT.

**Ms O'CONNOR** - Have you directed STT as a shareholder, minister, to cease logging in high conservation value forests and to cease logging in forests that contain threatened and endangered species in order to support their FSC application?

**Ms COURTNEY** - I have not directed STT to do anything with regards to the FSC audit process. The audit process that STT is going through is a matter for them. I'm very supportive of the process and the Government is very supportive of STT's aspiration of having this accreditation.

**Ms O'CONNOR** - How can you say it's supportive when it is Government policy to log where rainforest species in areas set aside for reserves, including by, might I say, former Liberal minister John Howard, and that was acknowledged by the parliament in 2013 the 356 000 hectares as being of high conservation value forest. How can you say to the auditors that you support STT's FSC certification when your Government's policy is undermining the opportunity for FSC?

**Ms COURTNEY** - I reject that anything that Government does is undermining STT's desire to get accreditation. I can't comment on STT's application to FSC. That's a matter for STT, and as I said, I'm more than happy to discuss this in immense detail later in the year. I know that STT is very proud of their forest practice.

**Ms O'CONNOR** - Point of order, Chair. I need to interrupt the minister to remind the minister that we don't have forestry GBEs this year and that -

**CHAIR** - That is not a point of order.

## UNCORRECTED PROOF ISSUE

**Ms O'CONNOR** - I'll just simply explain this to the minister then. We don't have forestry GBEs this year. We have forestry GBEs next year and that will be after the April 2020 deadline where your Government wants to allow loggers in to 356 000 -

**CHAIR** - Thank you for your clarification, Ms O'Connor.

**Ms O'CONNOR** - hectares of high conservation value forest.

**CHAIR** - I pass the call to Mr Tucker.

**Mr TUCKER** - Thank you, Chair. Minister, can you describe the benefits of the National Institute for Forest Products Innovation in industry in Tasmania including the establishment of the national hub in Launceston. Thank you.

**Dr BROAD** - Do you want to start again?

**CHAIR** - Mr Tucker, could you please repeat your question. Dr Broad couldn't hear it.

**Ms O'CONNOR** - Did you actually want to hear it?

**Dr BROAD** - Well, no, I literally couldn't hear it. I don't know.

**Mr TUCKER** - Minister, can you describe the benefits of the National Institute for Forest Products Innovation to the industry in Tasmania including the establishment of the national hub in Launceston.

**CHAIR** - Thank you.

**Ms O'CONNOR** - Did you write that one yourself?

**CHAIR** - Order.

**Ms COURTNEY** - The Australian government committed \$4 million -

**CHAIR** - Order.

**Mr TUCKER** - What's going on?

**CHAIR** - Order.

**Ms O'CONNOR** - There's two sets of rules at this table.

**CHAIR** - Order.

**Ms O'CONNOR** - In fact there's three.

**Mr TUCKER** - This is a bit bizarre.

**Ms COURTNEY** - Can I just clarify. You asked me about the hub that was announced earlier this year. I'm talking about the National Institute for Forest Products and Innovation. This is a very

different - sorry, I just wanted to clarify that. This was, the Australian government committing \$4 million over four years towards the establishment of NIFP to provide additional forestry research and development across Australia. This commitment included \$2 million research hub in Launceston and a \$2 million research hub in Mount Gambier as I mentioned earlier, and the one in Tasmania is based at Launceston at the School of Architecture and Design.

The NIFP hub in Launceston was launched on Thursday 14 December 2017 and the outcomes of the first Launceston centre funding round were announced late last year, 23 November, with eight successful second round projects announced recently this year. The Tasmanian government committed matching funding for the Launceston hub of \$2 million over four years and this funding was allocated from residual Tasmanian forest inter-governmental agreement funds. The NIFP funds have now been fully allocated, providing a total project investment for rounds 1 and 2 of almost \$10 million, including funding and in-kind contributions from the forestry industry and research agencies.

The National Institute plays a vital role in fostering collaboration, supporting cutting edge research, boosting innovation, maintaining jobs and securing Tasmania's place as the centre for forest industry research in this country. This is achieved by exploring and facilitating innovation in the forest product sector in areas such as forest management, timber processing, wood fire recovery, value adding, advance manufacturing and the bio economy. I have to say one of the best outcomes of this has been the collaboration and the fact that many of the successful applicants have been various companies and various research institutions and universities working together. I'm very, very pleased that it has achieved all its objectives.

**Dr BROAD** - Minister, how does what you just announced differ from the CRC Centre for Forest Value which has various themes, including theme 1, sustainable forest management, forest production and certification; theme 2, products and manufacturing; theme 3, supply chain integration and information management; and that CRC is based at the University of Tasmania in Hobart, I believe. How does what you've announced differ from that?

**Ms COURTNEY** - Do you not welcome more government funding -

**Dr BROAD** - I'm just worried that there might be duplications. How does it differ from that CRC project?

**Ms COURTNEY** - I'd have to seek advice on the CRC project, but in terms of the NIFP, that's been a collaboration initiative of the Commonwealth Government which the state government provided co-funding for to ensure that we could expend those funds further and get more involvement from a range of companies into more research and innovation.

**Dr BROAD** - That's also a CRC structure. That's exactly what CRCs do. The CRCs are a combination of industry, state and federal funding.

**Ms COURTNEY** - I'd have to seek advice on the CRC.

**Mr MORTON** - Yes, I'd have to take it on notice, but it is worth noting that in the first and second round of NIFP a number of projects were from the university.

**Dr BROAD** - University of Tasmania?

## UNCORRECTED PROOF ISSUE

**Mr MORTON** - Yes.

**Ms COURTNEY** - So my understanding is it complements the CRC, but in terms of the CRC itself, I don't have information here to provide for you but we can provide further information on notice if that's of use to you, Dr Broad.

**Dr BROAD** - Yes, I'm just trying to -

**Ms O'CONNOR** - Cobble together a question?

**Dr BROAD** - No, go off memory because there was a research hub to grow forest innovation announced in the past, the 14 -

**Ms COURTNEY** - Stop calling them all hubs, maybe. I love it when you guys agree with each other over forests. It's so reassuring.

**Ms COURTNEY** - It was over hubs actually.

**Dr BROAD** - That was over hubs.

**CHAIR** - So who's seeking the call?

**Ms O'CONNOR** - I'm seeking a call.

**CHAIR** - There you go, Ms O'Connor.

**Ms O'CONNOR** - Dr Broad is faffing around. Minister, can you advise where Shin Yang, which has renamed itself conveniently Patriarch & Sons, forest supply will come from and can you confirm it will be native forests?

**Ms COURTNEY** - First, with regards to contracts between Patriarch and STT, that's a matter between STT and Patriarch. I'm just seeking some more advice so I make sure I give you the most up-to-date information that I have with regard to their project. This facility, it's any investment, particularly in downstream processing, is obviously welcomed by the Hodgman Government, and should this facility see its full scope it will receive \$54 million over three stages with up to 109 jobs created when the project is in full production, and indeed over the construction period will see up to 30 personnel employed over a nine-month period.

**Ms O'CONNOR** - Minister, we've heard this before.

**CHAIR** - Order.

**Ms O'CONNOR** - The question was where Shin Yang, otherwise falsely known as Patriarch or truly known as Patriarch, will obtain its timber supply from.

**Ms COURTNEY** - That's a matter for Patriarch. My understanding is that they are seeking wood supply from a number of sources.

**Ms O'CONNOR** - What are those sources, that's the question.

## UNCORRECTED PROOF ISSUE

**Ms COURTNEY** - I can't speak for a company, Ms O'Connor, they have met and had conversations with STT, but as to those, that's a matter between STT and Patriarch.

**Ms O'CONNOR** - We confirmed last year in GBEs that Shin Yang/Patriarch had met with the Coordinator-General and the Office of the Coordinator-General. Can you confirm that Shin Yang, otherwise known as Patriarch, is here at the invitation of the state government?

**Ms COURTNEY** - I can't comment on the Coordinator-General and his interactions with Patriarch. I have visited their proposed site at Bell Bay, and my understanding is that they are in conversations. I don't know whether they have progressed to the negotiating stage around their wood supply.

**Ms O'CONNOR** - Have you visited the forests in Borneo where they're logging orangutan habitat and driving the indigenous people out of their homelands?

**Ms COURTNEY** - I've not been to Malaysia, I'm sorry.

**Ms O'CONNOR** - You haven't been to Malaysia? Do you think -

**CHAIR** - We are examining the Budget, Ms O'Connor.

**Ms O'CONNOR** - Absolutely. Thanks for your guidance, Chair. Minister, you are aware, and we have raised this in parliament with you a number of times, and in GBEs last year, that the parent company of Patriarch is responsible for devastatingly, unsustainable logging in the forests of Borneo. It is accused of breaching human rights of the indigenous people of Borneo. Do you think this is the sort of company that should be invited to Tasmania by the government?

**Ms COURTNEY** - I'm very aware of your views of -

**Ms O'CONNOR** - No, this is a matter of record from human rights investigators and forest watchers globally.

**Ms COURTNEY** - I'm very aware of your views on this company. Tasmania has a robust forest practices system and it's managed by -

**Ms O'CONNOR** - You won't even tell us where they're going to get their timber from.

**Ms COURTNEY** - the forest practices -

**CHAIR** - Order, Ms O'Connor.

**Ms O'CONNOR** - You won't even tell us where they're going to get the logs from -

**CHAIR** - Ms O'Connor, order.

**Ms COURTNEY** - As all private businesses, how they support their supply is a matter for them.

**Ms O'CONNOR** - What, you don't care?

## UNCORRECTED PROOF ISSUE

**Ms COURTNEY** - I would very much like to see this project up and running.

**Ms O'CONNOR** - Has there been any discussions between Patriarch and Government over access to the 356 000 hectares of high conservation value forest?

**Ms COURTNEY** - As I said before in a previous answer, I have had no direct approaches, requests for FPPF land going forward and the Government has no plans about that. My understanding is that this proposal, there's no expectation this will increase the area or the intensity of harvesting within the PTPZ land.

**Ms O'CONNOR** - As forests minister -

**CHAIR** - Dr Broad, you have the call.

**Ms O'CONNOR** - I do not understand how you don't know -

**CHAIR** - Dr Broad has the call.

**Ms O'CONNOR** - where this company is getting their timber from. You're either misleading

**CHAIR** - Ms O'Connor, Dr Broad has the call.

**Ms O'CONNOR** - or you're wilfully ignoring them.

**CHAIR** - You are interrupting the committee.

**Dr BROAD** - Minister, just the Dorothy Dixier you read a minute ago, there's something that I'll read. 'With a track record of research innovation and timber stretching back decades, the University of Tasmania is the ideal place for the National Institute of Forest Products innovation to base its Launceston hub and says the institute is made up of two regional hubs in Launceston and Mount Gambier, with the Australian government contributing \$4 million over four years in the South Australian and Tasmanian governments contributing \$2 million'. That was announced on 14 December 2017. How does that differ from what you just mentioned?

**Ms COURTNEY** - I was giving an update on the fact that the projects have actually been announced both late last year and earlier this year.

**Dr BROAD** - Two years after this was - December 2017, yes.

**Ms COURTNEY** - There was a process obviously, and that obviously predated me as being minister. My understanding is, and I stand to be corrected, that there was a board which governed the way those applications were framed and the successful application. So my -

**Dr BROAD** - So it wasn't a -

**Ms COURTNEY** - I'm saying the Government didn't play a direct role in actually administering those grants.

**Dr BROAD** - So it wasn't just a -

**Ms COURTNEY** - We provide the funding.

**Dr BROAD** - A pre-election relaunch of a previous announcement, was it?

**Ms COURTNEY** - The one that Senator Colbeck -

**Dr BROAD** - Yes.

**Ms COURTNEY** - No, that's very different. They are completely different.

**Dr BROAD** - Minister, can you explain why the Government's community service obligation has been reduced by the Government's component of the STT's service obligation is reduced by \$14 million over four years.

**Ms COURTNEY** - Dr Broad, I understand that the Treasurer has also answered questions pertaining to this earlier in the week. I'm aware that STT, through their corporate planning processes, are in a strong financial position. We should welcome that and they've got an expectation that they will be included in the forward estimates. So, as the Treasurer has already indicated earlier in the week, the strong financial position has allowed the government to reduce the CSO payment to STT, and we have an expectation that the activities will be met by STT in light of their strengthening financial position.

**Dr BROAD** - So why \$2 million this year, \$4 million next year? How do you arrive at those figures?

**Ms COURTNEY** - That's a matter for the Treasurer in particular, but they're things that are worked through with the Treasurer, me and the Chair and the Board of STT in light of their planning processes and in light of their forecasts.

**Dr BROAD** - Is that because they've got cash sitting on their balance sheet?

**Ms COURTNEY** - I'm not going to go into STT's specific financial position at the moment. I don't have that information. I don't have STT representatives -

**Dr BROAD** - Well, you know that they got \$25 million from sale of assets.

**Ms COURTNEY** - But what I've said is, the Treasurer has determined that, considering their strength and financial position, their strong financial forecast going forward, they have the ability to be able to fund these aspects of the CSO.

**Dr BROAD** - Did you explain what the CSL is used for?

**Ms COURTNEY** - CSI or -

**Dr BROAD** - CSL, I think is -

**Ms COURTNEY** - It's the levy. CSO, so it's community service obligation. It funds a range of things including supporting tourism, firefighting access, and apiarists, and so it ensures that there

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is access for Tasmanians for this land, and in terms of the management of it, that's for STT, and I know that we talked about a lot in Estimates late last year.

**Dr BROAD** - So what does it cover, special species management?

**Ms COURTNEY** - In terms of the CSO, the CSO covers, my advice is its tourism, firefighting access and I'll - so CSO, some of their, what they provide on behalf of government, it has reduction burns, assisting with the prevention, preparation for and detection of bush fires, ensuring that permanent timber production zone land continues to be managed and accessible for multiple uses, and Mr Evans is -

**Mr EVANS** - I was just going to add, minister, that the bushfire, the firefighting is funded separately.

**Dr BROAD** - That's \$2 million a year?

**Ms COURTNEY** - Yes.

**Mr EVANS** - Yes.

**Dr BROAD** - Yes. Does that CSO cover special species management?

**Ms COURTNEY** - No, that's not what the CSO go towards.

**CHAIR** - Ms O'Connor, you have the call.

**Ms O'CONNOR** - Thank you. Minister, do you recall or have you read the letter from the Chair of the Board of then Forestry Tasmania about the inability of the GBE to regularly meet its minimum saw log quota of 137 000 cubic metres?

**Ms COURTNEY** - I can't recall having seen that.

**Ms O'CONNOR** - Are you actually saying that as minister for resources you haven't read the letter from the board to your predecessor about STT's inability, consistently, to meet the minimum legislative saw log quota?

**Ms COURTNEY** - I have a strong working relationship with the board of STT. I'm aware of a range of policy initiatives and correspondence in the past with regards to STT and their wood supply agreements. That's a matter for STT.

**Ms O'CONNOR** - This is not about wood supply. This is about legislative quota.

**CHAIR** - Ms O'Connor, please do not disrupt the committee all the time.

**Ms COURTNEY** - The wood supply that is legislated, and that is a matter for STT and -

**Ms O'CONNOR** - It's a matter for parliament.

**CHAIR** - Ms O'Connor, order.

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**Ms COURTNEY** - As I've said, in terms of wood supply agreements, that is a matter for STT.

**Ms O'CONNOR** - Can we just be really clear here. I didn't ask you a question about wood supply agreements. I ask you two things: did you read the letter from the former chair of the board which explained very clearly that the GBE consistently struggles to meet its minimum legislated saw log quota? I asked you about the minimum saw log quota and the fact that it's not being met. Do you confirm that STT is consistently unable to max out its logging quota?

**Ms COURTNEY** - I'm not going to talk about STT's inability or ability to meet its quota as per the legislation without STT here to be able to provide advice, and they can provide advice to me in the appropriate forum which is the GBEs later in the year.

**Ms O'CONNOR** - Minister, it's actually a matter of government policy and it's something that parliament enacted. It was a reduction of the saw log quota as a result of the TFA to still too high a level at 137 000 cubic metres. Are you able to provide information to the committee on STT's saw log quota outputs, if you like, if I put this on notice in previous years? So how much of the 137 000 cubic metres went out the door, if you like, last year, the year before, the year before and the year before.

**Ms COURTNEY** - All the quota outputs from STT can be asked of STT during Estimates for that later in the year.

**Ms O'CONNOR** - So as you understand, minister, what you're doing at the table and you've done it consistently, is avoid answering Greens' questions about your Government's ongoing logging of high conservation valued forests. You fob it off to GBEs and we won't have an opportunity to ask those questions for 18 months. Can you confirm then, have you been advised by STT that they are unable to meet their minimum saw log quota?

**Ms COURTNEY** - I'm not going to talk - at the table here or otherwise - about correspondence that goes between me and the board of STT.

**Ms O'CONNOR** - So other ministers, when they're advised by GBEs, don't seek to avoid this sort of question in the way that you have. The only conclusion I can draw is that you're not across your policy area, your portfolio, or you're deliberately avoiding answering questions because you know that STT is not meeting its minimum saw log quota on a consistent basis.

**CHAIR** - Do you have a question?

**Ms O'CONNOR** - Can you confirm that?

**Ms COURTNEY** - I appreciate your opinion, Ms O'Connor.

**Ms O'CONNOR** - No, you don't. You couldn't care less about it.

**CHAIR** - Order. Order.

**Ms COURTNEY** - As I have said, I will provide, during GBEs, advice on STT and its contracts, of its wood supply and whether or not it is indeed, as you have said, meeting its quota.

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**Ms O'CONNOR** - Can you confirm then that STT's HCV management plan does not once mention fire, despite being published last month and in the wake of some of the most devastating bushfires this state has seen which has impacted on production forests –

**Ms COURTNEY**- I can't comment on the HCV, that STT has produced, it is a matter for STT.

**Ms O'CONNOR** - How come you can comment on the so-called special species management plan but you can't comment on the HCV management plan? Why is it?

**Ms COURTNEY** - Ms O'Connor, I would like to say that I am trying to answer questions.

**Ms O'CONNOR** - No, you're not.

**Ms COURTNEY** - And indeed, as we've seen from my answers to Ms Dow, I'm trying very hard to answer questions that are outside the scope of this year's Budget or indeed even the state Government, so I am trying to be helpful.

**Ms O'CONNOR** - Have you read that document as minister? This is STT's high conservation values assessment and management plan.

**Ms COURTNEY** - I've read lots of documents from STT, Ms O'Connor.

**Ms O'CONNOR** - Have you read that document?

**Ms COURTNEY**- Yes, I have.

**Ms O'CONNOR** - Have you? Okay. Are you in a position to comment on it as minister, because this falls within your portfolio. Can you confirm that this high conservation value management plan doesn't deal with bushfire risk?

**Ms COURTNEY** - I'm not going to comment on STT matters. That is a matter for them and I will deal with them later in the year.

**Ms O'CONNOR** - So you comment on STT matters when it suits you or when you get a Dorothy Dixier from Labor. Why can't you comment on STT's high conservation values assessment and management plan? It is clearly part of your responsibility. You're the portfolio minister. You claim to have read it. Were you not concerned that it had no mention of bushfire mitigation in it?

**CHAIR** - Minister, it is up to you whether you answer this question. But clearly, this is not part of the budget.

**Ms O'CONNOR** - Rubbish.

**CHAIR** - It is not part of the budget.

**Ms O'CONNOR** - It is part of the budget.

**CHAIR** - Excuse me, I'm speaking with the minister. It is up to you whether you choose to answer this, but if you don't choose to, I will pass the call to Dr Broad.

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**Ms O'CONNOR** - It clearly falls within the Resources portfolio, Chair.

**CHAIR** - You have heard my ruling.

**Ms O'CONNOR** - What was your ruling?

**CHAIR** - My ruling or guidance to the minister was that I believe that that is not part of this Estimates and it is up to the minister whether she chooses to answer or not. If she chooses not to answer, I will pass it to Dr Broad.

**Ms O'CONNOR** - Do you choose not to answer?

**Ms COURTNEY** - I choose to answer it in the appropriate estimates for STT which is later in the year.

**Ms O'CONNOR** - So you are not concerned that there's no mention of fire in STT's high conservation value forests management plan? Is that right?

**CHAIR** - This is tedious repetition. Dr Broad.

**Dr BROAD** - Minister, in last year's budget there was a line item of \$9 million support for the Hermal Group. There's no mention in this year's budget of that \$9 million. Where's that money gone? Is it still available and do you have an update?

**Ms COURTNEY** - I can provide you with an update, Dr Broad.

**Ms O'CONNOR** - Is this something you are prepared to answer?

**Ms COURTNEY** - As it relates to the Budget, Ms O'Connor.

**Ms O'CONNOR** - So funding for Forestry Tasmania doesn't relate to the budget? High conservation for the forest management plan –

**CHAIR** - Order.

**Ms COURTNEY** - Dr Broad, with regard to your question, first, I'll provide an update on the project because I know that this is something that you and Ms Dow and indeed the Chair, are very strongly supportive of considering the location. It is proposed that we'll have a total of \$190 million with \$135 million to be invested within the first three years. My advice is the new facility is expected to provide 160 construction jobs over the build period of 12 months, and employ 100 FTEs soon after it's commissioned. I'd also like to provide an update.

I've met with the Chair earlier this year and I also know that members around this table meet with the company because of their local involvement as well as their ministerial portfolio responsibilities and my understanding is and my advice is that following the lodgement of the notice of intent with the EPA, representatives of Hermal will meet with the EPA on site in Hampshire later this month. Following this meeting, the company intends to lodge an application to the EPA for kiln drying and manufacturing at the Hampshire site.

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On 3 June 2019, so a few nights ago, representatives of the company conducted a joint briefing of councillors and aldermen from the Burnie, Wynyard, and Circular Head councils. Hermal has received a permit from the Wynyard Council to conduct research and development and small production runs at its Wynyard small production development facility. The company intends to increase production from this facility from 1000 cubic metres per annum to 10 000 cubic metres. There are currently 10 people employed on site at Wynyard, all of whom are local residents. As at mid-June, it is expected the production machinery will arrive on site at Wynyard. The company also advises that the eucalyptus as licensed timber, it intends to process into cross-laminated timber, has exceeded expectations in both strength and appearance, which I am sure is welcomed to all members. The company is yet to draw down on any of the grant payments negotiated with the Tasmanian government as they relate to the Hampshire development site, and the company hopes to be in a position to provide a further progress update following the meeting with the EPA later this month.

**Dr BROAD** - So is that \$9 million still available?

**Ms COURTNEY** - Yes.

**Mr EVANS** - So the \$9 million was committed in last year's budget so it doesn't appear as new money.

**Dr BROAD** - So where would it be in the Budget? Where would it be sitting?

**Mr EVANS** - It would be within output 1.2 of my budget.

**Dr BROAD** - Sorry, what was that output?

**Ms COURTNEY** - You won't see it as a new bit of money because the money has gone through.

**Dr BROAD** - Yes. So where is it sitting? What output what?

**Mr EVANS** - I think it's probably in output 1.1 or 1.2 but I will check.

**Dr BROAD** - Yes, if you could give us a page reference that would be handy.

So have they used any government funds at all or are they - do they have a facility sitting there ready to be drawn down? You said related to the Hampshire Project? Have they had any support in getting the deed funding facility?

**Ms COURTNEY** - I'll check with the secretary, because this -

**Mr EVANS** - Not that I'm aware. We haven't yet finalised the funding deed with them. That's still under negotiation.

**Dr BROAD** - Sorry?

**Mr EVANS** - The details of the funding deed are still under negotiation between Hermal and the Office of the Coordinator-General.

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**Dr BROAD** - Can you provide an update on the activities of the Tasmanian Forest and Forest Products Network?

**Ms O'CONNOR** - Is that a Dorothy?

**Dr BROAD** - No.

**Ms O'CONNOR** - Okay. Just checking.

**Ms COURTNEY** - I met with them early this week. I can take that on notice and provide you with an update of what they've been doing. It was a delight to see a lot of the things they've been doing to increase collaboration across industry. At Agfest, it was the first time we've had a Forestry Tent with all representatives and that was coordinated by the Network and it was really pleasing to see that. They've got a number of initiatives, I know that they're doing an awards night later in the year to increase the profile of industry and also recognition of participants within the industry at a range of levels.

I'm really pleased with the efforts that they've gone to and the way that they have engaged with industry. I've met them on site at a number of facilities where we have had opportunities to talk with workers and do afternoon teas. They've also coordinated a thank you effort in the south of the state post the bushfires, a barbeque which I attended along with a number of other representatives from forestry. I can seek through them to provide you an update with the network and what it is actually doing.

**Dr BROAD** - How much money -

**Ms O'CONNOR** - Dr Broad can seek a meeting with them, too, couldn't he? You could have a sit down.

**CHAIR** - Ms O'Connor, Order.

**Dr BROAD** - Just let me ask the questions, please. You're the one who's running interference. How much money does this organisation receive?

**Ms COURTNEY** - The Government provided seed funding for the organisation but the organisation is considering increasing the number of participants. My understanding is, going forward, they will be able to self-sustain on industry and contribution.

**Dr BROAD** - When do you think their current funding, that seed funding, will actual run out?

**Mr MORTON** - Through you, minister, it was \$100 000 of seed funding provided. It's also important to note that the network is the newly announced convenor for the north and north-west forestry hub.

**Ms COURTNEY** - That's the hub that was announced earlier this year in the election.

**Mr MORTON** - Yes, so through the National Forestry Plan, that's an Australian Government issue, so they are receiving \$1 million over four years and that's the network that will be convening that. They're in the process now of setting up the government structure and working out how those hubs are going to work.

**Ms O'CONNOR** - Minister, now that it has been confirmed that your Government is allowing Sustainable Timbers Tasmania to log high conservation value forests, in all likelihood, there will be dissent from that and the defenders of Tasmania's forests will be there to defend them. It is in this context that I ask you, do you under the administrative arrangements, have responsibility for the Workplace (Protection from Protestors) Bill?

**Ms COURTNEY** - I have responsibility for the carriage of that bill but that is not under this portfolio responsibility, it's under my ministerial portfolio responsibility that construction is being administered through the Department of Justice.

**Ms O'CONNOR** - Yesterday when I asked the Treasurer about this and the Minister for State Growth, he told me that he thought you were responsible - he wasn't certain - but as you're aware, the legislation was drafted specifically to penalise forest protests, but to stifle democracy in Tasmania generally. Are you able to explain what part of the Police Offences Act and other laws in Tasmania such as trespass, do not adequately cover protests in forests?

**Ms COURTNEY** - I'd like to begin by clearly stating the Government makes absolutely no apology for protecting the rights of businesses and the rights of Tasmanians to go to work unimpeded. This is a clear intent. We have now been to two elections with this policy and we are looking forward to it -

**Ms O'CONNOR** - Yes, it's a broken promise because the High Court smacked it down.

**CHAIR** - Order. Order.

**Ms COURTNEY** - We are looking forward to being able to enact this policy. As the member would be aware, there has been a consultation period and the department is working through that with regards to any further specifics, I'm not able to answer this in this output group, it would have needed to be asked this morning under Building and Construction.

**Ms O'CONNOR** - Minister, can you confirm that the High Court accepted that there are other Tasmanian laws to deal with criminal or destructive behaviour including those that may take place in public forests?

**Ms COURTNEY** - Ms O'Connor, we are working through a process, but as I have said, this is the wrong portfolio area -

**Ms O'CONNOR** - No, it's not.

**Ms COURTNEY** - Indeed, I've got the completely wrong -

**Ms O'CONNOR** - It's not the wrong portfolio area because the legislation -

**CHAIR** - Ms O'Connor.

**Ms O'CONNOR** - The legislation -

**CHAIR** - Ms O'Connor, order.

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**Ms O'CONNOR** - has prepared to punish forest protestors.

**CHAIR** - If the minister rules -

**Ms COURTNEY** - I and the Government -

**CHAIR** - Ms O'Connor, if the minister says it's the wrong portfolio, it is the wrong portfolio.

**Ms O'CONNOR** - That's a matter of interpretation.

**Ms COURTNEY** - The Government makes absolutely no apology for protecting the rights of Tasmanians to go to work.

**Ms O'CONNOR** - Well, the Government's problem is it never apologises for anything.

**Ms COURTNEY** - We make no apology for protecting the rights of local businesses to conduct their business and we will protect them as we have gone to two elections with this policy. The consultation that's underway with regard to implementing the outcomes of the High Court decision, that is being worked through at the moment, and I can't say anything further without the appropriate advisors here and -

**Ms O'CONNOR** - Because you don't actually know. You need to have your advisors here?

**CHAIR** - Ms O'Connor, order.

**Ms COURTNEY** - No, Ms O'Connor, because we're in the wrong output group. We're in the wrong entire department at the moment.

**Ms O'CONNOR** - Can I just ask minister, do you agree that the original intent of the Workplace (Protection from Protestors) Bill, as stated by your predecessor, the former minister Paul Harriss, was to prevent Tasmanians who care about their forests from protesting in forests?

**CHAIR** - Minister, I'm going to rule that out of order. It's not in this portfolio. You've already explained that. I'm passing the call to -

**Ms O'CONNOR** - How is it not in this portfolio? Point of order, Chair. Can you explain how it is not in this minister's portfolio responsibilities when the legislation is specific in its intent to stop forest protests?

**CHAIR** - The minister has already given you the advice that that is her responsibility under building and construction. We are currently in Resources and that is my ruling. Dr Broad, you have the call.

**Dr BROAD** - Minister, does your Resources portfolio have capacity to take an efficiency dividend?

**Ms COURTNEY** - Thank you, Dr Broad, I appreciate your question. In terms of the efficiency dividend, I know that this has been canvassed with a range of ministers and I know that the Treasurer has outlined clearly that in terms of the efficiency dividend, I will look at consultants advertising,

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promotion, travel and transport, targeted vacancy control and natural attrition. We are working through this process with agencies and we'll work through these with secretaries.

**Dr BROAD** - Does your department have the capacity to take a 2.25 efficiency dividend in two years' time?

**Ms COURTNEY** - As I said, Dr Broad, we're working through a process and the process will consider a number of things. It is a matter for the Treasurer and that's what the Treasurer is working through as he has stated.

**Dr BROAD** - Are you on the budget subcommittee?

**Ms COURTNEY** - As the Treasurer has outlined, I think it was yesterday, the makeup of that budget subcommittee is covered by Cabinet confidentiality.

**Dr BROAD** - Yes, but if you are on it, you could opt yourself if you want.

**Ms COURTNEY** - Dr Broad, the Treasurer has dealt with this yesterday.

**Dr BROAD** - The Treasurer did say yesterday that it would be up to the individual members, that he would have to consult with them, so I'm consulting with you. Are you on any budget subcommittee?

**Ms COURTNEY** - As the Treasurer outlined yesterday, the constituency of that is a matter for Cabinet.

**Ms O'CONNOR** - It's not a matter for Cabinet -

**CHAIR** - Order. Ms O'Connor, you don't have the call.

**Ms O'CONNOR** - Two previous ministers have detailed subcommittee members.

**CHAIR** - Ms O'Connor, order. You don't have the call.

**Ms O'CONNOR** - I'm trying to prevent the minister from misleading the table, Chair. It is not a matter of Cabinet confidentiality, the member or of any particular subcommittee. It is a new level of secrecy, that's what it is.

**CHAIR** - Dr Broad has the call.

**Dr BROAD** - So what activities are carried out in your portfolio which you don't consider essential and may be subject to an efficiency dividend?

**Ms COURTNEY** - As has been outlined Dr Broad, the efficiency dividend, which I might add is demonstrably smaller than a lot of other jurisdictions, will have a look at consults, advertising and promotions, travel and transport, targeted vacancy control and natural attrition. We are working through those and we will do so over the coming weeks.

**Dr BROAD** - When will your agency engage any consultants in the coming financial year?

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**Ms COURTNEY** - I'm not going to speculate on what my agency may or may not do in the coming financial year.

**Dr BROAD** - If you're going to appoint consultants then some of that may be already in train?

**Ms COURTNEY** - With regards to consultants that will be engaged over the coming financial year, we can talk about that at Estimates next year and we can give you a clear outline of the quantum of consultancies that we're engaged.

**Dr BROAD** - There's been no tenders or there's been no activity in appointing consultants?

**Ms COURTNEY** - I can provide information, I understand, about consultancies in the year or the nine months up until March 31 and I believe my secretary can provide that.

**Dr BROAD** - Okay, well, that's a start.

**Ms COURTNEY** - But I can't pre-empt consultancies into the future. It's something that we are targeting, but that's going to be a matter that's going to be worked through and will be a matter for the secretary of each department to make the appropriate decisions.

**Dr BROAD** - Also, has there been a directive that no consultants be engaged in the coming financial year?

**Ms COURTNEY** - As I said, there's a process that's been worked through. There are a number of aspects that the Treasurer, along with the responsible portfolio ministers and agencies will look to to make sure that we can achieve those savings.

**Dr BROAD** - So does that involve a directive that no consultants will be engaged?

**Ms COURTNEY** - As I've said, Dr Broad, consultants are part of the scope of work of where efficiency may be gained. We're also going to look at advertising and promotion, travel and transport, targeted vacancy trial and natural attrition and how that will be attributed to different aspects, how that will be attributed to different agencies will be worked through in the coming weeks.

**Dr BROAD** - One of the directives is to target vacancy control and natural attrition. As we've heard earlier in the resource portfolio, there's one position vacant in the north-west. Is that an area - will that position be targeted as part of this search for efficiency? So-called efficiency dividend?

**Ms COURTNEY** - As has been outlined Dr Broad, no decision has been made as the Treasurer has outlined. He will work through this with each of the secretaries in the coming weeks and then I have an expectation that secretaries will be able to manage appropriately.

**Dr BROAD** - So do you consider that vacant position to be frontline?

**Ms COURTNEY** - I am not going to be drawn on what is frontline or backline, Dr Broad. We want to ensure that service delivery remains and in terms of the work that will be done, this will be done over the coming weeks.

**Dr BROAD** - In the budget subcommittee?

**Ms COURTNEY** - Dr Broad, as we've been through, the makeup of that committee as the Treasurer said yesterday is a matter for Cabinet.

**Dr BROAD** - Just fess up.

**Ms O'CONNOR** - Minister, I do want to pull you up on that because it's never previously been a matter of Cabinet confidentiality, the membership of any subcommittee. The previous ministers have detailed subcommittee members and this is just your people taking secrecy to the next level.

**CHAIR** - Could we have the question, please?

**Ms COURTNEY** - If you want to direct that to the Treasurer, I'm sure he'd be pleased to address it.

**Ms O'CONNOR** - There's no point. I've spent yesterday with the Treasurer and it was an exercise in mind-numbing dishonesty.

**CHAIR** - Order. Can we go to the question, please?

**Ms O'CONNOR** - Thank you. Minister, has STT or any of your advisors raised concerns about illegal wood hooking in particularly in the southern forests and around Ladina? And I should just point out that this is a matter that has been raised with the FSC auditors because there is pictorial evidence of logging, of converting, of illegal firewood cutting, in PTPZ lands with the full knowledge of Sustainable Timbers Tasmania so-called? If you want pictures, minister, these are all from Gumtree, so these are all questionable, wood-chopping practices that are all on Gumtree. Look at that. Have any of these concerns been raised with you?

**Ms COURTNEY** - With regards to forest practices, I feel confident that Peter Vulca could discuss -

**Ms O'CONNOR** - It's nothing to do with -

**Ms COURTNEY** - ensuring that there are appropriate forest practices.

**Ms O'CONNOR** - Well, it's nothing to do with him.

**Ms COURTNEY** - In terms of the allegations that you have there, that is something that we can, if you have specific things that you'd like to raise with me -

**Ms O'CONNOR** - I'm asking, so these are ads that are placed in Norfolk, Hobart, Launceston, Sheffield, Westbury, Bicheno, where there is wood being offered for sale and the allegation is that Sustainable Timbers Tasmania is allowing the illegal firewood cutting and that it's happening in fact 200 metres around the corner from the Sustainable Timbers Tasmania office.

**Ms COURTNEY** - If there are concerns they can be raised with the FPA that would investigate them appropriately. I know that STT has in the past, or my understanding is, works with individuals to be able to help with supplies of firewood.

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**Ms O'CONNOR** - Can I just ask you this then, minister, and this should be a matter of concern to everyone at the table. Whether you love our old growth forests or not, will you commit to ensuring there is an on-ground investigation and audit of illegal woodcutting in permanent timber production lands that is happening without forest practices plans and it's happening with the full knowledge, it is alleged, of Sustainable Timbers Tasmania.

**Ms COURTNEY** - I'm not going to comment on allegations about what is STT may or may not know about alleged illegal activities. With regards to wood hooking and I'm not sure whether the FPA wants to comment further in terms of their practices and -

**Ms O'CONNOR** - They should be given the opportunity because this is a serious matter.

**CHAIR** - Order. Ms O'Connor, can you just allow the minister to finish her answer.

**Ms O'CONNOR** - The minister's just waffling.

**CHAIR** - The minister is answering the question. Order.

**Ms O'CONNOR** - Well, we're running out of time and what we need from the minister is a commitment to investigate.

**CHAIR** - We are not running out of time, Ms O'Connor. I'm about to warn you again. Can you allow the minister to finish?

**Ms COURTNEY** - My advice is, Ms O'Connor, if you have evidence of illegal activity it should be presented to either the police or the FPA for appropriate investigation.

**Ms O'CONNOR** - Has any concern been raised with you as minister about illegal firewood cutting in lands which you are administratively responsible for?

**Ms COURTNEY** - So with regards to STT as the member will be aware, STT provides for permits with which they would be able to access firewood. When wood is accessed illegally, there are challenges - well, there's obviously illegality around trespassing and I mean, I would suggest if you have allegations that you take those that's particularly specific instances to the police or the FPA for investigation.

**Ms O'CONNOR** - What I'm asking is if you as minister will take a direct personal interest in this and make sure that the allegations are investigated and perhaps ask someone in STT or your office or your agency to go and check out the amount of wood that is advertised on Gumtree and to make some inquiries about where it's coming from and whether it has forest practices plans in place.

**Ms COURTNEY** - Ms O'Connor, and on that, I'm genuine when I say, if you have any specific information I will commit to pass that on to be able to investigate it appropriately.

**Ms O'CONNOR** - See that's buck passing. We've got the information, it is all there on Gumtree.

**Ms COURTNEY** - It's not a matter for a ministerial office to investigate this. It's a matter for, as been said, my advice is call the police or the FPA -

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**Ms O'CONNOR** - You should investigate.

**Ms COURTNEY** - Well, if I am referred allegations I will. If they come to me, I will refer them appropriately.

**CHAIR** - Ms Dow, you have the call.

**Ms DOW** - What areas of your department will be quarantined from the efficiency dividend?

**Ms COURTNEY** - Thank you, Ms Dow for the question. As has been discussed a number of times already, the Treasurer is working through that process with different agencies.

**Ms DOW** - Which area will be quarantined?

**Ms COURTNEY** - Well, as I have said, there are a range of measures that we can look at to seek efficiencies in terms of consultants, advertising and promotion, travel and transport, targeted vacancy control and natural attrition. The Treasurer will be working through those with agencies.

**Ms DOW** - Has the number of full-time equivalents increased or decreased over the past financial year in your department?

**Ms COURTNEY** - I can get that advice for you.

**Mr EVANS** - There has been an increase because we've put on additional graduates. It is part of our diversity program, we're trying to encourage more younger people into the organisation. I can give you the specifics once I find it.

**Ms DOW** - Thank you.

**Mr EVANS** - So the number of paid full-time equivalents increased by 31 from the last reporting period, so the FTEs at 31 March was 744 compared to 713 for the previous year. The increase is primarily due to an increase in the number of fixed term employees engaged during the reporting period including 13 fixed term graduates as part of our graduate recruitment program.

**Ms DOW** - So how many of those are permanent?

**Mr EVANS** - At March 19, of this year, 785 permanents, 82 fixed term and then 28 contracts.

**Ms DOW** - How many people are employed in communications and marketing across the agency?

**Mr EVANS** - I'm not sure I have that figure here. I am happy to put it on notice. I have lots of information - no, I don't have that detail but it is roughly -

**Ms COURTNEY** - You can put it on notice. If the number is available, we will provide it, but it's not broken down that way, so we will do our best to provide it should that number be able to be extracted from the data.

**Mr EVANS** - I'm advised we don't have that number.

**Ms COURTNEY** - No, I have been advised that we don't have it, I'm afraid. It is not broken down that way.

**Ms DOW** - Okay.

**Ms O'CONNOR** – Sustainable Timbers Tasmania recently published its high conservation values assessment and management plan in April 2019 as part of its renewed attempt to get FSC following its failure in 2015. The critical non-compliances related to old growth forests and threatened species including the Swift parrot. The plan identifies about 24 000 hectares of Swift parrot breeding habitat in PTPZ land, 9 300 hectares of which are located in the southern forests and are to be managed under what's a new public authority management agreement for DPIPWE and STT which is yet to be finalised. Has the public authority management agreement been completed. Will it be provided to parties interested in the conservation of the Swift parrot which is, as you know, a critically endangered species?

**Ms COURTNEY** - My advice is that's a matter for DPIPWE.

**Ms O'CONNOR** - Oh, oh, I see. So as forestry minister, even though the FFC application from STT was rejected on the basis of a failure to protect Swift parrot habitat, you're going to fob questions off to DPIPWE?

**Ms COURTNEY** - Those specific questions that you asked is the responsibility of DPIPWE.

**Ms O'CONNOR** - It relates to Swift parrot habitat in the permanent timber production zone lands over which you have portfolio responsibility.

**Ms COURTNEY** -The land itself yes, falls under my responsibility. In terms of the question you asked with regard to the Swift parrot, that is managed by DPIPWE.

**Ms O'CONNOR** - Well, can you commit to producing maps identifying where these 9300 hectares of Swift parrot habitat in the PTPZ land are located and the geo coordinates?

**Ms COURTNEY** - No, I cannot.

**Ms O'CONNOR** - Why not?

**Ms COURTNEY** - As we just said, this is a matter for DPIPWE.

**Ms O'CONNOR** - No, it's not solely a matter for DPIPWE. No, you are not going to get out of it. Mr Evans, would you like to help?

**Mr EVANS** - You asked about the status of the PAMA and the PAMA is an agreement being negotiated between DPIPWE and STT so that is legitimately a matter for DPIPWE rather than for us. We don't have an involvement in the negotiation of PAMA. In terms of the mapping, I don't know the answer to that question. I would have to take that on notice.

**Ms O'CONNOR** - Do you think that those maps have been prepared? Presumably if it's been identified that these 9300 hectares of Swift parrot habitat in the forested areas over which you have administrative responsibility, minister, these maps have been prepared.

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**Ms COURTNEY** - But they've been prepared not my department.

**Ms O'CONNOR** - So are you saying, minister, that you have not seen the mapping of Swift parrot habitat in PTPZ land?

**Ms COURTNEY** - What I'm saying is any mapping that you're referring to, as has been outlined by secretary, is a matter for DPIPWE and STT.

**Ms O'CONNOR** - Well, minister, that wasn't the question. I said have you seen the maps that have been apparently prepared by DPIPWE that define 9 300 hectares of Swift parrot habitat, as portfolio minister for forest policy and knowing that the FFC audit failed last time because of the Swift parrot habitat. Have you not taken an interest? You must be aware of the Swift parrot habitat in the PTPZ forest is?

**Ms COURTNEY** - With regards to the FFC audit as we have gone through previously, that process and the information that is provided by STT to the auditors is a matter for STT.

**Ms O'CONNOR** - But it's also a matter for you as minister responsible for forest policy.

**Ms COURTNEY** - I was not involved in the provision of information from STT to the FFC auditors.

**Ms O'CONNOR** - All right. Could I ask you, before you had your meeting with the FFC auditors, did you have a briefing with STT about its FFC application and its responses to concerns raised by the auditors about the failure to protect Swift parrot habitat back in 2015?

**Ms COURTNEY** - I met with STT regularly around a range of things.

**Ms O'CONNOR** - Minister, I just asked -

**CHAIR** - Order, order.

**Ms O'CONNOR** - Why can't you even give a straight answer to a question like that?

**CHAIR** - Ms O'Connor, allow the minister to finish.

**Ms COURTNEY** - It's been well canvassed and it's my expectation that STT in the process of seeking certification this time, they have, has been working through a process to address the concerns raised.

**Ms O'CONNOR** - Why can't you simply answer a question that was so straight forward? Did STT brief you on their response to FFC audit failure in 2015, before you sat down with the auditors this time?

**Ms COURTNEY** - As I have said, Ms O'Connor, I get briefed on STT on a range of things and I'm not going to -

**Ms O'CONNOR** - Why do you think it is appropriate to stonewall a question like that?

**Ms COURTNEY** - I'm not stonewalling you, Ms O'Connor.

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**Ms O'CONNOR** - You absolutely are.

**CHAIR** - Ms O'Connor.

**Ms COURTNEY** - What I am going to say is that I have got a strong working relationship with the management of STT.

**Ms O'CONNOR** - But you don't care enough to find out about the Swift parrot habitat.

**Ms COURTNEY** - I meet regularly with them and as is appropriate, we discuss a range of aspects -

**Ms O'CONNOR** - Minister, were you briefed before you sat down with the FFC auditors last week on Swift parrot habitat in lands over which you are administratively responsible?

**Ms COURTNEY** - Ms O'Connor, I am not going to discuss the meetings.

**Ms O'CONNOR** - So you weren't? Do you not care enough?

**Ms COURTNEY** - Between STT and myself.

**Ms O'CONNOR** - Or are you wilfully ignorant? I don't understand why you think it is acceptable to sit at this table when really straight forward questions about the protection of threatened species habitat -

**CHAIR** - Ms O'Connor, that is very unparliamentary and I warn you for that outburst. I am going to direct the call to Dr Broad.

**Dr BROAD** - Just from your Rowley report, recommendation No.13, 'The state government should map out a staged commitment to a preferred long-term infrastructure investment plan that essentially makes the best use of existing state-owned infrastructure assets and improves them as described above'. Are you committed to delivering this plan?

**Ms COURTNEY** - We're working through all the recommendations in the Rowley report and as I said earlier, we've committed to a number of these with regard to port access. We're continuing to invest in rail infrastructure including commitments this year to upgrade facilities at Parattah, so that there can be access from - in various places from around Tasmania, and with other recommendations within the Rowley report like the road link as was discussed earlier, we'll work through those with industry.

**Dr BROAD** - So you're only committing to keeping the port open and Parattah and that's as far as you have got so far?

**Ms COURTNEY** - No. We are working through the other recommendations. I'll be working through those with industry and I note that the body of work was done prior to the devastating bushfires that we have had, and I outlined the impact of those, and I've also outlined that there is a process under way to frame-up and to understand how significant that damage is. That's a process that's undergoing now.

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We've also had significant damage to processing facilities. The Neville Smith is up and running again and I'm hopeful about Ta Ann to come on stream. They're working through their own processes to do all this repair. Considering that that has been a great deal of uncertainty for industry, it's been uncertainty around the wood, the standing wood that is there, it wouldn't be prudent to make decision -

**Dr BROAD** - So will you be providing a response to the Rowley report.

**CHAIR** - The time for the examination of this portfolio has expired. We will suspend and I will resume at 2 o'clock when we start with Aboriginal affairs, I believe. Thank you very much.

**The committee adjourned at 1.12 p.m.**