## TRANSCRIPT OF PROCEEDINGS

COMMISSION OF INQUIRY INTO THE TASMANIAN GOVERNMENT'S RESPONSES TO CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE IN INSTITUTIONAL SETTINGS

At Hearing Rooms 6A and 7A Tasmanian Civil and Administrative Tribunal, 38 Barrack Street, Hobart

## BEFORE:

The Honourable M. Neave AO (President and Commissioner) Professor L. Bromfield (Commissioner)
The Honourable R. Benjamin AM (Commissioner)

On 13 May 2022 at 10.10am
(Day 10)

PRESIDENT NEAVE: Ms Bennett, before we begin today's hearing there's something I need to say.

Commissioner Benjamin isn't able to attend the hearing this morning as he's attending the funeral of a close friend. It's this Commission's intention to always conduct hearings with all Commissioners present. If it weren't for these circumstances beyond anyone's control Commissioner Benjamin would obviously be here but, in accordance with section 5A of the Commissions of Inquiry Act 1995 (Tasmania), Commissioner Bromfield and I are able to proceed with today's hearing without Commissioner Benjamin. Commissioner Benjamin will review all of the evidence from today's hearing at a later time.

I would also like to make a further and very special announcement about Commissioner Benjamin. Today the Chief Justice of Tasmania, The Honourable Justice Blow AO, has announced the appointment of two new Senior Counse1, one of whom is Commissioner Benjamin. That appointment takes effect from today. His appointment as Senior Counsel recognises Commissioner Benjamin's experience, independence and contribution to the legal professional, including as a former judge of the Family Court of Australia. Commissioner Bromfield and I would like to personally congratulate Commissioner Benjamin on his new appointment. Thank you, Ms Bennett.

MS BENNETT: Thank you, Commissioners, and of course Counsel Assisting and the legal team extend our congratulations on a worthy and appropriate appointment.

Commissioners, we have Mr Sam Leishman here to give evidence this morning, can I ask that he be sworn in.
<SAMUEL MATTHEW LEISHMAN, affirmed:
[10.12am]
<EXAMINATION BY MS BENNETT:
MS BENNETT: Q. Can you tell the Commissioners your full name and we need not have your address?
A. Samuel Matthew Leishman.
Q. And you've made a statement to assist this Commission?
A. Yes, I have.
Q. Have you reviewed that lately?
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A. Yes, I have.
Q. Are the contents of that statement true and correct to the best of your knowledge?
A. Yes, they are.
Q. Thank you. Commissioners will have that statement in their bundle. Mr Leishman, I'd just like to start by thanking you for being here to give your evidence to this Commission and I'd like to ask you about yourself and about your family. Can you tell the Commissioners about you as a young man?
A. Okay. Thank you. I was born in 1966 in Hobart, so I'm a Hobart boy. I was the youngest of five children and I was brought up in the Hobart suburb of New Town. We had - I was very lucky, like, my mother and father got on very well together; in fact it's probably fair to say my father doted on my mother so we were very lucky in that respect. I was brought up in a very busy household, because I had three older brothers and a sister, there was always a lot going on, a lot of people coming and going, friends coming and going, family coming and going. It was always a very welcoming house, the door was always open. And my parents, they encouraged us as best we could to be independent and sort of find our own paths in life. It was a busy chaotic sort of home life and, it was never perfect, we weren't the Brady Bunch or anything like that, you know, there were fights and arguments, but we were close and we looked after each other.
Q. And, can you tell us a little bit about your early experiences of school; how did you like school as a child? A. I enjoyed primary school and I was - I wasn't particularly a super high achiever, but I got on well. I was good particularly sort of in the more artistic pursuits, and I was good at maths and I enjoyed going to school.
Q. It was 1978 when you started high school, and that was at your local high school; is that right?
A. Yes, I started Grade 7, I was 11 when I started Grade 7 in 1978 at New Town High School which was Tasmania's - at that time until just recently Tasmania's only public high school for boys.
Q. And in your first year at school you had a science teacher by the name of Darrel Harington; you say in your

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statement "he began to gain the trust of myself and my parents", can you tell us what that meant?
A. Yes, just to clarify something, he wasn't actually my science teacher, he was a science teacher at my school, I wasn't in any of his classes at the time, I just met him sort of coincidentally at school. And, because I was interested - he was a science teacher, he was a young, youngish man at the time and quite sort of sporty and got on well with most of the - seemed to get on well with all the other kids in my school.

I was more into sort of musical pursuits and the high school musical that year, Paint Your Wagon, he came along and sang in our musical, which was kind of nice but I thought it was kind of strange as well that this man who couldn't sing particularly well was interested in taking part in this musical.

He started learning to play the clarinet and appeared in our high school band. He even started taking piano lessons from my own private piano teacher. I sang in a church choir at that time as well on a Sunday and he started coming along - singing in my church choir, even though he couldn't sing particularly well.
Q. So he did start to gain your trust?
A. Yes, and that of my parents as well, because of my activities at school, if there was a concert or school performance or whatever, my parents would come along and see, as parents have to do. And, I can't give an example but I just know that he would have got to meet and know my parents better during that period in 1978 as well.
Q. And, he became sort of - he was known to be friendly with the other students as well, or did he single you out a bit?
A. He was popular, he was very confident and he was - he could play sport and, like, if there was a teacher-student football match or something, he'd be the first one lining up to kick a football around with the kids. I guess I felt a little bit singled out, like, he was particularly interested in my activities, you know, to the point of having piano lessons off my piano teacher and that sort of thing, I think, yeah.
Q. And, you were 12 when he became sexually abusive towards you; is that right?
A. Yes, that's right.
Q. And that continued for some 12 months, I think you say?
A. Do you want me to describe?
Q. Say whatever you feel comfortable to say?
A. Do you want me to describe how it happened or?

COMMISSIONER BROMFIELD: Q. Only if you want to; this is for you.
A. I'm happy to, I'11 keep it brief. What happened towards then of 1978, towards the end of Year 7, there was one particular day, it would have been December, where my parents allowed me to spend a day with him, and that was fine by them, they knew him and obviously trusted him. I spent the day with him, it was December, beginning of summer, it was a beautiful day. I remember spending a bit of time at the beach and he bought us some lunch, he bought us Kentucky Fried Chicken, which I'd never had before. And we went back to his - his parents had a flat, a unit in Bellerive, we went back to that unit and ate the chicken.

One thing I remember, because he was a science teacher he understood the anatomy of this chicken and these bones, he could describe where all these bones came from, which I thought was quite clever.

When we were eating the conversation started turning to girls and whether I had a girlfriend, was I interested in girls, did I have a girlfriend yet, and my answer to that was "no". And the mood sort of quickly changed and he grabbed his car keys and he said, "Come on", and we left the unit and we drove - or he drove a couple of hundred metres down the road to the shops, went into a newsagent and came back with a rolled up magazine. Went back to the apartment and we were sitting on the couch very close together - I have to be clear here, this is a teacher I really admired, I really liked a lot.
Q. Of course.
A. We were sitting very close together, the magazine gets unwrapped, and it's a Playboy or something and he starts he's very, very close to me, starts flicking through showing me pictures and asking me if I was being turned on by the pictures that I was looking at. And, one part of me was terrified but there was an excitement in me as well, I
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have to be honest about this, because he was so close to me and it wasn't particularly the pictures that I was - there was this nervous, terrifying excitement about me, within me, and he was asking me if I was getting aroused and that's how I was feeling, and this turned into a - do you want me to keep going?

MS BENNETT: Q. Say what you're happy to say, but only as much as you're happy to say.
A. This turned into sort of play fight sort of thing, and he's a big man, I'm like a 40 kilo 12-year-old, I was little. And his - I was trying to resist and his hand is then on my genitals, and then everything happened quite suddenly, he swept me up in his arms and carried me to a bedroom at the back of this unit, and it would have been his parents' bedroom. I remember the curtains were closed, it was dim in there, and we were on in this bed together, and he sort of - I'm terrified about what's going to happen and, to be honest, I stopped resisting and I felt like I just submitted to it, I let him do whatever he wanted to do. And it was slow, what he did, and as well - he used the word "retaliate", he said, "You can retaliate if you like", I didn't even know what the word meant; he explained what the word meant. So, as well as submitting to this, I also complied; I did what he wanted, or tried to do what he wanted me to do to him. And that was that first incident and he drove me home.

I remember the drive home was silent, I was sitting in the passenger's seat thinking, "I have no idea what I've just done or what just happened", and he dropped me off at the front door of our house, and I walked in through the front door, the key was always under the mat, invited myself in and I could hear my parents in the kitchen and I thought, "Oh my God, I don't want my parents to see me, they can't see me because they will know". So, I went to the bathroom and I remember distinctly looking in the mirror thinking, "Oh my God, what is this disgusting thing I've just done? My parents, this is written on my face, they will see what I've done, this disgusting act", and I was just trying to compose myself in the mirror, and the door bell rang. I knew it was him, so I wanted to get to the door first and, sure enough, I'm going down the hallway and I could see his figure, his tall figure in the mottled glass in the window. And, I opened the door about that far (indicates), and he said to me, he said in a sort of half-whispered voice, he said, "You looked really upset
when I left you, I just wanted to make sure you're okay", and with that I could feel my mother coming up behind me, and he basically looked over the top of me, invited himself in, my parents welcomed him, and it just turned into this session of beers and food with my parents while I was sitting there absolutely. I didn't - I was terrified initially, first of all, that he was going to tell my parents of this disgusting act that I'd just done with him, but he didn't, it just turned into a big drinking session with my parents and, they didn't know, they thought he was a friend.

COMMISSIONER BROMFIELD: Q. And you were sitting there overwhelmed and confused and frightened, and it sounds like still kind of blaming yourself.
A. I guess I'm better at not blaming myself, but thank you for that observation, thank you. Do you want me to talk more? Do you want me to talk more?
Q. We want you to say as much as you would like to say, but don't feel compelled to say anything?
A. I actually want to get to a certain point.

MS BENNETT: Please.
COMMISSIONER BROMFIELD: Please, you choose.
A. I stayed up as late as I could until I was absolutely exhausted, went to bed, and the next day I thought, that's just not gonna happen again, but $I$ just couldn't quite resist. And, because he was so confident and had the trust of my parents, over that summer my parents let me spend time with him, even let me go away with him for days sometimes on a couple of occasions, and that initial terror that I had, I basically started to get more comfortable with what we were doing together and the acts that we were doing together became more involved.

And, towards the end of - towards the end of Grade 8 towards the end of that summer he said to me, just before we're getting ready to go back to school, he said, "I've really had to be really persuasive and do a lot of things here, but I've managed to get your home group for the year so I can see you every morning and you'll be in my science classes this year so I'll be able to see some of you", which I guess at the time I thought, "Oh gee, that's nice" but looking back I can see what he was doing.

We get back to school in Year 8, in 1979 I'm still 12 years old, and there was a sort of sudden shift in his behaviour, because I'd sort of grown what I'd thought was this emotional attachment to this man - I know that sounds disgusting but that's what it was like.

COMMISSIONER BROMFIELD: It doesn't sound disgusting.
PRESIDENT NEAVE: It doesn't at al1, it's completely understandable.

THE WITNESS: But things shifted, there was no longer that connection, he was no longer at our house, but occasionally there'd be moments where we would get together and things would happen, or occasionally he'd whisper something to me at school.

Just for an example I remember once at school he came up to me and whispered in my ear, he said, "I can see the outline of your dick in your pants", those sort of things. Occasionally if he ever got a chance he'd give me a lift home and would perform some sort of act in his car.

PRESIDENT NEAVE: Q. When you say things shifted, do you mean he ceased to try to endear himself to your parents?
A. Yes. So, what I thought was some sort of a relationship, I sensed it wasn't all of a sudden and it was just a physical thing, and that left me feeling, it's tough to say, but I felt pretty isolated and let down because I really admired this person.

PRESIDENT NEAVE: Yes.
A. Sorry, it's true.

MS BENNETT: No, don't apologise.
COMMISSIONER BROMFIELD: That's the psychology of child sexual abuse, that's the thing that's so hard because you carry that for so long in your life, questioning the how.

THE WITNESS: I will get to the point.
MS BENNETT: Q. Please take your time.
A. So, I began Year 8, I was still 12 and it was just sort of occasional quick get-togethers, and there was one particular occasion when, I think he must have given me a lift home from school and on the way home from school we

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quickly went via his parents' unit with the intention of performing a sexual act in this unit.

When we arrived at the unit there were two boys from my year in the carpark kicking a ball around, just messing around playing, and I thought - I just felt, "Oh my God I've been spotted in a car, these boys are going to know what's going on". And because he was so confident and sort of blase, he just hopped out of the car, "How are you going kids?", he knew their name, probably even kicked the ball around, I don't remember, but I just remember standing there thinking, "Oh, this is so uncomfortable". And after that he starts walking away towards the door of the unit and beckons me over, and I - it was terrible.

I just wanted to point this out because the next day at school everything changed because $I$ was in the playground, it must have been recess time or something, this group of boys there and those two that had been involved who had seen me last night just called out across the playground or the - words to the effect of, "How did you like sucking Harington's cock last night?" And so, I'd managed to sort of fly under the radar quite well until that point, but when - I mean, you can imagine in Tasmania in 1978 that quickly sort of bubbled and festered and turned into - immediately turned into a huge problem for me. Because, not only did I feel isolated by all the boys in my school, I had my group of friends there, who were just dorky music students, but it's awkward for them as well, isn't it, because they don't want to associate with someone who's being bullied to that degree, and I know this Commission's not about bullying but I will get to the point about isolation in my school.

Because, there's all this vocalising amongst these kids about what I am and what I've done, and then a few days later one of the other teachers in my school took me aside, and the words effectively were, "I don't know what's going on between you and Mr Harington, but obviously something is and you need to make it stop".

PRESIDENT NEAVE: Q. So, you were given the responsibility of stopping it?
A. Yes. So, I knew in my mind that kids in my - everyone in school knew, teachers knew, but I felt I just had - I was left to deal with it on my own. That's the point I wanted to get to.

MS BENNETT: Q. And you carried it on your own for a 1ong time after that?
A. Ah, yes, for a long, long, long time, yes.
Q. And am I right to say that it sounds like you blamed yourself for what had happened?
A. I have always - for any unhappiness I've had, I've always - yeah, I guess I blame myself for my own misery sometimes, yes.
Q. And, was there a shift in your understanding that came as an adult?
A. There was a definite shift. I'11 just speak briefly about that; I was about 48 , so about eight years ago, I was - a few things had happened, my mother had died and I was getting renovations done on my house and it was costing an exorbitant amount and I wasn't able to live in my house, and I was drinking really heavily and I'd lost my licence for drink driving, so they are just things that happened. But as well as when all of that was happening, when things were going bad for me these events of my childhood used to circulate more and more than ever, and I think part of that was to do with me thinking, if I hadn't done all that stuff when I was a kid, maybe I would have made different choices and where I was in life would be different by now, so blamed everything that was happening in my life now to events going all the way back to when I was 12.

COMMISSIONER BROMFIELD: Q. And describing them as choices that you had made as well as part of that internal narrative?
A. I guess so, yeah. And, just coincidentally when I was just feeling really low about everything that I thought was wrong in my life, I just happened to grab - I happened to see a grab of news and it was Julia Gillard talking about the Royal Commission and how it was progressing, and I'd never thought about what happened to me as child abuse, funnily enough, I thought it's something that I initiated, that I had done and that it was just a one-off thing that this man had been attracted to me for some reason and it was - it was a single thing that happened.

And, out of curiosity I got on to the website for the Royal Commission, and I was - I was just staggered, because by that stage there was volumes and volumes and volumes of work that they had done, and story after story, and I
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started reading through them and I thought, "Shit, that happened to me", yeah. So, it was sort of like a light bulb moment.

PRESIDENT NEAVE: Q. Just before you go on, going back to the comments that the boys made to you: at that time obviously it was widely known that he was engaging with boys in the school; is that right, do you think?
A. We11, it was certain1y - it certainly - it was assumed by the groups - it was assumed correctly by the groups the group of boys that saw me who were playing with the ball, they guessed correctly. Whether or not there were other rumours about him circulating around the school, I can't confirm that, but definitely there was a definite link made between him and me.
Q. Yes, yes, I understand that. Yep, thank you.

MS BENNETT: Q. So, I think you just were telling us about how during your life the experiences of your childhood would come back to you again and again and, when things were hard, it would be harder because of that; is that fair?
A. Yeah, that's how it seems. If I look at the - you know, I go through long periods of time being pretty happy, but if things are not - you know, we all have ups and downs. If I'm feeling - if I'm going through periods where things aren't going so well, as well as the current issues I'm thinking about, I'm also thinking about, "Oh, there's all that business that went on too". It's like an unresolved matter, something that hasn't ever been finalised.
Q. And then, around the time when you saw Ms Gillard speaking about the Royal Commission and then you looked on the website and you came to - is it right you came to understand a bit more about what had happened, in terms of, that was child abuse?
A. What the statements that I was reading in the Royal Commission - so many of them were just so revealing and I thought if I - that sentence there, that is exactly, that's exactly what happened to me; that's how that person behaved with my parents; that's how they felt when they were at school, and I thought, "Oh, this is not what I thought it was, this was abuse", and I was - I'm not stupid, but I was 48 and it sort of sudden 1 y dawned on me that that's what it was.
Q. And then, were you able to speak up at that stage?
A. I rang the Royal Commission and that was - that was a great moment for me because it was like a little bit of a weight off my shoulder, and they were fantastic; they arranged a hearing for me - a private session for me and initiated a lot of things that eventually led to me - the charges and everything against him.
Q. Was that the first time you really told your story in full, at the Royal Commission in that private session?
A. Yes, yep; yep.
Q. And then you were helped then and supported to perhaps reach out to law enforcement?
A. Yes. I spoke to the Royal Commission a couple of times just over the phone about arranging a private hearing with them, and about a week into that process - I can't remember her name, but I had someone else I was communicating with, she rang and she said, "Sam, the Tasmania Police have been in touch and the particular teacher that you're talking about, there are numerous charges - numerous complaints about numerous students and young boys about him", I think there were about nine other complaints involving nine other boys, and she said, "I really think, my advice, is for you to speak to this particular police officer". And I thought about it for about 24 hours and I thought, I just feel I have to do that.
Q. And how was that process for you?
A. The police were wonderful. Again, I can't think of the police officer's name, but it was - it was a really supportive process, and the police get a lot of bad press, but they were very good with me.

And, do you know, I think I - perhaps I helped them as well, because a lot of the complaints they had about him were fairly contemporary, from the 1990s, the 19 - and they had a lot of gaps and all of a sudden I come along and I can fill in a couple of years in the 1970s for them which just showed this enormous period of abuse to them that went over decades.

And, you know, the way I described it to them, they could see so many similarities to what was happening with people in, you know, 20, 30 years later, so it was a really
positive experience.
Q. Was it important to feel believed and heard by all these people?
A. Um, yes; yes, it was and it was important to - it was important to sit there and feel like I was being listened to and that a lot of time was being taken in what I had to say and that what I had to say was important and relevant and, even though it was a long time ago, it was important that it still needed to be dealt with.
Q. I think you talk about then, Harington was charged and convicted; is that right?
A. He was charged and there was - the matter was going to trial and the day before the trial he pleaded guilty to most of the complaints, not all of them, but most of them.
Q. And he was sentenced?
A. Yes.
Q. And you talk about having made a victim impact statement in Tasmania; can you tell the Commissioners about what that experience was like for you?
A. So, I was invited to make a victim impact statement, and I guess I "ummed" and "aahed" a little bit about whether I would like to do it or not and I decided I would. And I spoke - so, I remember clearly on the day of making the statement, I was nervous about it and I didn't - I was told to bring some support along and I didn't because I thought, "Oh, I'll just throw up or start crying or wet myself or something, I'11 make a fool of myself", so I just went on my own with my statement.

And I remember standing up before the judge and the court, and he's over on one side with security and prison officers and so forth, and standing up and starting to read my statement, and this will sound a little bit up in the air, but I suddenly felt like the biggest person in the room. I felt like the biggest person in the room because I was there standing up in front of everyone, including him, speaking up for the child that I once was when I felt that that had never been done before, and that was 36 years after when it first started, and that's a long time.

PRESIDENT NEAVE: It certainly is.
Q. If you'd been given the option to make your statement
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remotely, and I presume you weren't, you were in the court --
A. Yes.
Q. -- would you have preferred to do it in the courtroom or?
A. I would have chosen to do it, I think, because I think that was going to be the stronger most impactful thing to do. So, if I was given an option, I would have - even though I still would have been nervous and felt sick about it, I would have chosen to give it in person, yeah.

MS BENNETT: Q. I just want to read from your statement, at paragraph 10, you say:

I was able to defend a child that had been confused, ashamed and bullied to the point of despair, forced to manage the most complex of emotions in isolation.

Did it feel like - I think you say it was a proud moment to be able to defend that child; is that -A. I think that's a pretty fair description, that's how it felt, I think that's how it felt.
Q. After he was sentenced you waited, and this is in 2015?
A. Yep.
Q. And you waited, and you thought that someone from the Department of Education might make contact?
A. I was perhaps quite naive, but I thought, even though there were gag laws and so forth in place so it wasn't what was put in the press it wasn't clear. I mean, it was pretty obvious that he was an Education Department teacher, and I thought I would be - if the Education Department wanted to contact me, they could perhaps contact me through the department, through the public prosecutor or something.

I guess that was naive to think that, but I thought that the Education Department must be curious about how this has happened and they must - they must at least want to investigate and find out how this could have possibly happened so, to me, it seemed sort of reasonable to expect that perhaps they might have got in touch with me.
Q. And perhaps even to wonder about your welfare?
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A. Yes, yeah. Yeah, just to see how I was going, sure, yeah; I thought that was reasonable.
Q. And, there was no contact from the department?
A. No, I think I waited six weeks or so and never heard anything.
Q. And, I think it was November of that year you made contact, and I'll show you the letter. If I can ask the operator to show us TRFS.0005.0014.0002. That's your 1etter?
A. Yes, that's me, I've written that.
Q. It's without your address, but otherwise that's your 1etter?
A. Yes, that's fine.
Q. And it starts off:

In recent months, I was a witness at a Supreme Court hearing in which Darrel Harington, a former teacher at New Town High School, was convicted for child sex offences against a number of individuals including myself. It is evident from articles printed in the Hobart Mercury, from television news reports, and from Justice Porter's comments in passing sentence, that some of the offending took place while the defendant was working in his capacity as a teacher ...

What do you go on to ask for in this letter?
A. You'll have to - I don't know that I asked for anything specific. I just basically am saying that I felt that I should have the opportunity to talk to someone from the Education Department about my experiences and I feel that they should be reaching out to some degree to see how I am and checking on my welfare; I think that's basically the flavour of the letter, yeah.

COMMISSIONER BROMFIELD: And what was the date of that letter?

MS BENNETT: November 2015.
COMMISSIONER BROMFIELD: Thank you.

MS BENNETT: Q. Now, you received a response; do you remember that?
A. Yes, I did, it was in - right at the end of December.
Q. Just before Christmas?
A. Just before Christmas, yeah.
Q. If I could ask the operator to bring that document up, it's TRFS.0005.0014.0032. And again, save for the redactions, that's the letter you got?
A. Yes; yes, that's the one.
Q. And it says, in the third paragraph:

I am seeking advice from the Department of Education as to how I can effectively address your concerns, while ensuring that I do not inadvertently take any action that is not helpful to the Royal Commission process.

I hope to be in a position in the early part of 2016 to more thoroughly respond...
A. Yep.
Q. Can I ask, how did that letter land with you?
A. We11, it was fine to start with because I thought, we11, 2016, beginning of 2016 I'm going to hear something from someone. You know, there's no - there was - I'm relatively easy-going about it so I thought, well, 2016, I've just got to wait a little while and I'll hear something.
Q. And, did that happen?
A. No, no.
Q. Can you tell us what happened after that?
A. I think, I can't quite remember, I think I waited until about May. I thought, well, the early part of 2016 is over now, I think it was May I wrote again, and I might have been a little bit more expressive in my disappointment that I hadn't heard anything. I certainly - I wasn't aggressive but I just wrote to say I'm a bit disappointed that I haven't heard anything and I've been left in limbo.
Q. And, how did the response to that come back?
A. I'm not sure that I got one; did I get one?
Q. I think that's right, I think there's no record of a response to that one, so that wasn't a trick question. A. No.
Q. Just genuinely asking about your experience. I think that you had some contact in 2017; is that fair?
A. Yeah, I wrote to Andrew Wilkie at one point as well, I thought - he's my member for Dennison at the time and he wrote to Jeremy Rockliff as well on my behalf. And then, towards the end of 2017, so that's two years after sentencing, the Deputy Secretary for Learning was in touch and said that she would have a meeting with me, which I met with her, and it was - it was - you know, I felt that, you know, it was about an hour and some notes were being taken and it was a nice sort of two-way conversation about things that had happened and I felt that I was - you know, to some degree I was being listened to.

And, by that point I had questions as well: I wanted to know why he was teaching at my school, what other complaints they had about him, who knew what, was there any record of any sort of meetings and so forth that had taken place, what were the circumstances around his transfer to another school: I thought they were reasonable things to want to know.
Q. So, did you get that information?
A. No. What happened was, I got - I think it was a response back from their Legal Services team saying actually no, I was told initially, for anything that - I was told initially, the response was that $I$ would need to apply under the Right to Information for the answers to any of my questions and that they would very kindly waive the fee for me, and so, I completed the Right to Information questionnaire for them with, I think, about six or seven points that I wanted addressed, sent it back into them and got a reply back some point afterwards, I can't remember how long it took. But it basically said that one or two of my questions they could possibly look into, but because most of them pertained to Darrel Harington I'd need to give - I need to arrange for his permission to have the answers to those questions addressed.
Q. And, were you keen to seek Darrel Harington's --
A. I felt completely stymied by the process. I felt like I was up against a wall, and I just didn't understand the implications of it. How does it sit with, I've given I've been responsible for this man going to gaol, and then I'm going to ask him for permission to give me information about the circumstances pertaining to that: it just didn't sit well at all. I thought, I just - this is a rabbit hole I'm not gonna go down, I can't do it.
Q. And, was there other support that was offered to you?

So, I think it's fair to say if I understand, the trial finishes mid-2015?
A. Yes.
Q. You contact the department in November 15 ?
A. Yeah.
Q. You get a response, effectively a holding response, at the end of 15 ; and then you hear from them again in the mid-to-late 17 ; is that fair?
A. Yeah.
Q. So there's the issue first of all of that delay:
you've reached out and they've not offered you any support or assistance in that period; is that right?
A. No, I hadn't heard anything from them apart from that one letter that you saw.
Q. And then when you had the meeting, I just want to be clear in my mind, you had the meeting which you say was a pretty positive meeting in the sense that the person did -A. Yes, in that, I thought, here we go, we're going to get a little bit of action now, yeah.
Q. And, did the action that followed meet your expectations?
A. Well, no, because I was given no answers to anything. I felt that - I felt that I was just going to be made to jump through hoops and things were just going to be made more and more difficult for me. And what it did as well, it confirmed for me that - well, I'm not sure if I'm right or not, but because they didn't give me an outright sort of "no, we're not gonna answer this stuff or we've got nothing to tell you", I thought, what is it, what is it? There must be something that they do have to tell me and they don't want to tell me: I don't know.

And the other thing I felt was, well, they haven't said I can't ask those questions, so obviously I've got a right to ask those questions, they must be things that I've got some sort of right to have an answer to, but then they're not going to give them to me.
Q. And, as we sit here today, do you have an answer to those questions?
A. No, not fully. I still don't feel that everything's been laid out on the table. I know a little bit more through my sort of legal representation about his timeline and his history and, you know, it's been confirmed for me that he probably shouldn't have been at that school to start with, so I know about historical things, but whether or not there's something to be told particularly pertaining to me and my time at school, I still don't know really.
Q. Now, as at the date of your statement I think you say that you wanted to see some change about how people in your position are responded to and you felt like you were left feeling completely stymied by the process and you didn't feel like your welfare was a priority for the department; is that fair?
A. Yes, that's fair and that's how I feel, I - yep, that's ...
Q. And as at the date of your statement had you received an apology from the department that responded to all of these things?
A. No, no.
Q. I understand that, in the days around this hearing, that you've had an approach from Mr Bullard; can you tell us about that?
A. Yes, he spoke briefly and offered an apology for the distress that the matter had caused me and the slowness of the response and so forth, and I was - I feel I was gracious in accepting that apology.
Q. Can you tell us what you'd like to see next, what changes you'd like to see, what steps you'd like to see both for yourself and for the community more broadly? A. Well, I just feel like we're always on the a back foot here, we're always just, everything is reactive, we're just continually waiting until something turns into a crisis before we respond to it, which is why we're having this Commission; things shouldn't ever have got to this state.
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So, I mean, I don't have solutions, but I would just like us to be living in a - be part of a system that is far more proactive and can look at issues as they're arising and before - even before they're arising and anticipate what the next problem's going to be, because things are changing.

In these sessions I've been listening to people talking about mobile phones and online stuff - I wasn't involved in any of that and it's a whole new matter that everyone for tomorrow is going to have to deal with because, without - with absolute certainty abuse is still happening and how we deal with that in the future is really important, so we need to be proactive.


#### Abstract

Just another quick point I sort of think about sometimes is, we talk about Tasmania as being a small jurisdiction and a small island, and it's isolating and, you know, we don't have the resources and how difficult all of that is because of that and we have to look at other states and see what they're doing, and what are they doing and let's just do this piecemeal approach down here. I sometimes think, well, why do we look at it like that, why can't we look at Tasmania as being a small isolated state and that's actually our advantage? We are small, we can set the standards and we can be the one that says, this is the benchmark that everyone else has to meet, and we can do that because we're small and because we're isolated. There's no reason why we can't do things better here than the rest of the country.


And just --
Q. Please keep going.
A. Just as an example I just think about COVID and how well this state managed two years of COVID when it was the worst - for everywhere else in the world it was terrible: because we're an island and because we're small, it was so well managed, and by government, by good leadership, and I hate to have to say it, by Liberal leadership, did a wonderful job of it, but not in spite of us being small but because of it and I don't see why child sexual abuse can't be viewed as a pandemic and let's just see why can't we take a similar approach to that? Strong leadership.
Q. I'm not quite sure, Mr Leishman, how you've managed to leave this story on a positive note, but somehow you've
managed that and I think it's a testament to you and I'm grateful. I don't want to, however - I just want to ask the world's most open question: is there anything else you want to say to this Commission?
A. Nothing except for, thank you very much for making it happen and, you know, my wish at the end of it is that, when we see recommendations, that they are taken seriously and are implemented in a timely fashion and that, as well, as well as whatever's implemented, we're always looking forward, always on the front step going forward. Does that make sense?

COMMISSIONER BROMFIELD: Absolutely.
PRESIDENT NEAVE: Do you have any questions?
COMMISSIONER BROMFIELD: I don't have any questions, I'm incredibly grateful for you coming and speaking today, it's been really moving and it's also, I think, really important to hear, not just about the abuse and us thinking that's a thing that happened in the past, but thinking about that long-tail for survivors if you don't get the closure that you need from the systems from where that abuse happened, so I really appreciate you telling the full story.
A. Thank you. Thank you.

PRESIDENT NEAVE: Thank you very much indeed for all your courage and the insights that you've offered us and the positive ending that you've provided us with. "This is something that Tasmania can tackle", and I think that's a very important message, so thank you very, very much indeed.
A. Thank you.

## SHORT ADJOURNMENT

PRESIDENT NEAVE: Before we start. On Wednesday the Commission made a restricted publication order in relation to the evidence of Mr Bullard. I remind everyone that the order still applies to the evidence that he gives today. A copy of the order is outside the hearing room and is available to anyone who needs a copy.
<TIMOTHY JOHN BULLARD, affirmed:
[11.20am]
<EXAMINATION BY MS BENNETT:

MS BENNETT: Q. Thank you, Commissioner. And, of course, Mr Bullard, you remain under oath from Wednesday. Now, Mr Bullard, I'd like to start by reflecting on the evidence we've just heard from Mr Leishman. You were present for that evidence, were you?
A. I was, yes.
Q. Were you in the courtroom, were you in the hearing room?
A. Yes, I was.
Q. I'11 just start by asking you generally to offer some reflections on the evidence that you heard while you were in the room?
A. The evidence has made me feel personally very sad for a number of reasons. I think that Mr Leishman's courage in revealing the betrayal of trust that happened to him as a result of an association that was made whilst he was in one of our schools is very confronting to hear, but also the barriers that then existed when he came forward later with an expectation that he would seek and receive support or acknowledgment from the Department of Education also makes me feel very disappointed and I have apologised to Mr Leishman and I'm very sorry, I'm very sorry for that.
Q. Just so I understand that, is it the case that you would as a matter of course inform yourself about trials or criminal matters that involve former teachers or former students who were abused in the course of their employment or in the course of their student --
A. So, this is by no way of excuse, but by way of explanation, we have no information feed from the Director of Public Prosecutions about matters that are going to court that may involve either ex-employees or employees of ours or students. And so, certainly part of Mr Leishman's evidence demonstrates an underlying assumption which I would not argue is unreasonable, that there would be some information that we would be provided with around the course of a trial or where a trial is at and individuals that may be involved, but that did not and it continues not to occur.
Q. Without having the transcript before me, my memory of Mr Leishman's evidence at that point was, he said, "You know, I'm not sure but I feel like it would have been reasonable for them to have reached out to me", that is, the department to reach out at the end of the trial, and I
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felt like it was a pretty reasonable expectation: do you think it's a pretty reasonable expectation?
A. I do think it's a reasonable expectation, and we need to find ways that we can do that and obviously that's within the remit of the Director of Public Prosecutions and it's not that - and I'm not going to say what his response would be to that, but it's certainly a discussion that would be useful to have simply so that as a government we're aware of people who are in the Criminal Justice system who may be looking for support in terms of apology, or redress, or counselling, or explanation, and that that can be coordinated around that process; rather than running the Criminal Justice process as it currently does as a linear process and then there's a range of other ways that you could interact with government to receive the other support or information that you may wish to.
Q. Is that something that you, having heard Mr Leishman's evidence, plan to take forward in your role?
A. Absolutely; I mean, one of the things that

Mr Leishman's experience has provided us with is yet another example of where, for whatever reason, there has been a systemic failing to put victim-survivors at the centre of decisions, and one of the pieces of work that we're looking at is around support and engagement through government processes for victim-survivors in a coordinated way to make sure that, whichever entry point you come into government with - if you come in through redress or the Criminal Justice system or an approach to the department that there is, if you like, a whole lot of machinery of government that can then come to you and be offered to you.

PRESIDENT NEAVE: Q. I have a question about that. So, you're now talking about a system for providing support in situations where people have been - where there's been a conviction, that was Mr Leishman's situation, and I know that there was some discussion of this the other day in relation to an acquittal.

But suppose you had a Criminal Justice process going through which resulted in an acquittal: now, that might come to you in another way as an ED5 issue, but that might also be a case where some support is necessary for the complainant in a case involving an acquittal. So, can you just remind me, I think, of what you said about that the other day?
A. So, certainly; and if I'm not referring to the correct
piece of evidence, please correct me, but the view that I take in relation to these matters is that Criminal Justice is a process that people can go through that may lead to a number of outcomes.
Q. Yes.
A. It does not and should not influence the decisions that we make as an agency, for example, in terms of ED5, and so then you could extend that to the support that is still then provided to victim-survivors. So, the failing to go through a Criminal Justice - the failure to get a conviction through the Criminal Justice process is not necessarily the end of a process as far as we should be concerned.
Q. And would you always know about that? Would you know that there'd been a Criminal Justice process?
A. No. So, absent of searching court lists and trying to reconcile what's on the public record for court lists with the information that we hold, we don't have any transparency internal to government of those processes that are being undertaken.

PRESIDENT NEAVE: Thank you.
MS BENNETT: Q. So, that's the issue around proactively reaching out. I might just pause there to say that the same observation might be made in respect of Ms Katrina Munting, is that fair, from Tuesday's evidence?
A. Yes.
Q. And, you'd agree, the evidence you heard from her is contributing to that, can I suggest, determination to try to fix that - what might be considered a gap at the moment in the supports provided?
A. Yes, and I think that I provided evidence that Katrina's evidence and experiences she provided provides a very stark example of where, if you like, bureaucratic process gets in the way of humanity and assisting and supporting healing.

So, they're both really good examples of where there's something else that's missing that comes with that heart and compassion and understanding of the experiences of these individuals, and we actually need to try and work out how we then adjust the legislative or administrative processes of government to achieve that rather than set

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them up as barriers.
Q. And I think, moving on then with Mr Leishman's situation, he then did reach out and wrote a courteous letter in November 2015, and I think your frank evidence is that that ought to have elicited a more fulsome and timely response than it did; is that a fair summary of your evidence?
A. So, that is my evidence and that is my reflection. I will just reflect for the purpose of the Commission that it's very difficult, and I know we have submitted the file in full, it's very difficult to ascertain from the file what actually led to the breaks in communication or the lack of communication, but certainly looking at the facts of Mr Leishman in coming to the department, and yes, very courteously saying, "Is there or could I have expected or should there be", there doesn't seem to be an agile response to that.
Q. And that's part of the apology you've offered today?
A. Yes, and in fact yesterday, and I was very pleased to have an opportunity to speak with Mr Leishman and to make that observation and offer that apology.
Q. Is there a policy presently in place that guides engagement and support for victim-survivors of child sexual abuse in place in the Department of Education?
A. So, not so much in the Department of Education; I think that through the Royal Commission and our Redress Scheme as a government as a whole we're much better set up to provide a point of contact through that unit for victim-survivors to come through, and the strength in that is the experience that the people that work in that unit have, the counselling access and the referral pathways that they have, and we're very active in partnering with the Department of Justice in that unit to ensure that we do the part that we need to play.
Q. Is that only for people who approach through Civil Redress?
A. We would, at the moment, refer people through Civil Redress as the gateway into a process where they can be properly supported to access what they want and need from government.
Q. So, if you received a letter like Mr Leishman's today, would it be directed to the Civil Redress Unit?

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A. Yes, we would be - we would be referring it to the Redress Unit. There's a way that you do that, though, of course; you're not going to write and say, "Sorry, this isn't our responsibility, please go to this email box", so there needs to be sensitivity and support and also an explanation that, from moving you into an area that can properly support you that isn't in any way removing our responsibility and certainly in terms of providing either personal or written apologies, information where we can, we are really active in partnering with that process to ensure that it is as useful as possible to victim-survivors.
Q. And that it's trauma-informed?
A. Absolutely, yep.
Q. Can you tell the Commissioners a little bit about what you understand a trauma-informed approach to involve?
A. So, a trauma-informed approach has to be centred on the victim-survivor, it absolutely needs to be sensitive to the events that have led to the trauma, and it needs to understand that there are a range of approaches that can either exacerbate or assist in the healing that that individual has experienced.

And, you know, the theory and evidence and science behind this is constantly evolving, and certainly in terms of our understanding for our young people in our system it's an area that we're putting a lot of energy and effort into.
Q. What about the information that Mr Leishman sought? He talked today about wanting to understand about how his abuser had been moved between schools, other allegations, how it had been managed; you can understand why Mr Leishman wants that information, can't you?
A. Absolutely.
Q. And it's a fair enough thing to want to know?
A. Yes.
Q. Is he able to get it as the structure presently stands?
A. So, at the moment there is a legislative framework through the Right to Information Act which sets out the way in which someone applies for and the way in which that information and the way in which that application is assessed, and certainly in terms of the way in which we've

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approached that in the department we ensure that the decision-makers who are making those decisions are under no influence from me or any other senior person within the agency and are able to make those decisions within the remit of the legislative framework.

The complexity, and Mr Leishman referred to that complexity, when a victim-survivor comes forward is, of course, they would like information on themselves, "What happened to me when I was at school? What does my record on file show? What were my reports?", et cetera, but there's also over here a conduct or investigation file or employee file which relates to the personal information of another individual.

I think there's a real conflict in these situations about how we marry all of that together. So, from my understanding of Mr Leishman's application, as I think he explained very well, he came in and made a Right to Information application. He was then advised that there was personal information of another individual, in this case it was the perpetrator, that he had requested and that under the Right to Information Act we would need to seek the perpetrator's permission, or actually consult as to the perpetrator's view as to whether or not that information should be released. And, my understanding is that Mr Leishman felt uncomfortable with that, and who wouldn't?

I think, as he also explained, he then proceeded through a lawyer to seek that information and the process proceeded. I understand that the perpetrator refused that information to be released, but in the public interest the decision maker agreed that some of the information should proceed.

That, to me, from a third party like Mr Leishman sitting there thinking he has a right to know looks like a lack of accountability and transparency, albeit it is operating within a legislative framework, whether or not that be right or fit for purpose for these kinds of situations.
Q. I just want to understand about the Right to Information framework a little bit. Leave aside that specific example for a moment and just assume that somebody comes to you and asks for some information or documents. Can you process that request outside the RTI framework?
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A. The other way that we could process that if they were documents that pertained to an individual only, so, "Can I have my file?", is under a Personal Information Protection Act as I understand it. And we have been talking to lawyers - and I note that Angela Sdrinis was presenting yesterday - about whether they would have an appetite to actually move some of the applications under that Act, because it's much less onerous to process an application under that Act. "Can I have my school record?", "Here's your school record".
Q. I think the question's a little bit more fundamental than that. If I come to the department and say, "I'd like a copy of a document that you have", can't you give it to me unless there is a statutory prohibition which prevents you from giving it to me?
A. We need to assess under the Act the exemptions that apply and make sure that all are applied. So, I think that you can't simplify the requests for information. If we had, "Could I have my enrolment record for 2007?", have the enrolment record, the requests are much more complex than that.
Q. I accept I'm simplifying; I'm just trying to understand if there's the capacity, as far as you understand it, to hand over documents or information - I mean, do you need an RTI request, that's the first question: is that a necessary precondition to you handing over any document at all?
A. The type of information we're talking, a right to - my understanding is a Right to Information request or a Personal Information Protection Act request to trigger a review of the information requested.
Q. And then you can only provide it if it is permitted by either the RTI Act or the, what I'll call the PIP Act but I mean the Personal Information Protection Act of 2004?
A. That's right, yes.
Q. So, there's no scope to hand over information. What about if someone asks for your annual report; you can hand that over?
A. That's already in the public domain so --
Q. So anything in the public domain you can do, anything that's private you can't without an RTI?
A. And also proactive disclosure and if you go and look

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at - on our website every year there's this enormous dataset, for example; well, that's information that we hold, it doesn't pertain to individuals, it's statistics, so we proactively disclose that.
Q. So, is it fair, to put it this way, information that is confidential already --
A. Or you would assume may be, yes.
Q. I guess, it's not in the public domain, it's not publicly available, and then so I assume there's some degree of confidentiality around it, either in terms of practice or formally; is that about right?
A. Yes, certainly, and in terms of information that may pertain to child sexual abuse, a majority of that is personal information of somebody.
Q. Yes, okay. So, the information is confidential by reason of a statute or a practice of government; then you need statutory authorisation and, so far as you're aware you've got two pathways generally - I'm not asking for a legal opinion - but generally the most common are the PIP Act and the RTI process?
A. They are the most general, of course, without --
Q. Subpoenas and notices --
A. And Auditor-General can ask us to produce, we can be asked to produce things to Parliament, so there's a whole lot of other ways that we are accountable, but in terms of an individual wanting to make an application for information to the department.
Q. If someone makes an application for information that isn't confidential, you'd say, no need for the RTI, here it is?
A. We'd send them to the website or the annual report or wherever they can find it, yes.

PRESIDENT NEAVE: Q. I've got a follow-up question on that. So, within the department is there a group or a person who is responsible for handling these requests, and what level of seniority are they at?
A. So, yes, there is, and if I could just step out how that looks. So, there is an administrative - there are some administrative roles that are dedicated to RTI whose job is to go out and gather the information, where are the records, where are the files, what do we know, and pull all
of that together. And then they prepare that into, if you like, a dossier that then goes to an authorised officer under the Act to make a decision. At the moment the first tranche of those officers are legal officers, so legally trained individuals; I believe there's seven of them.
Q. In your department?
A. Yes. They're obviously doing other work.
Q. Yes.
A. But there is seven legally trained officers who will make the assessment. Now, as I'm sure you're aware, there's a right of internal review as well. There are other senior people across the agency that also hold a delegation; they are away from the legal team so they're in totally different areas of the department at arm's-length that will undertake the internal review should we be requested for one. So, we do treat the process very seriously in ensuring that we have people that are appropriately trained to undertake the assessments within the legislative framework.
Q. What, if any, role does the Solicitor-General have in that context?
A. No role as such unless there was a particular question of law that needed to be answered. I'm not aware that we have, I'm not going to say that we haven't ever done that, but as I've said I remain at arm's-length of all of this and so I don't involve myself in the decision-making processes of those individuals.

PRESIDENT NEAVE: Thank you.
MS BENNETT: Q. I'm going to in a moment ask you to provide any final reflections about Mr Leishman's case study, but before I do that I'd like to read from your statement that you provided in response to the request for a statement from this Commission.

You say, reading from the relevant part of paragraph 46, and you note the meeting that Mr Leishman had in 2017 which he referred to today as a reasonably positive process, and then you say that:
[Aside from that] I do not consider the Department's response to Mr Leishman to be trauma-informed, person-centred or

> consistent with community standards and expectations, nor is it acceptable that the Department did not - and stil7 does not have any policy or procedure in place to assist in meeting the expectations necessary to demonstrate support, care, compassion and understanding of victim-survivors' experiences.
> You go on at 48 to say:
> I personally wish to extend an apology to Mr Leishman for the delayed response from the Department, following his 7etter to the Minister on 20 November 2015. I thank Mr Leishman for raising his concerns about the lack of Departmental support, which will in turn assist us in developing policies and guidelines to ensure victim-survivors are supported in the future.

That's what you've put in your statement, I thought it appropriate to read that in this forum. Is there anything you'd seek to add? I'm not suggesting that is in any way incomplete, I just offer you this last opportunity to say anything about that before we move to other topics.
A. Just to reiterate what I've set out in those paragraphs, which is absolutely what I genuinely believe and, just to reflect that certainly as an executive we, you know, have discussed how we can be more responsive and trauma-informed to victim-survivors and to reflect that, since the time of Mr Leishman's meeting with the Deputy Secretary Learning a number of senior staff have been trained in conducting those meetings in a trauma-informed way and to indicate, as $I$ think $I$ did in one of my other statements, that $I$ too will be attending that training in June.
Q. Mr Bullard, you've spoken in some of your statements about the Office of Safeguarding Children.
A. Yes.
Q. Can you remind the Commissioners and those watching briefly what that office is?
A. Yes. So, the Office of Safeguarding Children and

Young People is an office led by Liz Jack who's a very

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senior officer who reports directly to me and has a range of individuals with various skill sets including policy analysis, project management, communications. That office's role is to systematically address issues such as have already come to light through the course of this week, starting front and centre with how we build a child-safe culture within our organisation, but then building on that in terms of developing the necessary policies and procedures and training, which we've already conceded through this process we need to be working on.

So, that office, as I said, reports to me; it also comes to the executive weekly to provide us with an update on the progress of its work. Front and centre of what it's doing at the moment is very much around ensuring that we're getting on with the recommendations from the Royal
Commission and the 20 recommendations that came out of the Professors' report as well as working across the agency to ensure that where children are the subject of harmful sexual behaviours in terms of peer-on-peer abuse, that we have an evidence-informed approach to dealing with those matters and supporting the children involved.
Q. Now, Ms Jack is coming to give evidence this afternoon and I don't have an expectation that you'11 have these details at your fingertips, but could you tell us roughly how many people are in that office?
A. I believe I did make that in one of my statements, so --
Q. Yeah. I think it's at ninety - well --
A. I can indicate, there are a number and there are more to come. I don't think that's probably a comprehensive answer but --

PRESIDENT NEAVE: It is in your statement. I can't find it either.

COMMISSIONER BROMFIELD: Paragraph 5 has got the staffing. Paragraph 5 of the general statement, page 4, I think.
A. Yes, I would agree with that, thank you, Commissioner.

MS BENNETT: Q. So, there's six staff currently and six additional staff coming?
A. That's right, yes.
Q. So, can you tell us a bit about - now, those six

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staff, was there sort of an initial recruitment phase that presumably you led because there was at that stage no Office of Safeguarding Children?
A. So, as soon as we got the professors' report it was very, very clear that this required significant leadership. The observations and recommendations that the professors made, made perfect sense to us. The objective nature of their observations and the practicality in which they approached the task, you could see immediately the work that needed to be done.

One of their recommendations was that I should have someone at a senior level who was working directly to me on leading this, and I think within a number of days, if not weeks, I had moved Liz Jack, who was a senior person in another part of the agency, to undertake that role and I charged her with responsibility and with a budget to start recruiting, which you can see that she has done.
Q. So, you recruited Liz Jack and she then recruited the staff under her?
A. That's right, yes.
Q. What are the particular checks that are imposed upon people who are going to work in the Office of Safeguarding Children?
A. So, each of the individuals, obviously, has to pass our internal benchmark which everyone does of having an RWVP, but we also have application in - and it's not a decision that we can make around pre-checks, police checks, but there's an application I believe and I would need to check on whether that had progressed or not, that everyone has a police check that's working.
Q. So everyone who works in the Department of Education in any role has a Working with Vulnerable People registration?
A. That's correct, yes.
Q. Does everyone have a police check?
A. No.
Q. How do you identify which staff need to have the police check and which don't?
A. Police check is where we would believe that there was a higher level of scrutiny required. Now, again, I would need to provide you with more - I'11 come back with more
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information if you thought that was useful.
Q. That's fine, but at the Office of Safeguarding

Children you've obviously decided that the higher level of probity is required?
A. That's right, yes.
Q. So you've imposed the dual obligation that you have the registration and the police check?
A. That's my understanding, yes.
Q. Again, this is not in any of your requests so $I$ don't impose a memory test on you, but are they national or state police checks, do you know?
A. My understanding is that when a police check's done it goes through local but national, but I would need to check that and maybe Ms Jack can provide more advice.
Q. Yes. Is that the highest, and leaving aside executive or other kinds of security-related clearances, is that the most exhaustive level of checks that are done?
A. Well, obviously where you're a teacher there is also the check with the TRB that you registered as a teacher.
Q. Yes, okay.
A. So, there's a slightly higher bar because obviously that goes --

PRESIDENT NEAVE: Q. So everybody in the Office of Safeguarding is registered as a teacher or --
A. No.
Q. Sorry, I misunderstood.
A. I'm just talking in generalities, so base level of requirement is that you have a Working with Vulnerable People check. For these roles, my understanding is that the police check generally in the agency, where anyone who is in a teaching or teaching-related role also has to have current teacher registration.

PRESIDENT NEAVE: Yes, thanks.
MS BENNETT: Q. And just to follow that logic to its conclusion, so as I understand it teachers obviously need to be registered with the TRB?
A. That's right.
Q. And it would be inappropriate, of course, to ask for non-teachers to be registered.

PRESIDENT NEAVE: Yes, yes.
MS BENNETT: Q. Anyone who's been removed from the TRB register for a reason, do they return to the department and have other roles? Suspended or removed, do they come to do desk jobs in the department?
A. So, let me just be very clear on that. So, there would be a number of categories there. So, I'm a teacher and I've let my registration lapse and I'm re-applying for my registration, so that - okay, where can we accommodate you in an admin and clerical role while that process goes on, but you cannot be a teacher and you can't be a principal, so they come and work in other agencies. "I've been removed as a teacher from the register", we would need to understand why and the Teachers Registration Board advises us of that and then a determination would be made as to your future employment in the agency. But in most part where teachers have their teacher registration cancelled, they are assigned as a teacher in the department; not, you can work in any role, and that actually leads to them being unable to fulfil their duties as a teacher which leads to termination through ED6, inability.
Q. But somebody under a disciplinary cloud, under suspension or investigation, are they sometimes moved into clerical roles away from schools or is that, they're just suspended? That might be while they're under --
A. No. So, what happens there as a matter of course so, I just want to make a delineation because some people, for a whole range of reasons, forget to pay their money.
Q. Yes, I accept that.
A. I'm shocked by that, but it happens, so "I'm not registered because administratively I haven't done what I need to do". "Where I'm a teacher and I'm suspended I can't fulfil my duties as a teacher and therefore I cannot be at work because I can't be in the role I'm assigned", so in those cases they're actually suspended and we can't pay them because they can't satisfy the conditions of employment.
Q. Yes, I understand, okay. We spoke a little moment ago about the Teachers Registration Board, and you heard -

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well, did you hear the evidence of Ms Moxham yesterday? A. I've read a summary of that evidence.
Q. I'm going to ask you a few questions about that and then I'm going to invite you to provide your general reflections about it, so don't worry, I'll come to any general reflections you might have. But, is the Teachers Registration Board intended to be independent?
A. It is, yes.
Q. And, so far as you're aware, is that the way that you direct your staff to treat it?
A. Absolutely, and in fact in terms of how we interact with the Teachers Registration Board, it has a board, and the board actually directs or manages the staff and apart from, you know, not even termly, maybe six-monthly, three-monthly, six-monthly catch-ups with the chair and the executive officer from the TRB; I have no other interaction in terms of directing the board.
Q. Now, Ms - I'm sorry, I didn't mean to cut you off.
A. I was going to say, absent of budget discussions, which I think, because we're the agency that, if you like, the umbrella agency comes through us in terms of budget submissions and requests to government for additional funds.
Q. Ms Moxham yesterday said that she took the view that the Department of Education didn't provide information that would assist them in carrying out their functions, including their functions that are protective of children, and she referred in particular to the details of investigations carried out by the Department of Education, and particularly the content of some of those investigations.

So, her evidence to summarise fairly so we're all on the same page was that they'd be notified of a complaint or investigation, and they'd be notified in due course about the conclusion, but they were often missing the actual evidence and that that caused them to have to go back and re-interview children, and it caused some of that evidence to be damaged or less available due to the effluxion of time. And, I'll ask my learned friend to tell me if I've fairly summarised the evidence of Ms Moxham.

Can you respond to that criticism? Is that a fair

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criticism?
A. I don't know that it should be accepted as a criticism. My understanding is that we provide as much information as we are legally able to, and we do, because I did check this, liberally interpret the sections of the Teachers Registration Act regarding the transfer of information about teachers of which we have concern.

I think I alluded in earlier evidence to the fact, though, that some of that information might be considered personal; people who have given statements and don't want those statements to go any further, without their permission we can't transfer those. But I was curious to read Ms Moxham's reflections and I'm certainly going to be following up on what else - or what else she believes we may have that she does not get access to in those situations
Q. Well, certainly her evidence, as I recall it from yesterday, was that some statements are not provided where they are obtained. Is it your understanding - again, this is not a legal question so much as a question about how you understand the process to work, we'll debate the law with the lawyers later - that because investigation reports contain, commonly contain personal information, they can't be provided to the Teachers Registration Board unless the consent for that provision is obtained at the time the statement is taken.
A. Yeah, and I think just to be clear, we're talking about third party information, so obviously the teacher involved, their personal details et cetera, my determination and the findings, go through to the Teachers Registration Board. If there are witness statements taken or other pieces of evidence that people don't want to be released, then without their permission we can't do that. I'm not saying that I agree with that position --
Q. No, I understand.
A. I'm not saying that I agree with that position. It does seem that we end up duplicating investigations in terms of, we undertake a process, I end up with a file like that (gestures); it would be expedient to be able to provide that through to the Teachers Registration Board in full.
Q. You get a folder like that (gestures), and is it fair that that goes across, a part of it (gestures)?

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A. I think it would be different in different matters. I think in some all of it goes. I would need to actually go back and ask for specific examples about, here's an example of where we couldn't provide anything, here's an example of where we provided everything and understand why that's the case.
Q. Just so I understand the framework. So, the perpetrator, let's call them the perpetrator: you get a statement from the child. The child says, "The perpetrator came to my home, the perpetrator drives this car, the perpetrator looks like this, the perpetrator lives in this place", that's in the statement of child. That is then personal information of the perpetrator which would need to fall into an exception under the PIP Act to be provided to the Teachers Registration Board; is that how I understand it?
A. I think that we might be moving outside the realms of what I can explain to you.
Q. Okay.
A. Because, to me, that's information around the teacher involved that should go to the Teachers Registration Board.
Q. I see. The PIP Act isn't picking up on the perpetrator as far as you understand it? A. Yes, but again, I don't want to - I don't want to push into an area which I think is sort of outside my bounds of being able to explain.
Q. So your understanding is, though, that you take a liberal view of what you can provide from the TRB. Ms Moxham's evidence was that she disagrees with the interpretation that the Department of Education has adopted. Is that something that, I take it that you've taken advice and you're acting, you see it, in accordance with that advice?
A. M'hmm.
Q. And you're aware, though, of Ms Moxham's concerns; have you been made aware of them before yesterday?
A. I - I was surprised to hear Ms Moxham express those concerns here, when in my contemporary memory I can't remember them being expressed, and we did have a meeting with the board, chair of the board, I met with the chair of the board and Ms Moxham and we were specifically discussing the 32 current employees that had investigations against

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them, and I was providing a high level overview of what my approach would be, because I thought that it was respectful to let them know that I would be re-investigating matters of teachers who were registered with them and, therefore, they may want to or need to take additional action. At that point in time I don't recall that she raised concerns with me around the level of information that we were providing. I'm very happy to take that, though, as a reflection that she now has and to follow up with that, absolutely.
Q. And do you see it as a matter of concern if all the information isn't going across to the TRB?
A. Yes, I do see that as a matter of concern, albeit it would - and this is not a matter for me, it's a matter for the TRB - to have from me a determination about what I think the facts of the matter were and the sanction that I've imposed, and then as a decision maker have to make a fresh decision under a different statutory regime, but that's not a problem for me, that's a matter that they would need to turn their minds to.
Q. Whether or not they need to do a fresh determination?
A. Whether or not they would feel influenced by my determination, I suppose.
Q. Is that to suggest that they don't need more if they've got your determination?
A. No, no. No, I'm saying that they should have fulsome information if that's possible, absolutely.
Q. Yes, they should have as much as possible, is that right, they should have everything that went to you?
A. Absolutely. I think that this idea that it's investigated by police, it's investigated by me, it might be investigated by the Integrity Commission, it's investigated by the TRB, and each of us are going along expending resources on investigating exactly the same matter is nonsensical. If we can streamline a process so that an action that's taken by one of those parties, at least has a positive impact on an action that's then taken by others, I think that would be very useful.

I might just make one final reflection, if I may?
Q. Yes, please.
A. The TRB is by far the most powerful body in relation
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to ensuring that teachers are safe; it has a whole range of information that it can make a determination on, and what we know is, if they suspend or cancel the registration of a teacher, they're immediately removed from the workplace and, apart from some paperwork to do an ED6 which we can do relatively quickly, they're then terminated. So, from our perspective the TRB's early action on these matters is highly beneficial.
Q. And so, you would support any - or you would, I take it, support anything that removes the barriers that this Commission has been hearing about to a flow of information between the various regulators?
A. Very supportive, yes.
Q. Let's turn to have a bit of a look at the civil litigation process, I'd like to just understand some of the architecture of that process. Now you tell us - now I'm going to look to your general statement which is, I think that's the one that was most recently updated this week with additional information.
A. Yes.
Q. And it runs to some 87 pages and 530 paragraphs.
A. Yes.
Q. So, I just want to ask you a few questions by reference to that, and I'11 direct you to paragraph 470. Now, prior to 3 November 2015 the DPP was responsible for civil litigation; is that right?
A. That's correct, yes.
Q. And let me just understand this at a broad level. Leave aside the Civil Redress scheme for a moment and let's just focus on civil litigation. So, someone is suing the department - well, someone is suing the State of Tasmania in relation to what happened to them as a child, the civil case is brought against the state because of their experiences as a student. Now, the Department of Education would be involved; is that right?
A. Yes.
Q. And they might even be the Secretary or the Minister might be a defendant; is that right?
A. No - I'm trying to think of --
Q. It depends on the solicitors?
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A. I'm trying to think, certainly in some matters I am both a defendant and sometimes a plaintiff; I'm not sure in civil matters whether they're just run in terms of the Crown.
Q. Yes, okay, but in any event I'm not here, again, to quiz you on the Civil Procedure Act. So, the DPP until November 2015, they were the ones who had carriage of litigation, they were acting as your solicitors; is that fair?
A. That's correct, yes.
Q. So they're the ones who would file the documents, draft the documents?
A. Yes.
Q. So a defence would be drafted by the DPP, they would send it to you or to your in-house lawyers, or did you not at that stage have in-house lawyers?
A. I think it's important to understand that the role that we play - and I did move to this yesterday - can't be categorised as you might conceptualise if we were a private company. So, as an agency, we just are an administrative arm of the Crown, and so, there is only one body, that is the Crown, and the Crown organises itself in the way that it sees fit in relation to these matters and, as I said yesterday, the Attorney-General is the first Crown Law officer and the Solicitor-General as the second do take carriage of legal matters with relation to the Crown. I think it's important to say that because it frames our roles slightly differently.

I could see how people might say, there's a lawyer and a client, certainly in the case of civil matters which is where we're going with this, that is not quite so sharply defined.
Q. But sometimes you're the defendant in a civil matter, like the Secretary, the office of the Secretary, not you specifically?
A. Yes, the Office of the Secretary can be and those matters are dealt with by civil division of the Solicitor-General's office.
Q. Yes. So, I'm just trying to understand. So, from 2015, before 2015 it was the DPP, then it became the Solicitor-General?
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A. That's right, yep.
Q. And let's just stick with for a moment - and that's the Office of the Solicitor-General?
A. That's right.
Q. So, there are a number of solicitors who work in the Office of the Solicitor-General in addition to the Solicitor-General?
A. Yes, there are the Solicitor-General, the statutory role of Solicitor-General, there are the advisings lawyers, so if you want to think about an advisings branch which is really the traditional role of the Solicitor-General, lawyers that support the advisings branch, and then there is a civil area which undertakes civil litigation. Certainly, when I worked in the Office of the Solicitor-General and the DPP ran it, it was really just an administrative change, exactly the same; there was an office that did civil, and they have moved the management responsibility for that office from the DPP under the Solicitor-General in --
Q. So let's just see how we understand this. I think at 472 of your statement, let me see if I can summarise this and tell me how you understand it. There's the Secretary of the Department of Education?
A. Yes.
Q. And the role really for the Secretary is to sit outside the litigation process save to authorise the release of funds?
A. To provide, through my legal officers, who I also need to point out are not considered lawyers under the statutory arrangement, so they're officers with legal qualifications: that's important.
Q. Yes.
A. We're not allowed to run our own legal offices internally. So, through my legal officers I am asked for input and I am asked for my opinion on the matters at hand, and I'm also responsible for discharging a number of administrative functions in terms of discovery and pulling together of files. But I would not say that I am an instructing officer or a client in terms of how you might traditionally conceptualise that which, if I can test or say what I would understand that to be, because I just want to test that we understand it, that I provide my opinion or

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direction around how a matter should be undertaken, and a lawyer --
Q. Carries out your instructions --
A. -- are bound to follow or carry out that instruction: that is not the relationship.
Q. So, the Solicitor-General's office has decision making capacity about, for example, an amount to be offered in settlement of a civil complaint?
A. That's right.
Q. Even when you are the defendant, your office?
A. Yes.
Q. So, in that instance, isn't it your responsibility to identify whether the matter should proceed to trial or should be settled?
A. I can provide advice on that, and I just will point out, without any opinion as to whether it's correct or not, the circularity of the process. I am bound by the advice of the Solicitor-General and, as I expressed yesterday, there are good reasons for that, to ensure that the machinery of government can continue to operate. So, in doing so, I think the question you're asking is, who has the final say? Once all the opinions, advice, different points of view have been put into the mix, who has the final say: that is the Office of the Solicitor-General.
Q. So to put to you what I put to your colleagues last week, the Solicitor-General says we think it is legally appropriate having regard to the exposure of the state in this matter to offer to settle it for $\$ 10,000$, you cannot say, "It ought to be 20 I so instruct you?"
A. So just to ensure that people have comfort that we do due diligence, $I$ do get my legal officers to write advice as to the - to whether or not in our view that's correct and that advice comes to me with the advice of the Office of the Solicitor-General. The action that I then take cannot be to go back and say, "I want it to be 20".
Q. You cannot instruct your lawyers to pay more than the Solicitor-General recommends?
A. The action that I can take is to go back and say, "Can we revisit the quantum because the advice that I have is that for these particular reasons it should be 20 ".
Q. Isn't the Solicitor-General personally in each instance evaluating and giving the advice about the amount of the settlement, or is it the officers of the Office of the Solicitor-General?
A. Well, the officers of the Office of the Solicitor-General work under the authority of the Solicitor-General.
Q. I'm just asking you - no, just my question is, is it the Solicitor-General in each case or is it the officers working in that office?
A. So, the officers working within that office are under the direction and working with the authority of the Solicitor-General. I understand your question --
Q. I think you're anticipating my criticism and I don't think it's helpful, so I think I'd just like you to answer my question, which is, is it in all cases the
Solicitor-General giving you the advice, or is it in some instances is it officers who work in the Office of the Solicitor-General?
A. I understand what your question is, and I'm not trying to be difficult, I think we need to look at the structure of the Office of the Solicitor-General and the statutory role of that office. If you're asking, are we interacting with people employed by the Solicitor-Generals's office working under the authority of the Solicitor-General, and are they providing advice, yes.
Q. And so, has the Solicitor-General seen and signed off on - insofar as you're aware, is it the Solicitor-General's personal advice in each instance or are you relying upon that authority being somehow delegated, and I won't get into the legalities of that with you, being somehow delegated to the officers who are employed by that office? A. I don't have knowledge of that.
Q. That's fair enough, and you don't have knowledge about that, but your view is that any advice that you receive from the Office of the Solicitor-General, from the Solicitor-General down to the most junior solicitor there employed, you are bound to follow in all respects?
A. Yes, we have guidance to that effect from the Attorney, is my understanding - not to say that everyone that works in that - but the authority of that office is such that that is the legal position as stated. I don't want people to think that it's as blunt as, "Here's what
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you've got to do, go and do it", so there are, as I've said --
Q. But it could be, couldn't it?
A. It could be, yes, it could be.
Q. And you would consider yourself to be bound to follow that advice?
A. I am bound to follow that advice, yes.
Q. Well, I'm just asking about your understanding; we'11 come to the objective position another time. You understand you're bound?
A. Yes.
Q. And you understand, therefore, that the decision as to whether to take a limitation period, even when it is in your own defence, even when you personally - your office, I should say, is the defendant; you can't say, "Do not take the limitation point, it's unfair"?
A. No, I can't. I can --
Q. Is that unacceptable to you? Do you find that frustrating?
A. We11, that's the way that government has structured itself. I think I pointed out yesterday that there was good reasons for that, that you do need to have a single point of legal authority for the Crown to operate under.

The point that you make as to where my authority stops: I act as a Head of Agency within the operating environment that I have, but I can provide assurance to the Commission that I do have people who advise me and I do advocate on that advice where we have an alternative position.
Q. And, in respect of the settlement amounts, what about in respect of how the lawyers are going to conduct themselves at the mediation? We heard from Ms Sdrinis and Mr Strange yesterday that there can be aggressive tactics or that victim-survivors are not excused from attending a joint session. Do you consider that it is available to you in your position, as a defendant in a proceeding, to instruct your lawyers to allow a victim-survivor to absent themselves from a joint session?
A. Again, we can put forward a view as to what we believe is in the best interests of those victim-survivors, but we

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cannot instruct the lawyers as to that view.
Q. If the Office of the Solicitor-General are behaving in your name in a way that you consider to be is not trauma-informed, what recourse do you have?
A. Obviously, I can speak to the Solicitor-General herself, or if I have concerns I can go through my Minister to the Attorney-General on those matters.
Q. And, has that ever been necessary?
A. There have certainly been discussions between me and the previous Solicitor-General around a course of action that was being taken and, if you like, my office's view on that.
Q. Thank you. Okay, so let me just understand then, let's go to - but you provide the factual instructions, that's right, as I understand that's at 456 and 457 of your statement?
A. 456 , are we talking about draft defence?
Q. Just trying to - you fact-check the statements?
A. Yes, so far as possible we try and pull together as much information as we can possibly find on a matter, so in terms of discovery, and make sure so far as we can that it's factually correct. We are also required to identify, if you like, potential redactions that may need to be made and to provide those back as well. So, if you like, we're in an information-gathering role in that part of trying to get the files, the records, the information together across the agency; give it a first pass, if you like, and make some assessments as to which things might need to be redacted or not provided; provide an explanation as to why, and then pass that through to the Office of the Solicitor-General.
Q. And, do you have any reflections you'd like to make to this Commission about the evidence of Ms Sdrinis or Mr Strange from yesterday? You need not if you don't feel you want to.
A. No.
Q. I also said earlier that I would give you the opportunity to respond generally to Ms Moxham's evidence, and I think I omitted to do that. Is there anything that I haven't covered that you wanted to address arising out of her evidence of yesterday?

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A. There were just a number of matters that I think it would be worth clarifying for the Commission.
Q. Yes.
A. The first is in relation to investigations, and I noted that she was concerned around some delay around getting our final determination and investigation file to her. And, absolutely, I'm following up on that, so to assure the Commission of that, but also to observe, there's nothing stopping Ms Moxham or the TRB from commencing their own investigation as soon as I alert them to the fact that we have a matter of concern.

So, you might recall there are two instances where we communicate formally: one is where I send, actually send my initial letter of breach or alleged investigating alleged breaches; the second is where I provide the investigation file back.

My understanding from Ms Moxham's evidence is that she awaits my full investigation file before she then starts a process, and I just wanted to be very clear that, when I raise a matter of concern, she could commence investigating.

The second matter that did really concern me was Ms Moxham's observations that in some way the changes that were being made to the regulatory arrangements regarding the TRB and the other statutory regulators, being the Education Act and the assessment and accreditation body, were bringing the TRB closer to government; in fact, it is the reverse.

So, under the regulatory arrangements which have been passed by both Houses of Parliament Ms Moxham's board will move from a representative board, so a union gets a seat, a teacher gets a seat, the independents get a seat, the Catholics get a seat to a skills-based board and we believe that from a department perspective - and this is a view that is shared by my colleagues in Catholic Education and independent schools - that in fact this brings a higher level of scrutiny and regulatory oversight to the activities of the TRB.
Q. Did you hear the evidence, and I'm conscious you've absorbed a lot of evidence this week, of Ms Girvin and Ms Sanders, and these concern the models in operation in

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Victoria and South Australia?
A. No, I didn't unfortunately.
Q. Can I just test with you about, the South Australian model had in place a centralised Investigations Unit.
A. Yes.
Q. And I wanted to ask you if that's something that, in your view, is within the capacity of the Department of Education of Tasmania, or if that's something that would require a whole-of-state response?
A. I think my observation, and I might have made it on day one, is that we are very, very supportive of that model, but I would question whether it is actually something we could apply to the whole State Service.

I was reflecting on the suggestion which some of my officers briefed me on. I think that the South Australian Department of Education has 60,000 employees; the Tasmanian State Service only has 30,000 employees in total, so you could ask whether, if you could replicate that model, whether it would be something that could be useful to the whole State Service.

COMMISSIONER BROMFIELD: I think we've certainly noted that suggestion.

MS BENNETT: Q. In terms of the Civil Redress scheme, can you just explain how your office interacts with Civil Redress at this stage?
A. Yes, certainly. So, in terms of the Civil Redress scheme, again, that is coordinated through the Department of Justice and we get a template form, if you like, with information that sets out matters pertaining to individuals that may have been involved in the claim and we provide, again, evidence and information that we can find, and sometimes through the redress that might be as simple as being able to place through school records and timetables the fact that that teacher did have an interaction with that student and at other times it will be far more voluminous.

So, we do pull all of that information together, so that's one role that we have. The other role is obviously around providing apologies. So, an important part, I believe, of that scheme is the ability for a victim-survivor to request an apology and, as I think I
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alerted or alluded to earlier, we have people trained in the provision of those apologies, both face-to-face but also in writing, and I am going to undertake that training myself.
Q. On apologies: as I understand that, the present position is apologies can be given on behalf of the department at the conclusion of the Civil Redress process or civil litigation; is that right?
A. Yes, I believe that's right, yes.
Q. Is that, again, the result of legal advice, and please don't feel you need to --
A. I'm not sure what that's the result of.
Q. Is there any reason that apologies couldn't be provided at a time that might best suit the person who's the victim-survivor?
A. So, can I give a personal response to that rather than a legal one?
Q. That's what I'm asking for, please?
A. Absent of what the lawyers may say, absolutely. People are coming to these matters at different stages in their lives and they will - to assist their healing they need to get what they need when it's required, not when it's comfortable or legally appropriate within some administrative process.

I think one question that has been raised internally is, why do we wait till the end? But that's something that we need to explore further with the office that undertakes redress.
Q. Your personal preference would be to offer an apology when you see it as being appropriate to offer, and absent any legal impediments, that's what you'd like to do?
A. Well, that's actually what is the right thing to do, yes.
Q. And you'd like to do the right thing?
A. That's right, yes.

MS BENNETT: Those are the matters, Commissioners, that I would like to raise with Mr Bullard and I extend the thanks of Counsel Assisting for Mr Bullard making himself available over the three days.
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PRESIDENT NEAVE: Thank you. Thank you, Ms Bennett. We also thank you very much for making yourself available over those three days and for your evidence. Any questions?

COMMISSIONER BROMFIELD: Q. I just had one to wrap up and it was just really reflecting on what Mr Leishman said, which was - you were in the room so I'm going to very poorly quote him - but he talked about, really, Tasmania should be able to aspire to do it well and to really capitalise on the fact that it's small and, I guess, the agility that that might bring. I wondered if you had any thoughts about that or reflections?
A. I absolutely agree with that. One of our strengths is that we're a small State Service, and we have shown - and I think COVID was provided as an example - how agile we can be when we give things the urgency and importance that they deserve. And so, I'm very, very supportive of
Mr Leishman's observations and I would absolutely support that statement, yes.

PRESIDENT NEAVE: Q. I have a follow-up question. It does seem to me, having heard from many of the survivors about their experience, that it might be useful for the department to think about ways in which that experience could be drawn upon to improve your systems, and I wondered whether you had contemplated including perhaps survivors in your processes of redesigning systems?
A. Yes, we have, and I am certainly looking to Ms Munting and Mr Leishman about their willingness, without any pressure whatsoever, to continue to inform our processes. But there have been approaches from other victim-survivors who have indicated their willingness to help, and it is only with the lived experience of people who have been through it we'11 make sure that we're able to ensure that that's not repeated.

PRESIDENT NEAVE: Thank you very much indeed, Mr Bullard.

## SHORT ADJOURNMENT

PRESIDENT NEAVE: Yes, Ms Norton.
MS NORTON: Good afternoon, Commissioners. Over the past four and a half days, Commissioners, we've heard a lot of evidence about gaps and failures in the past and some that continue to the present day within the Department of

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Education.
For the final session of this block of hearings the Counsel Assisting team would like to re-orient our focus bearing in mind your task of making recommendations at the end of this process and, with that in mind, we have a panel this afternoon to look at ways that the existing procedures within the Department of Education might be improved and to assist us with that work we have Professor Kerryann Walsh and Ms Elizabeth Jack, and I'll ask that both witnesses be sworn in
<KERRYANN MARIE WALSH, affirmed:
<ELIZABETH HAMILTON JACK, affirmed:
<EXAMINATION BY MS NORTON:
MS NORTON: Q. Professor Walsh, I'11 start with you, could you repeat, please, your full name, your professional address and your occupation?

PROF WALSH: My name is Kerryann Marie Walsh, I'm a Professor in Education at the Queensland University of Technology; I'm a teacher/educator by trade, yeah, and my work address is Victoria Park Road at Kelvin Grove in Brisbane.

MS NORTON: Thank you, Professor Walsh. You've prepared a statement to assist the Commission, it's a statement dated 15 Apri1 2022; is that correct?

PROF WALSH: Yes.
MS NORTON: Have you recently reviewed that statement?
PROF WALSH: Yes, I have.
MS NORTON: And are its contents true and correct to the best of your knowledge and belief?

PROF WALSH: Yes.
MS NORTON: Thank you.
Ms Jack, can I ask you to state your full name, professional address and occupation?
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MS JACK: My full name is Elizabeth Hamilton Jack. My address is 4 Salamanca Place, Hobart, and my role is Executive Director, Safeguarding Children and Young People within the Department of Education.

MS NORTON: Thank you, Ms Jack. Now, you have prepared a statement at the request of the Commission; have you reviewed that statement recently?

MS JACK: I have.
MS NORTON: Now, I understand, Ms Jack, that you have some changes that you would like to make and I have them here. The first change is to paragraph 21 of your statement; that's where you identify the full-time equivalent - I'm sorry, the additional positions that are yet to be recruited in your office, and is it the case that the reference there to "four additional positions" should be to "three additional positions"?

MS JACK: That's correct. I actually list three positions, but use the number "4".

MS NORTON: Thank you, you do indeed. And then, at paragraph 22, and it's a corresponding change I suppose, you say:

The office will be directly and indirectly supported by 14 staff not 12.

MS JACK: That's correct.
MS NORTON: Can I ask you there, that insertion of the word "indirectly", can you just explain what you mean by direct and indirect support?

MS JACK: Yes, when I re-read it I thought it was probably not quite correct because some staff that are supporting the work of the department and the work of the office of Safeguarding Children and Young People in particular don't sit in the Office of Safeguarding; they might be systems staff, they might work in our broader policy team, but they provide direct support to us from the point of view of working on safeguarding matters, but they aren't part of our team.

MS NORTON: Thank you. Then the final change is at paragraph 83 where there's an incorrect cross-reference, and in the beginning of the second line the reference to "paragraph 77" should read " 87 "; is that correct?

MS JACK: That's correct.
MS NORTON: With those changes having been made, are the contents of your statement true and correct to the best of your knowledge and belief?

MS JACK: It is.
MS NORTON: Now, Ms Jack, you have a background in coaching elite sports persons in Canada, but you've lived in Tasmania, you returned to your birth place of Tasmania in the 1990s, early 1990s and you've held a range of executive roles within the Tasmanian State Service. I'll just invite you to summarise for the Commissioners the professional experience that you have that you see as relevant to your current role.

MS JACK: Before I speak about my professional experience I think, first and foremost, I can say I'm a mother of two girls, two young women, who I largely brought up as a single parent, and so, I know how important keeping them safe and protecting them from harm, while helping them to grow and develop and push the boundaries, it's so critical; and so, for me as a mother and as a human being hearing the testimonies of the many victim-survivors that we've heard over the last two weeks has been immensely heart-wrenching and quite confronting, as well as the conversations that I have had directly with other victim-survivors with whom I have had some considerable engagement in some cases, and on all those occasions they have been so generous with their time, their thoughts, their input and shown such resilience. I mean, even the last testimony of Mr Leishman was incredibly moving and impressive.

So, I think that, along with my driving passion to make a difference in people's lives through collaboration and a concerted collective effort to achieve an outcome, I think, are probably more even important than my professional experience.

But if I were to talk about my professional experience, I have - I spent 15 years as a diving coach,
not just as an elite coach, I had children from the ages of 5 and 6 as Learn to Dive children. It was a full-time role, full-time professional role for 10 years and, while I was first and foremost appointed because I was there to build their technical skills, I was also responsible for them, sometimes without their parents being present, on week-long trips away where their safety and their wellbeing was my primary concern.

My experience in the State Government has been in senior positions across a broad range of areas and I think those experiences are more about my understanding of the way the government works. My leadership skills, my passion for change management, and my ability to lead change in some of those places where I've worked, as well as my ability to think strategically at a whole-of-organisation level, and I have worked quite considerably with Mr Bullard as the Secretary of Education in other roles outside Education, and I think he knows of my passion and my drive to make a difference, so hopefully he considered that when he appointed me to this role.

MS NORTON: Thank you. Now, this role, Ms Jack, was really created in response to the report of Professors Smallbone and McCormack. I just invite you to begin with to offer any reflections that you have on that report and the work that lies ahead of your office in making Tasmanian schools safer for students.

MS JACK: I'11 start by saying I welcome the report and I welcome this Commission of Inquiry. It's a shame that it's taken that much to drive the change we need, but if that is what is the catalyst, then it's a good thing.

There are some really fantastic recommendations, practical recommendations, in the report by the two professors. I've only met with them once, I've spoken with one of them on the phone as well, but they have offered to provide me with any additional support or advice I would like, which I think is important.

It is going to be challenging, yes, but I've never walked away from a challenge and I do believe this is a challenge that we must face and we must get right.

MS NORTON: If I can take you perhaps, Ms Jack, to your first challenge which was to in fact create the office that
you need to support the work you've been charged with doing, and I should just note for the transcript that you've been in this role since August of 2021?

MS JACK: The middle of August, about 15 August.
MS NORTON: Right, so we're coming up to eight months in the job?

MS JACK: Yes.
MS NORTON: You talk in your statement, at paragraphs 19 and following, about the unit or office, and you have 14 staff members. What process did you follow to recruit people to those roles?

MS JACK: So, I currently have six staff including myself.
MS NORTON: Sorry, yes, some are yet to come.
MS JACK: I'd like to have 14 now. When I was appointed the principal policy analyst who works in my area who had already been doing some investigatory work around the outcomes from the Royal Commission, the recommendations from that, and looking at ways that we could work more strategically as a department, so she automatically came into my office.

MS NORTON: Into which role, was that?
MS JACK: Principal policy analyst. And she has been invaluable because I walked in with very little background, a huge passion to make a difference, but I needed to get up to speed so it was basically the two of us until we had really working with the Secretary and the executive members of the department, until we had determined what we might need in terms of staffing and what our approach might be into the future. I then went about recruiting other staff that we identified as being very important, and they are staff in the project space, project management, project officers.

But also, I have now a senior communications and engagement consultant who has been really important in helping us plan our communications and engagement approach to start to build and strengthen the message that we need to get out to, not only all staff and volunteers in the
department, but also to the broader community.
Safeguarding children is everybody's responsibility, all our staff: our volunteers, from the education facility attendant, to the librarian, to the Secretary need to understand and live that, so that role has been critical. So, I've put in place the most important roles first; that's the team of six, I have an executive officer who runs the office day-to-day, and then we have planned out other positions that I am hopeful we will have filled in the next three or four months.

MS NORTON: Yes, I wanted to ask about that, because it seems to me that you have lot of work to do and a relatively limited timeframe in which to do it, I'm sure the work will continue on beyond your current contract, but your contract is through to the latter part of next year as I understand?

MS JACK: Yes. My contract - I came across on my existing contract, I was already working within the department; I was the head of Libraries Tasmania, responsible for libraries and archive services, and so, I was moved across on my existing contract.

MS NORTON: I see, thank you, that's helpful
clarification. Can I just go back to the recruitment that you've done so far and the recruitment that you're yet to do. Have those positions been advertised externally, what are the key skill sets you've looked for in staffing your office?

MS JACK: They have indeed been advertised externally, and when I say I have six staff currently, they don't all work full-time, and that's why you'll see in my statement I've tried to put down the number of FTEs that I have that that equates to. So, if I sound a bit vague in terms of numbers and people, that's probably why.

MS NORTON: You won't be able to give us exact numbers, thank you.

MS JACK: But I have definitely advertised externally. We have had some applicants that have come outside of Tasmania, but at the moment everybody on my team has come from not just within the department but from within the state.

Since I have started I have included requirements for additional conviction checks for our staff and they are national police checks.

MS NORTON: Thank you.
MS JACK: So, that is something that I want to continue because I think it's extremely important for people working in our office.

MS NORTON: Can I ask you: this came up in Mr Bullard's evidence this morning and I think this is the evidence he gave but I'11 check with you to make sure it's correct, that all staff in your office are required to have a Working with Vulnerable People registration?

MS JACK: Yes.
MS NORTON: And you're saying a national criminal record check?

MS JACK: Yes, however, my position was created before I had started that, and the principal policy analyst was already in place in the department and her statement of duties didn't incorporate that, so I'm now looking at retrospectively putting that in place because I can't very well expect everybody else to have that without that role.

MS NORTON: So, you don't currently have that registration and that check but --

MS JACK: For the Registration for Working with Vulnerable People, there is not one person within the department that is able to work there without that check being done.

COMMISSIONER BROMFIELD: So it's gone through the administrative process to ensure that the two existing positions, including your own, are required to have the National Police Check as a way of modelling what you expect to see?

MS JACK: Absolutely; I think it's entirely appropriate and incredibly important. I would love to just have a blanket requirement that all our statements of duties automatically have that within them, I asked for that, but I've been told that I need to - each time I create a new
position I need to put that request forward.
MS NORTON: I understand.
MS JACK: And so far it's not been turned out.
PRESIDENT NEAVE: Q. Sorry, I didn't hear what you said before about where the people who you have recruited come from. Did you say they all come from within the state?

MS JACK: Yes.
PRESIDENT NEAVE: Currently.
MS JACK: Currently.
PRESIDENT NEAVE: Right, thank you.
MS JACK: But we do advertise broadly.
MS NORTON: And you said you have some interstate applicants?

MS JACK: Yes.
MS NORTON: Professor Walsh, I haven't forgotten you, can I turn to you? I'd like now, having explored some early matters in relation to your office, Ms Jack, I'd like to now turn to some of the specific ways in which the work of your office might increase the safety of students in Tasmanian schools.

And, Professor Walsh, can I ask you to speak about the need to educate, not just teachers and staff within schools but also students in relation to child sexual abuse prevention?

PROF WALSH: Yeah, sure. So, multiple enquiries have shown that sexual abuse prevention education is an important part of a broader suite and system of interventions and prevention activities. So, standing alone child sexual abuse prevention programs can't really achieve what we would hope for them; they need to be implemented with a - alongside a range of other measures, environmental, structural issues, big issues that children and families don't have much control over but policymakers and other leaders in the field do, politicians and so on,
so this kind of broader environment needs to wrap-around children and families and schools, and sexual abuse prevention programs sit in there.

Sexual abuse prevention programs aren't only delivered in schools, they're delivered by some other child-serving organisations in different kinds of forms. So, broadly, they have existed since the 1980s, 70s, 80s. First developed in the US in response to people in schools noticing or identifying rape of children. So, they were first developed by women's Rape Crisis centres in the US and then began to be developed and disseminated more widely. In the US they're delivered very widely and 27 of the 50 states require - have in legislation that they're to be taught in schools and funding is hitched to that.

In Australia, there are only two states, South Australia and Western Australia, that require - will have a legislative requirement for and a policy requirement for sexual abuse prevention programs to be taught in schools. The other states don't have that.

MS NORTON: I want to come to lessons that might be learned from interstate and the importance of mandatory education, but before we get there, Professor Walsh, can you just explain for the benefit of the Commissioners and people here today what the key elements of the sort of education that you're referring to?

PROF WALSH: Yes. So, sexual abuse prevention education can be thought of as having multiple components. There are first of all the content areas that are to be taught, that should be taught, and high level studies that have identified over time fairly consistently several key kind of headline topic areas that need to be covered in programs to enable them to be successful, and they're things like teaching children about body integrity, which may or may not include consent; education as we would know it, but teaching children, "My body belongs to me, nobody can touch my body without my say so", so that kind of concept of body integrity and that you're a separate person from those around you.

They also teach several rules, for example, body safety rules that children might learn; they teach children the difference between safe and unsafe touching, safe and unsafe secrets, so they try to plug into the, I guess, the
features of sexual abuse as a phenomenon so that it involves secrecy, so teaching children the difference between types of keeping - you know, that secrets should be told; that sexual abuse can occur in private, so teaching children about safe adults who are there to tell if that were to occur, and it teaches them help-seeking strategies as well; help-seeking strategies are a big part of the programs, teaches children to identify who some trusted adults might be, and they often include teachers. They help children know how to tell, so the words they need to start telling someone, to keep telling until someone listens, yeah, those kinds of things.

Secondly, there are teaching strategies that are part of component parts of programs, and these are not to be underestimated because they play a key role in the program's effectiveness. So, those are things like ...(Zoom screen freezes)... active involvement of children, so electives with children in the assembly hall --

MS NORTON: Apologies, Professor Walsh, we just lost you. Can I just take you back to the beginning of the point that you were making about the second feature?

PROF WALSH: So, the second feature is about teaching strategies and they're not to be underestimated because they often are the mechanism or the thing that makes the difference with whether a program is successful or not. So, successful teaching strategies for these programs have been shown to be group delivery, active involvement of children in the program, so children doing things and participating; so, a lecture in an assembly hall, for example, is likely to be less effective than a program that goes over several weeks and might help children engage with the content.

Children need opportunities to have strategies modelled for them, demonstrated, they need opportunities to practice those, so again, that's about active engagement of the kids; and they need reinforcement and feedback on how they are going with that, so not every response is okay, there are certain ways of doing things that are better than others, you know, and these kind of pedagogues or teaching strategies kind of make sense - make a lot of sense to teachers because they're what good teachers do everyday anyway, so they're the effective methods.

And then there are delivery resources that can be used. So, current programs are often multimedia programs, they're not just someone standing and delivering messages to children, they might involve images, animations, info graphics and things like that that really engage children and hit children at their level.

MS NORTON: Can I ask you about that reference to "at their level". At what stage in a child's life should they begin receiving this sort of training or this sort of education?

PROF WALSH: It would be my view that they should begin at birth and that - but that obviously can't begin with school, but parents contribute to that, and parents can do that by, you know, teaching their children about their body integrity from an early age, teaching children the names of their body parts so they can correctly report safe and unsafe touches on those body parts. Teaching children about safety about, you know, declaring to the children that, "I love you no matter what, you can tell me anything no matter how yucky or uncomfortable and I will still love you", there's lots of messages that parents can give children in those first five years of life that also feed into sexual abuse prevention education and then get taken up in school curricula.

MS NORTON: And so, it follows from your response there that this sort of education should commence as soon as children enter the school system?

PROF WALSH: Yes, absolutely, and before school, definitely before school. If you think about childcare, daycare, long daycare, kindergartens, children and adults are engaged in a lot of intimate care routines with children at those times, children need to have a voice and need to be empowered to say what makes them feel safe and unsafe and that sets them up then - that set of skills can set them up then for programs that occur later.

MS NORTON: Now, I cut you off with that question; was there anything else you wanted to high1ight in terms of the key elements of protective education?

PROF WALSH: Yes, probably one key thing about resources that are used to deliver the programs, and they need to be
age appropriate. So, there are programs for very young children can involve puppets and plays, and theatre productions, songs, dances, rhymes and so on, so they can be very engaging.

And the final thing would be that another key element that's been found is the resource of homework. So, while I don't mean, you know, them going home and doing their times table, simply sending an information sheet with some activities home with children helps to engage their parents and let their parents in on the content and helps parents be able to reinforce the messages that the kids are receiving in a program at school, which is like an extra dose or a booster shot, if you like.

MS NORTON: Yes.
COMMISSIONER BROMFIELD: Professor Walsh, can I follow up on that idea of, kind of like, the booster shot? So, if they start with formal programs in pre-school or kinder, when would they finish? Would once be enough?

PROF WALSH: Yeah. So, the Australian curriculum at the moment tends to differentiate safety from the respectful relationships space, not really distinctly but it's built into the health and physical education curriculum. So, lessons in the first four years of school in particular will focus on those things that I've mentioned. Before in Year 5 and 6 in primary school they will switch to learning more about respectful relationships, they begin to have lessons on pre-puberty education at that time, so it flips more to the relational aspect rather than the kind of safety aspect in the early childhood years. Does that answer the question?

COMMISSIONER BROMFIELD: It does. Can I infer from that then, that best practice is that this education commences at the start of schooling and goes right through to the end of schooling?

PROF WALSH: Absolutely, yes.
COMMISSIONER BROMFIELD: Thank you.
MS NORTON: Professor Walsh, last week the Commission heard evidence from Associate Professor Tim Moore in relation to some research that he's doing with a colleague,

Professor Morag McCarthy, they've been interviewing Tasmanian students in relation to their experience of safety, Tasmanian students among a broader cohort of children and young people, and one of the matters that he mentioned in his evidence coming out of those conversations is a concern that sex education within schools, when it talks about unwanted sexual advances, it still focuses on the unwanted sexual advances on the part of peers, not on the part of adults. Is that something that should be covered in sex education in schools, do you think?

PROF WALSH: Yes, it probably should be, but I don't think we understand yet the best ways of doing that; it's sensitive, it's really sensitive, that's really hard for teachers to do. It's really difficult - you know, there would need to be experimental studies done to figure out the best way to delivering this material to kids in schools. Because of that it's often avoided.

So, in a study we did 10 years ago we found that grooming strategies by adults, for example, was completely left out of programs along with a lot of content around online safety because it just wasn't a tradition that had been, you know, taught in those programs.

So I think that, yes, we need to teach it, but perhaps the avenue for doing that may be to get parents on board. Now, having said that, I'm conscious that not every child has a parent who is willing and able to do that with them, so it leaves a significant proportion of children without those messages, so school is probably the place where they need to get that; I'm just not sure of the best way of being able to introduce that to children without creating the fear.

MS NORTON: Yes.
PROF WALSH: Having said that as well, the evaluations of the sexual abuse prevention programs, and multiple evaluations over time, tend to show that the programs don't increase or decrease children's fear or anxiety as a general kind of statement across the board, and as programs have improved over the years and become more sensitive to children and more developmentally appropriate the risk of them doing that is lower.

I think there is, in relation to the kind of crossover
or overlap between broader sex education and sexual abuse prevention, harmful sexual behaviour addressing and respectful relationships, online safety, this big program landscape. I think sex education - it's my view that sex education should be delivered by experts rather than expecting the everyday classroom teacher to be able to deliver this material.

Because, when we leave it to everyday classroom teachers, it falls off the agenda; it's easy to avoid, it's not like addition and subtraction and all the steps you take to teach that that can - yeah, some teachers will never be comfortable with this content and perhaps should not be required to be comfortable with it. Mindful that the greatest proportion of teachers are female, there's higher incidents and prevalence of abuse, sexual abuse amongst females, yeah.

And we have teachers increasingly from diverse cultural backgrounds who may have different levels of comfort in addressing this material, so I think there is a place for experts and I think Family Planning Tasmania might be one, we have the equivalent up here in Queensland known as True Relationships and Reproductive Health who are really expert in delivering this material in schools, but it comes at a cost.

MS NORTON: Thank you. Before I turn back to Ms Jack to ask about the availability of prevention programs in Tasmanian schools, at the outset of your discussion on this topic you referred to mandatory training only being in place in South Australia and Western Australia. Can I invite you to speak about the importance of mandatory training? Mandatory education, I should say.

PROF WALSH: Yeah, it is actually mandatory everywhere in Australia if we hitch it to the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers. So, Standard 4 is about safe environments, teachers being able to demonstrate that they can create and maintain safe environments in schools, and 4.4 relates to children's safety in particular.

So, to be registered as a teacher, to graduate from a teacher education institution, one - we can assume that yeah, pre-service teachers need to have some content in that area, and then to be registered as a teacher they need to have some kind of training.

I'm not sure that's consistent yet throughout the states and territories because, of course, it's the states and territories who are the regulatory authorities in registering teachers rather than the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers which is Federal.

So, in Queensland at the moment there's - to be registered as a teacher an applicant simply needs to be able to demonstrate that they've had some kind of training. In South Australia they need to provide evidence that they have had an 8-hour training program, I believe, or a one-day training program which $I$ think is delivered online now since COVID.

So, I think it is incredibly important that teachers begin their careers, you know, in classrooms, with some level of training. And I sometimes refer to this as a wedge of content where we begin in pre-service with some content and that wedge of content then grows as teachers progress through their careers and as they move into management positions and so on and need to have more knowledge, but I think making training mandatory means it will happen, yeah.

MS NORTON: And can I ask you then, in a similar vein, is it important that these education programs that you have been describing for children are also mandatory? Is that important in your view?

PROF WALSH: So, I think it's a double-edged sword to have the program delivery as mandatory. I think in South Australia that works because they've had a program that's been developed over many years, it's very comprehensive, it's been revised over time, and it's had - the Department of Education there have been really open to expert influence so have sought out expert advice and input.

So, I think, again, the requirement for a mandatory curriculum might need to go alongside other elements being present. So, if it were mandatory in Tasmania, for example, now, who would be responsible, what curriculum would be delivered? Would it be just any? How would you regulate that? How would you know/quality assure what children are receiving, yeah.

MS NORTON: You've referred there to South Australia; are
there any other jurisdictions that you could point the Commissioners to which you think are doing a good job in this space?

PROF WALSH: So, Western Australia have over time developed a Child Protection portal on their Department of Education website. It's hard for us to get into that now because you need to be - it's for staff only, it's hard to get access.

From what I can tell and from what I know, Western Australia also - so, Western Australian Catholic Education also deliver the South Australian Keeping Safe curriculum as far as I know, or when I was last notified, and Western Australia have different kinds of mandatory training in place for mandatory reporting, for curriculum delivery and so on.

I think the South Australian model is the soundest that we have at the moment because it's been so well thought through because it's been developed over time, and teachers have to actually do the training on the curriculum before they receive the curriculum materials, so they can't get access to those materials - they could beg, borrow and steal them, but they can't technically get access to those unless they do the training, which I think is a nice strategy for quality assuring for who gets to do the work, yeah.

MS NORTON: Ms Jack, I note you've been taking down notes as Professor Walsh has been speaking. Can I invite you to reflect on the sexual abuse prevention programs that currently exist in Tasmanian schools?

MS JACK: I'm not the expert on what's being delivered from a curriculum perspective, but as I have provided in one of my statements, which I believe Professor Walsh has a copy of those programs --

MS NORTON: Yes, I'11 ask Professor Walsh shortly.
MS JACK: I would welcome any comments or suggestions she might have on that, but it's quite a range, but they have been assessed by our curriculum staff within the department; they are not mandatory, other than what's mandatory within the Australian curriculum through the health and physical education.

Schools tend to use the programs that they believe work best for their context because all our schools are in different environments, they're a different size, they might have different issues within their student cohort. The principal and the school leaders normally make that determination. So, there will be professional support staff, for instance, that might contribute to that so that they determine what is best to be run in their school.

But in terms of what we are rolling out in our schools the advice I have internally within the department is that these are appropriate, they are accredited or they have been reviewed and are seen to be appropriate, but if Professor Walsh has a different view I would welcome it, because we are not getting everything right, we have a long way to go and we are at the start of our journey.

And, I will be following up with South Australia and also Western Australia and lots of other things that I've been noting during the course of these two weeks because there have been some incredible experts up here that have given me lots of things to think about.

MS NORTON: Can I just ask a few questions, and if you can't provide the detail, I understand, you can perhaps take it on notice. You've referred to schools having discretion about which programs to offer. And I should say, Commissioners, for your assistance, Annexure 6 to Ms Jack's statement contains a table outlining all the prevention programs that are available in Tasmanian schools.

MS JACK: I'm sorry, Ms Norton, if I could just also mention there are a couple, and it is noted in the annexure, that were run previously and have been superseded and replaced, so I think it's only two, but there might be a couple that are no longer run.

MS NORTON: Thank you, there's certainly a lot of information in the table. Can I ask this: you've talked about the discretion that individual schools have in terms of what they offer. Is it possible for a school not to offer any of the programs, and I put to one side the mandatory programs in relation to relationships and sexual education and health and physical education, but in respect of the voluntary programs, is it possible for a school not
to offer any of them?
MS JACK: I would have to take that on notice. I can't give you a categorical yes or no, but it's my understanding the expectation is, every school offers something depending on the context. I have not had a conversation with anyone in the department yet who has told me otherwise.

MS NORTON: Well, perhaps I think it would be useful --
MS JACK: I will provide that information.
MS NORTON: -- to know if that expectation is borne out and if the Department of Education monitors whether or not schools are going beyond the mandatory education.

COMMISSIONER BROMFIELD: Can I ask a follow-up question on this one? We heard from, I think it was Ms Carter, the principal from one of your schools --

MS JACK: Yes.
COMMISSIONER BROMFIELD: -- about a school-based fund that they used for things that they were talking about - she was talking about a social worker that they had at a particular faction. Is it the same fund that pays for this mandatory training, so is it a school level? Does it come from the school level budget? There you go, I got my question out.

MS JACK: This is something, because I'm not responsible for school budgets or that side of what happens in the department, that's another - that's something else I would have to take on notice. I'm very happy to get the information, it's probably a very simple answer and if the Deputy Secretary learning was sitting here, she would be able to answer.

COMMISSIONER BROMFIELD: I'd appreciate the answer and I'll let you know the intent for why: I'm curious as to whether schools could be making choices about the curriculums that's best for them based on the cost of the curriculum, where the lowest cost might win.

MS JACK: I do know there is some funding that is allocated to providers under a terms of a grant deed, so whether schools have additional funding they can put to other prevention programs is what I'm not sure of. So, for
example, SASS, the Sexual Assault Support Service, is provided with funding through the department by a grant deed; they also have funding from other Tasmanian Government agencies, from the Department of Communities Tasmania to deliver certain services and programs. So, some of it is definitely wrapped up in broader funding; what I don't know is whether schools themselves have additional funds that they can use through their resource packaging to allocate as well.

PRESIDENT NEAVE: I've got a follow-up on that. As I understand it, as you mentioned SASS and I think Laurel House have got some funding to offer programs, and as I understand it also, Ms Norton might correct me if I'm wrong, it's a certain number of - programs to a certain number of schools per year. What I don't know, I don't think, is whether the school says, "We want to have some of that", or whether the department says, "These are the schools you should go to", or how that distribution is worked out. What is it that dictates whether the school gets access to one of those programs offered by SASS or Laurel House, or is it some other process, and it would be helpful for us, I think, to understand how that actually works.

MS JACK: It's something that we have within Safeguarding Children and Young People identified; it's not one of the areas that we have focused on because there have been some more immediate needs in terms of supporting particularly our staff, the teachers, and giving them the tools they need to deal with, you know, mandatory reporting, to understand what to actually do when there's been child sexual abuse, a suspicion or an allegation of child sexual abuse in their school. So, we've tried very hard to get into giving teachers the practical tools. We have identified prevention programs as an area of focus for us. I'm not sure how those programs are identified.

I have spoken a couple of times with the CEO of SASS and also of Laurel House and talked to them about the fact that I would like to get some more information from them and build a really strong working relationship so we can understand from our perspective. I don't get - I don't want to interfere in the way Learning Services in schools manage their budgets, but if there is a way that can be recommended that might be better, then that's something we would do. I will find the information out in relation
to --
PRESIDENT NEAVE: I've got a follow-up question then, and I understand that this might be regarded as a Learning Services issue rather than an issue that relates to your office, but how does that coordination work? Because we've heard evidence from Professor Walsh and others about how this prevention exercise is terribly important in terms of safeguarding children, so it does seem to me at this preliminary stage that having those two things working hand-in-hand are very important, the Learning Services and the role that your office takes.

MS JACK: The way we work across the department, not just with Learning Services but with every part of the department, is going to make or break the way we end up safeguarding and protecting the children and young people in our care. So, I am working very closely with staff within Learning Services, the Student Support Team in particular, staff within our systems areas, Child and Student Wellbeing, that space as well; we need to make sure that we are not working in silos which - and also not working in silos across government. It's something that I feel very strongly about, so I do not for one second intend to sit back and say, "Learning Services can deal with that and that's on their watch", but I don't want to overstep the bounds and be making calls without having the conversations with them or without determining who is responsible for what part of the decision that needs to be made.

PRESIDENT NEAVE: Thank you.
MS JACK: I hope that answers the question.
PRESIDENT NEAVE: Yes, thank you.
MS NORTON: Ms Jack, before I return to Professor Walsh; Professor Walsh talked before about protective behaviours training for teachers and said that it tends to - it's only when it's mandatory that it tends to happen. Is protective behaviours training for teachers mandatory in Tasmanian schools currently?

MS JACK: The only - as I'm aware, the only training of that nature that's mandatory is mandatory reporting. And, I'm not sure, Professor Walsh, what you meant by protective
behaviours training because there's a lot of training that I believe our staff, not just teaching staff but all staff need to be able to safeguard and protect the children in our care. And that's one of the things that our office is working on right at this moment: (a) I think it's fair to say that there has not been the same rigour around the mandatory reporting training that there could be, and we are about to introduce a new module that will be compulsory and will be put onto our - an online system where every single person in the department will have to do it every year and we will know who has and who has not done that training.

We are also working on training for, in the first instance, principals and aspiring principals on their obligations and the requirements to safeguard and protect our children, the rights of children, in particular their right to an education, their right to be safe and their right to be heard, so that in the first instance principals and our school leaders understand what those obligations are and understand why we have those obligations in place, and will give them tools and training on red flag behaviours that you might pick up through, you know, grooming behaviours; what to do if you're seeing something that doesn't look right; it's fairly basic training but it's the first step to then building that into something much bigger and also rolling it out right across the department.

MS NORTON: Thank you, Ms Jack. Professor Walsh, is there anything you'd like to say following on from Ms Jack's evidence just now?

PROF WALSH: Yes. I think Ms Jack's role is, you know, organising training is complex, in that, there's mandatory reporting training, there's the component that I was referring to before which was about the teaching of sexual abuse prevention - training teachers to teach sexual abuse prevention in schools, and then there's kind of the leadership training that school leaders, even counsellors, and from Annexure 6 I noticed the key role of school nurses in delivering several of the prevention programs in Tasmania, which I think is really interesting and a bit different to what might happen in some other states.

I think a register of training so that you can track who's receiving which training, you know, and how
frequently is really essential to understanding how - you know, to being able to get a pulse on how many of the staff are actually trained and who's due to be trained and who's missing that training.

I guess the only other thing I would mention is that there are some existing training programs, evidence-based training programs, that have been used in the US. One of them is called Stewards of Children that deals not only with understanding sexual abuse as a concept, understanding how it happens and it as a phenomenon, and how to report it, but also moves then on to modules to do with teaching children to keep themselves safe.

So, I think we haven't tried that program in Australia, I've tried to get funding to do it several times here, but it is an evidence-based program, it's been evaluated by some of the best in the field and shown to be - to have effect, even at state level, so entire states have been studied: Georgia, for example, in the US where this program has existed for a number of years and they've looked at reporting rates on sexual abuse before and after the introduction of the program and shown increases, but also a lot of increase in general community awareness because schools are such a hub of activity and what's happening in schools ripples out into wider communities.

There's another program that trains teachers to deliver sexual abuse prevention in their classrooms and teachers are about integrating it into everyday classroom activities, which given that teachers are under so much pressure and the curriculum is so condensed and there's so much pressure to cover literacy, numeracy, science - that program's called Second Step, I believe, and is also used in the US but hasn't been delivered here.

So, in Australia I think we've missed opportunities or not taken them for some reason, we have different states and territories, education departments develop their own materials because for some reason we all think we're unique, when there's probably not that much difference in how teachers should be handling sexual abuse across the board, and I include for children with disability in that and children from indigenous communities; there are certainly some nuances there but it's probably something that all teachers should be aware of.

Yeah, I think that would - oh, and regarding the funding models I did notice on Annexure 6 that there is the model where a not-for-profit, an NGO such as Alannah \& Madeline or SASS, might be delivered or receive a contract to deliver programs in schools. I actually think that's quite a sound approach, but there's no - I had a quick search for literature around this just this morning and I couldn't find anything on it. And I know Alannah \& Madeline deliver eSmart Schools here in Queensland and it's in a similar way.

But leaving the funding model to schools to decide what they will do and how they will spend their budget, I think the literature would tell us that they will only look for a sexual abuse prevention program when they have an incident; it will be reactionary why they do it. So, that is very hard for schools to do when they commit their budget at the start of the school year, there's just no wriggle room in budgets to suddenly get somebody in to deliver a program when an event happens, even though we know that's not what should happen but in practice that's often how it plays out. So, I think they are some of the barriers. The cost for individual schools to receiving programs is definitely a barrier.

MS NORTON: Thank you, Professor Walsh. Can I just go back to something you said earlier. You observed in respect of Annexure 6 that a lot of the training programs are delivered by school nurses --

PROF WALSH: Some, yes, some of them.
MS NORTON: -- and that that was interesting and different. Can I just invite you, if you like to, elaborate on whether there's any difficulty with that delivery model?

PROF WALSH: I don't think there is, but there were a lot of programs there that mentioned that school nurses were doing it, so there's a lot for school nurses to do, they're assisting really with curriculum delivery there. So, I had questions around how many FTE nurses are there that would do this work, how might they prioritise this over the everyday kind of practical, you know, broken arms and bleeding noses that they might have to also deal with in schools? How common are nurses? Does every school have access to a full-time nurse? I wouldn't think that would
be the case.
So, I think placing that responsibility, at least they're departmental staff, and it would relieve teachers to a certain extent, but there was a lot that seemed to be going their way or that they were expected to contribute to, so I wondered whether it would be important to hear from them about how that's working.

MS NORTON: Yes, thank you. I might stick with you, Professor Walsh. You talk in your statement about the importance - and this is at about paragraph 45 - you discuss the importance of specialist portfolios. Can I ask you to elaborate on that for the Commissioners?

PROF WALSH: Yeah. So, I think a key way to incentivise safeguarding in schools is to attach status and reward to those positions in schools, and probably at departmental levels, you know, in head office levels as well. I think that those roles carry additional risks that some other school leadership positions like curriculum leadership don't carry. I think it would ensure that the right kind of people get into those roles as well, so people who are both ambitious, have drive, want to make a difference, but also have some content area knowledge or are prepared to get that content area knowledge.

I think leadership roles in safeguarding in each school as well as, you know, a digital safety lead might be a model that could be tried. Often schools have Child Protection or safeguarding leads but those people are just doing it as part of their everyday work; it isn't something that they're given additional credit for, that they get additional pay for, that they have additional status for or even a title often, so I think those kind of basic industrial elements might be - might incentivise or might help raise the status of safeguarding in schools to some extent.

I can't point to models where that's happened well, it's an idea and it's untried, but it works in other areas, and the digital safety lead; it might not exist as a kind of "safety oriented digital lead" but there are digital leads in schools. There's an example of a school here in Queensland with a digital lead who began as a straight digital lead but who has become a digital safety lead in addition and doing absolutely marvellous things across the
school in designing entire programs where the kids are learning about being safe online, including sexual safety online, from when they enter - it's a secondary school, so when they enter secondary school, and then they're doing peer mentoring and the kids are deciding what the content is that happens in the school, and this digital lead, they are leading that work. Whereas, left to everyday classroom teachers to fit it in with their other roles, it just simply wouldn't happen. So, in my mind it would give time, it would give status, it would give acknowledgment that this work requires time and requires dedication, yeah, it would lift it.

MS NORTON: Thank you, Professor Walsh. You mentioned there that this is a model that hasn't yet been done elsewhere. The Commission heard evidence earlier today from a witness who encouraged Tasmania to lead the way on reforms, and so, with that in mind I'll come to you, Ms Jack.

I wonder if you could comment, having regard to what Professor Walsh has been talking about, on the need for specialist portfolios, and in particular whether the School Safeguarding Officers that are intended to be introduced as recommended by the professors in their report might be a place for specialisation?

MS JACK: My thoughts went exactly to where yours did because I heard Mr Leishman, I think it was, talk about the opportunity for Tasmania being small, and I think I made comment in my own statement; I was asked about barriers and I did say that, you know, when - and I know I'm going slightly off track, but with RCIRCSA, the recommendations from the Royal Commission, some of the not barriers, but challenges are that some of the education-related recommendations required a whole-of-nation approach and we might end up rolling something out that looks slightly different because of our size and the scale of our programs. But I also said in my statement that we have some real benefits in being a small state because we can should be able to and can - collaborate better, we can work together more easily, we have easier connections with people, and through that I think there are some real opportunities for us to be more agile and, as Mr Leishman suggested, take the lead, and perhaps this is one way.

We are still mapping out what - or what the specifics
of the Safeguarding Officer roles are, but we do not intend - and I have stated this from the beginning - we will not target staff who are already working in schools and either give them the title or an expectation that they have an additional role in safeguarding without adequately resourcing that. So, it may be that we take some of an existing roles or an existing person's role away and give them the safeguarding role if they are the right person, or it might be a recruitment of new staff depending on the skills and experience we require.

We cannot expect staff to do more with no additional resources and we can't expect schools to do that. So that, the Safeguarding Officer will be there to help the principal lead the work we're doing to put children and young people at the centre of every decision and action we take. They will be there to help with the development of risk assessment plans and monitor those plans so that we do have some ideas on the role. We had not even thought of digital leads, I will be honest - or sorry, digital safeguarding leads, but that is something else that we should be looking at.

MS NORTON: And, I appreciate that you're still working out these roles and what they would look like, but have you given any contemplation to, or could you, consider the additional remuneration and status that Professor Walsh has referred to both as recognition of expertise but also as an enticement, an incentive, for people to do extra training and take on this additional responsibility?

MS JACK: The title will be there regardless because we think it's important, not just in terms of recognising that person or acknowledging them or adding "status", it's about getting the message out to everybody, not just our staff and volunteers, not just the children that go to our school, but the broader community that safeguarding is a priority within our department.

The Rights of the Child are already highlighted in our strategic plan as one of our improvement drivers, and that is the right to an education, a right to be safe, and a right to be heard, and they are not just words on a piece of paper. We have to enact that, we have to embed the national principles in everything we do, so the role will be a role that is recognised and identified through that title.

As to remuneration, we haven't even gone down that track and I have to be careful with that because we are subject to the State Service Act and we already have statements of duties that require certain roles and responsibilities to be pitched at a certain level with aligned remuneration, so $I$ can't - I would love to sit here and promise extra dollars, but I would have to take that on board and look at it.

MS NORTON: Yes, thank you, Ms Jack. I'd like to speak to you both about harmful sexual behaviours within schools.

Ms Jack, I might just stick with you for the minute. The Commission has heard evidence this week and last week, and indeed in other evidence that's come to the Commission's attention about concerns that support services working in this space have about the ability of staff within Department of Education schools to properly recognise and respond to harmful sexual behaviours. Do you have any reflections on that as a difficulty within the current system?

MS JACK: Within the Student Support Team we have considerable expertise in that space, and our student support - senior student support staff have built strong connections with a large number of experts in the field and they have established a harmful sexual behaviours working group that is building, not only its own knowledge bank in terms of harmful sexual behaviours, but is also working to build the skills and capacity of all staff in that area. So, professional support staff like our school psychologist and social workers.

I have heard and I have heard quite often in evidence that one of the concerns is that there just aren't enough of them, and we take that very seriously, and I have had considerable discussions with the Secretary and we have we acknowledge that that is a need. As I've had conversations with student support themselves, and it's not just around the harmful sexual behaviours, it's across the board in all our schools, and we are doing everything we can to put forward the arguments to build the case for more support in that area.

MS NORTON: Thank you. Professor Walsh, I might come to you. As Ms Jack continues the work of building
capabilities within the department in relation to harmful sexual behaviours, can I invite you to comment on best practice responses in that area?

PROF WALSH: Yes, so the best - this is not - so, I will say that harmful sexual behaviours is something I've come to later in my career to understanding and to working with, and the experts on that really are from the University of South Australia and my colleague, Dr Leslie Ey, who is currently working on this, on a new model to development a new model that well help schools and other agencies working with children with harmful sexual behaviours, it will help each party understand what each other is doing, but it will also develop a greater nuance to existing models, for example traffic light models which is the predominant model that teachers have been provided with to understand harmful sexual behaviour to date, and that model goes along the lines of, green light behaviours are everyday appropriate sexual behaviours with students. A student might mistakenly use or mistakenly do something when they're very young, for example, and don't understand that the context isn't appropriate for that behaviour and the occurrence of that behaviour presents a teachable moment that can be addressed in everyday teaching.

Yellow light behaviours or orange light behaviours are those behaviours that make teachers prick up their ears and go, "M'mm, what might be going on here?" And red light behaviours are those that are repeated, might involve coercion, might be - might involve manipulation, grooming or perhaps even violence. So, Dr Ey, is working on a model that would add greater nuance to that.

So some teachers across Australia, depending on where they are and depending on what training they've been exposed to, may have received training in the Traffic Lights Mode1 or they may not have. It's considered at the moment to be ... [Zoom cuts out] to be a best practice framework, if you like, for responding, recognising and responding to children's harmful sexual behaviour, but it has some limitations and it's - I guess it's rich within Australia across, whole school systems just hasn't been there.

The Royal Commission recommended greater attention be paid to this and I understand there are different things happening around Australia in addressing this, but there
isn't a coordinated - everyone's off doing their own thing as I believe.

MS NORTON: Thank you, Professor Walsh.
COMMISSIONER BROMFIELD: Sorry, just for the record and to avoid any potential perception of conflict, I just wanted to acknowledge that I'm a co-chief investigator with Dr Ey on the South Australian research that Professor Walsh just mentioned.

MS NORTON: Thank you.
COMMISSIONER BROMFIELD: You carry on.
MS NORTON: I have finished my questions, thank you, Commissioners.

MS JACK: Ms Norton, if I could just add along with what Professor Walsh has said: there has also been significant work done in the UK by, I think he's a professor, Simon Hackett, and our staff do use Hackett's Continuum, which while not a red light/green light system, it's very similar and identifies behaviours along a spectrum from the green light to the red, without using those, and we are hopeful of being able to roll out training from that program, which is the AIM program as I understand it, because we understand that that is also another best practice model.

MS NORTON: Commissioners, you recall that Renae Pepper from SASS gave evidence about that model earlier in the week. Commissioners, are there any questions you have for the witnesses?

COMMISSIONER BROMFIELD: No further questions, thank you.
PRESIDENT NEAVE: Thank you very much both of you, that was a most interesting session, we've been very well informed on the issues that you've spoken about today, so thank you.

SHORT ADJOURNMENT
PRESIDENT NEAVE: Ms Bennett.
MS BENNETT: Commissioners, at the end of each hearing week your Counsel Assisting will offer some brief
observations about what we can take from the evidence that we've heard this week and how it connects with the work of the Commission overall.

This week, Commissioners, we heard from four very courageous victim-survivors and I reiterate the thanks of your assisting team that they've shared their experiences with us, and I'd like to begin by revisiting the powerful evidence of those victim-survivors.

The week commenced with the evidence of Ms Kerri Collins, a person whose young life was rocked by the abuse that she suffered at the hands of a teacher. She talked about her first attempt at making a disclosure, first to the school counsellor who created a safe environment for her to make a disclosure. Then to the principal and deputy principal. She was asked to sit on the lap of the deputy principal to show how she was sitting when she was abused. She didn't feel believed by them. She said that the interaction had an impact on her, Commissioners. She said:

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It was really difficult because all of a
sudden you were seen as different, or
other, or a liar ... that was my final year
of primary schoo1 ... not on7y had that in
my formative years of primary school but in
the final years.
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The perpetrator, who we referred to as "John", was present at school the next day. Shortly after, Ms Collins' father and parents of other children who alleged abuse by John went to discuss John's ongoing presence at the school. John did not return after that.

So far as Ms Collins was concerned, there was no further support from the school. Even with the benefit of her supportive home life, Ms Collins had to attend each day of school with the feeling that she was not believed.

She gave her first statement to the police when she was 11. It was in a small, window-less room with a male police officer sitting nearby. She was alone, being too embarrassed to speak about the abuse in the presence of her father.

Ms Collins heard nothing else and did her best to get on with her life. She says she was not told until this
week that the police analysis of the charges at the time was based, in part, on their view that corroboration was a legal requirement for the case to proceed. We heard this week, Commissioners, that it is the current position of the DPP that this view was incorrect at the time.

She heard nothing further until 2001, when police contacted her and asked her to give assistance in giving evidence against John. She gave an account of her abuse to the police for a second time. This time her interaction with police was trauma-informed. The police officer went to her, the environment for the discussion was improved, and she could disclose at her own pace.

John was charged and committed for trial by a magistrate. Not long before the trial was due to commence, the DPP decided not to proceed with the prosecution. The reasons for the decision not to proceed were not clearly communicated to Ms Collins at the time having regard to the impact of her trauma, including the compounding impact of that decision to not proceed.

Her significant disappointment with that decision was overlaid by an urgent concern that John would continue to teach.

What has now become apparent, Commissioners, that is following the decision to discontinue the trial the Department of Education sent a letter to the Teachers Registration Board advocating for John to be permitted to continue teaching. That took place without any analysis or investigation of John's suitability by the Department of Education at the time in 2004. That conduct was condemned in the course of this week, Commissioners, by the current-day Secretary of the Department of Education and the registrar of the Teachers Registration Board.

Ms Collins went to the Teachers Registration Board and was told she would need to attend an in-person hearing with John. Understandably, she was scared of facing her abuser and she was frightened she would be sued for defamation if she "lost".

She contacted a Minister, she engaged a private lawyer, all in a desperate attempt to protect other children. She felt stymied at every turn and, ultimately, she says she gave up. The need to ensure that John was not
permitted to continue to teach, Commissioners, is not a burden Ms Collins should have been asked to bear.

We have now learned from the materials provided by the Teachers Registration Board that Ms Collins' advocacy led to widespread changes to the processes and procedures of that body. Inextricably, Commissioners, those changes did not lead to a re-examination of John's teaching status. Ms Moxham, on behalf of the Teachers Registration Board, described that as "a nasty black stain" and apologised on behalf of the Teachers Registration Board.

Commissioners, Ms Collins did not give up on protecting children. She became a social worker and she started working with children, and she is now a senior social worker with the Department of Education. In that capacity she talked about the inability of her teams to provide proactive care and attention for students who should have it. She told us that they are stretched even in responding to category 1 incidents, that is, critical incidents, for students.

She told the Commission that her staff provide a safety net for students who have no other access to services, including alleged victims of violence, abuse, neglect.

The practical difficulties in accessing the services and support were also described by Ms Collins, including the long drives in rural areas. She talked about the difficulties she has in recruiting staff, including because of the way that leave and entitlements are prioritised.

She said that in her experience there had not been sufficient priority given to the protection of children from child sexual abuse. She talked about her experience of the ARL and the variable response that she had observed. She felt that there was insufficient response to imminent safety issues that she and her staff had raised, leading to her and her staff liaising directly with police. She emphasised that rural staff "got nothing" by way of support.

On Tuesday, Commissioners, we heard from Katrina Munting, who I acknowledge is present in the hearing room today. Ms Munting now teaches at an independent school, but was a student at a public high school in the late

1990s. Ms Munting described herself as a student who was eager to do well at school and to please her teachers. A bright student, she had hopes of being the first person in her family to attend university and she applied herself to her studies accordingly. She had a large group of friends, she loved primary school and the early part of secondary school.

Ms Munting spoke of her contact with a teacher who we referred to as "Peter" in Year 9. She described his relaxed attitude to students and his "very friendly, very familiar way". Looking back now as an adult and as a teacher she regards his interactions with students as concerning and considers that in some respects Peter was canvassing which students may have been "available" to him.

Peter was assigned to assist Ms Munting on a school project and they worked closely together for that project in a confined space. At first, Peter brushed past her in ways that seemed accidental and, over time, the contact became more deliberate. The change was subtle, but Ms Munting came to realise the sexual nature of Peter's behaviour. She was shocked but felt powerless to escape, and Commissioners, the abuse continued for the remainder of Grade 9, including on a school camp.

It continued through Grade 10 and it was about halfway through term two, Commissioners, that a teacher, a senior teacher, took Ms Munting aside during a class in the library. The teacher said that he had noticed that she was spending a lot of time with Peter and that it "wasn't normal". Commissioners, she was horrified that the abuse had been noticed and she felt blamed for it. She ran from the room and cried her eyes out in the toilets, terrified that the abuse was or would become widely known, with dire implications for her marks and aspirations to go to university. Another burden, Commissioners, that no child should be asked to bear.

Ms Munting's anger that the senior teacher had raised the matter with her in class in a way that held her responsible for abuse was palpable. She was later told that around this time someone did speak to Peter and that he wasn't told to stop the abuse, just to "watch himself". In the words of Ms Munting, he was given the message to "keep doing it, just be better, so no-one notices, will you?" And the impact of that on Ms Munting was immense.

Her evidence was this:

> It is beyond devastating, it is beyond mortifying, it is beyond horrific; I can't find a strong enough word to reflect my disdain for the school, for the Education Department, in the way they let me down.

Ultimately, Ms Munting was able to extract herself from the abuse, however she was then taught by Peter in term 3 of Grade 10 and she described his angry and verbally abusive conduct towards her at the time, and she put her head down and got on with things as best she could.

The abuse was some years later reported to the school. Ms Munting told us that neither the school nor the department contacted her parents; not at the time the senior teacher was spoken to, not at the time the abuse was formally reported to the school, not even at the time that Peter was charged and pleaded guilty to criminal charges; not even, Commissioners, when Ms Munting went to the media after amendments were made to section 194 K of the Evidence Act. And, Mr Bullard acknowledged appropriately, in my submission, that this was a failing by the Department of Education.

In 2020, Ms Munting wrote to the Minister for Education at the time seeking a meeting with him, and she wrote, the Commissioners heard, every week for 16 weeks but her request was not granted. She had a meeting with a Deputy Secretary of the legal branch who listened to her account and offered her a personal apology. While she appreciated that apology, it did not satisfy her need for an acknowledgment from the very top of the ways in which the Department of Education failed her. In light of her experiences she regards the government's rhetoric as hollow if it is not accompanied by real change.

Ms Munting also shared with the Commission her powerful suggestions for change from the perspective of a survivor and teacher.

On Wednesday the Commission heard from a person identified as "Rachel". Rachel told the story of how she was groomed and abused by a charismatic teacher at her school in a small community. We refer to him as "Wayne".

Rachel talked about the way that Wayne encouraged her to engage differently outside of school from inside of school. He encouraged her to attend extracurricular activities with him.

Rache1's mother observed some of Wayne's inappropriate behaviour towards her daughter while they were on a trip interstate that was connected with those extra-curricula activities. Rachel told the Commission that what her mother observed was by no means all of the conduct. Indeed, Rachel said that she was confused and that she felt it was her responsibility to protect Wayne. She said:

> I felt in a way [that I needed to] protect him ... that's how I was advocating for him, I was protecting him in the beginning. I was so confused because I was torn; I'm a people-pleaser ... I just wanted it all to go away... and I thought, by not speaking up and saying anything back then it would go away, but it just didn't, it just kept going.

And that confusion contributed, Commissioners, to Rachel's sense of fear and uncertainty when she met with Department of Education investigators. And, I can't summarise any better than the evidence of Rachel herself, Commissioners. She said:

So, there were, from what I remember, two
men in suits in a small office in
school ... it wasn't a safe place for me
reflecting back because $I$ wasn't willing to
come out with anything, but I just felt
like this little person with these men in
suits hovering over the top of me, and
scared, I feared it.
She recalls about four interviews. Her mother came with her to some, at others she did not have her choice of support person present. She said that she could not disclose the full conduct in those circumstances.

She told the Commission that when she went home after each time she spoke with investigators she cried and tried to talk herself into making further disclosures the next time: another burden the child should not have to bear.

Commissioners, Rachel was invited to a "close out" meeting in 2007, two years after her initial complaint. She was shaking as she attended and was told that no breach of the State Service Code of Conduct had been found. She told you of her response:

I was absolutely mortified because I just feel like everything was sitting on deaf ears, but at that stage they only had my mother's version ... I broke down crying and I admitted to them what had actually happened.

She then disclosed substantial detail of her abuse, and she told for the first time that he had kissed her a number of times, he rubbed his hand up her thigh and to her vagina, she talked about him have her suck his finger and put her phone down her pants on vibrate for when he messaged and being shown inappropriate videos at school.

Commissioners, Rache1 left that meeting without knowing what was going to happen next. She went to the police and they asked her to handwrite her complaint, again, in a small room at the police station. She was told it was too late to charge him with an offence related to his conduct.

Rachel believed the Department of Education would at least investigate her allegations. Instead, a few weeks later, she came across a statement in the local newspaper. It read:

The following is an agreed statement between the Department of Education and Wayne.

After an extensive investigation the Department of Education has determined that Wayne has not breached the State Service Act 2000 Code of Conduct. Wayne has been appointed to a position within the department and he took up that position in 2007.

The impact on Rachel was substantial. In a small town she felt disbelieved. She said she wanted to be "under a
rock". She left the town where she was born and where her mother and she had lived their whole lives.

The following year, in 2008, Rachel provided her statement to the Teachers Registration Board and this was a process to which she had very little insight. She met with the TRB and they told her that Wayne would be suspended. She found out later he had successfully appealed.

Throughout the process Rachel felt peripheral, Commissioners. She received no support from the Department of Education, and she described the impact in stark terms. She said:
[Both of my] daughters ... I will not let them go to a state school, I am firm on
that. I have been diagnosed with PTSD, I
have been diagnosed with major depressive disorder, I need sleeping tablets, I have restless legs, I have nightmares, I have flashbacks.

Every sort of relationship that I have had in my life I struggle with. I struggle with trusting people, I struggle with being in a room with men that do have power. My current career is immensely affected by my abuse, I can't handle certain noises, I can't function some days ... I am very fearful of being around too many people, very intimidated if a male challenges me. And, I am so over-protective and hypervigilant of my daughters.

The issues concerning the treatment of Rachel was the subject of further information as the week progressed, Commissioners. Mr Bullard agreed that two years to complete the ED5 investigation into Wayne was too long. He also acknowledged the way the matter was investigated was unacceptable, and he said, Commissioners:

I absolutely accept that part of the impact
that this matter had on Rachel was
compounded by the way in which the matter was investigated and the approach that those investigators took, and I do not accept that we could say that that was in
any way acceptable.
He said:
The Department's response to this was woefully inadequate.

Mr Bullard also acknowledged that, had Rachel's allegations been fully investigated at the time and substantiated, Wayne would not have been allowed near children and that there were significant failings of the systems and processes of the department, including, Commissioners, misrepresentations by the Department of Education to the Teachers Registration Board and to the public about the investigations into Wayne's conduct.

Mr Bullard said there was no evidence that there had been any intention to mislead anyone, including the Regulator. He accepted, however, that there has never been an investigation into that question, and we are therefore unable to reach a conclusion, Commissioners, about how such serious failures occurred.

Ms Moxham confirmed that the TRB received Wayne's application for registration in 2007 and made enquiries with the department about his appropriateness to be registered.

There were various hearings before the Teachers Registration Board and he was ultimately granted a 12-month registration and there was subsequent renewals over time.

In 2021, the Teachers Registration Board was notified that Wayne had been suspended by the department and it became aware of a possible third victim.

On 22 October 2021, the Teachers Registration Board sought advice from the Solicitor-General around legalities of re-opening an investigation into Wayne given the identification of further matters. That advice, we were told by Ms Moxham, has not yet been provided. We understand that Wayne has since resigned.

That chronology, Commissioners, should be the subject of reflection for anyone who would suggest that the matters explored in respect of Wayne were merely of historical interest.

Mr Sam Leishman gave evidence this morning about being sexually abused by Darrel Harington when he was a student at a high school in the late 1970s. He was 12 when the abuse began and he spoke of his shame and concern that he had "done a terrible thing". The abuse was known amongst his peers who bullied and ostracised him, and staff at the school. Echoing evidence given by Ms Munting earlier this week, Mr Leishman gave evidence that he was spoken to by another teacher at the school and made to feel that it was his problem to fix.

It was not until he was in his 40s and became aware of the work of the National Royal Commission that Mr Leishman understood that he had been sexually abused by Darrel Harington. It was the start of a process that saw Mr Leishman share his experience with the National Royal Commission and to engage with Tasmania Police.

His abuser was convicted of multiple offences both in relation to Mr Leishman and others. Mr Leishman described his experience of giving a victim impact statement in the Supreme Court. He said this morning that it was a proud moment and he felt like the biggest person in the room, he felt that as an adult he was able to stand in defence of his 12-year-old self.

We hear his evidence, Commissioners, as a call to this Commission and to the Department of Education to stand up in defence of young children and young people today.

Following the criminal conviction of his abuser, Mr Leishman thought the Department of Education would contact him to enquire about his welfare, and Mr Bullard accepted that this was a reasonable expectation. After waiting some weeks, he sent a letter to the then Education Minister and received a holding response just before Christmas of 2015. He expected to hear further in the New Year.

Commissioners, he waited until May 2016 before Mr Leishman sent another letter. He was feeling unsupported by the response, both to his written communication and to his very reasonable attempts to gain access to information to help him piece together what had happened.

Responding to Mr Leishman, Mr Bullard said this, this morning:

> Mr Leishman's courage in revealing the betrayal of trust that happened to him as a result of an association that was made while he was in one of our schools is very confronting to hear, but then the barriers that existed when he came forward with an expectation that he would seek and receive support or acknowledgment from the Department of Education also makes me feel very disappointed and ... I'm very sorry for that.

In terms of the work ahead, Mr Leishman expressed his dismay at the tendency to regard Tasmania's size and isolation as a downside and to look to other states for solutions in a piecemeal way.

He went on to say:

> I sometimes think, well, why do we look at it like that? Why can't we look at Tasmania as being a small, isolated state and that's actually our advantage? We are small, we can set the standards, and we can be the one that says, this is the benchmark that everyone else has to meet, and we can do that because we're small and because we're isolated. There's no reason why we can't do things better here than the rest of the country.

Mr Bullard agreed that the small size of the Tasmanian State Service meant that it could be agile when it approaches matters with the urgency and importance that they deserve. And, Commissioners, it is difficult to imagine a matter of greater urgency or importance than that of making schools a safe place for all students.

We now move to the witnesses who have given evidence in an exclusively expert or professional capacity. We heard on Monday afternoon from Professors McCormack and Smallbone who had been commissioned to carry out an inquiry into the Department of Education's response to child sexual abuse.

They explored the kinds of issues they found in the course of their review, including the substantial difficulties with records and the delicate balance between permitting proper discretion to principals and avoiding an ad hoc approach that leaves child safety to chance. They spoke of the natural gravitational pull back to the interests of adults when dealing with allegations of sexual abuse and the need for the best interests of children to be embedded in the responses to allegations of sexual abuse.

We heard in the afternoon from Ignatius Kim, a Senior Mental Health Nurse at CAMHS. He spoke of the enormous impact of betrayal trauma which can arise where an institution not only fails to protect children in its care but also responds to their disclosures in a way that is not trauma-informed.

Conversely, his evidence, Commissioners, was that when a trauma-informed response is on display there can be a positive healing experience for children.

Mr Kim also acknowledged the work and commitment of those who operate the ARL, but spoke as well of the real structural problems within that service.

On Tuesday, the Commissioners heard from Ms Pepper, a representative of SASS, who identified a range of training supports that they have developed. She explained that SASS often receives requests for advice from schools about how to respond to harmful sexual behaviours. She said that SASS provides different categories of support, including therapeutic supports and training supports.

The appetite for training around these issues is, Commissioners, telling. These are issues which are of increasing significance and it appears that there is not yet enough in the way of training and support around these matters at a school level. What training there is, Commissioners, appears to us at this stage to be piecemeal.

This was reinforced later on Tuesday in a panel comprised of individuals working on the ground in student-facing roles. In that session the Commissioners will recall that Mr Russell, a teacher of long experience, talked powerfully about his experience in attempting to manage the aftermath of an incident of harmful sexual
behaviour in his classroom. He talked about how the conduct arose and how a serious sexual assault was preceded by challenging conduct, but the practice of keeping children in the classroom at all times left few options for the teachers as the child's behaviour escalated.

He talked about the impact on him of not being able to guarantee the safety of the children in the classroom and that impact being in addition to the impact on the victim, the perpetrator, and the rest of the class.

He described returning months later to a classroom where there were the two groups of boys separated: those who had supported the perpetrators, those who had not, and in an image which I cannot get out of my mind, Commissioners, there were the girls grouped together taking refuge at a table in the front of the class, the safest part of the room.

Ms Carter is a principal who spoke about an incident of harmful sexual behaviour where she felt that at the time there were no clear policies or procedures to assist her in how to respond. She said that very recently there have been some policies and procedures in relation to these issues. Ms Carter was, in our submission, an example of the positive impact that school leaders can have on improving responses to these difficult issues.

Ms Drake is a social worker in the north west region who provides support to around 38 schools. She described how her peers are spread thin attempting to respond to the issues raised in relation to child welfare, including child sexual abuse.

The panel observed there were a number of systemic flaws in the education system from their perspective. They reinforced the lack of utility in the current computer system, noting it was cumbersome and ill-suited to dynamic record-keeping. They observed that it did not enable links to be made between multiple complaints against a single teacher. Ms Carter said that she had stretched her school budget to afford a social worker; first, half a day a fortnight, then one day a fortnight.

Xris Reardon, the LGBTIQA+ Lead Schools Inclusion Coordinator at Working It Out gave evidence about the particular concerns that can arise for students who
identify as LGBTIQA+. They spoke about the additional barriers to safety that these children can face, of the way that harassment of queer and gender diverse kids are sometimes "written off" as curiosities. Xris explained that inclusive schools are safer environments for LGBTIQA+ students and all students.

Mr Smith of the Australian Education Union gave evidence about the issues of child sexual abuse and discipline from the perspective of the union. He agreed that the first issue is the child, but noted the role of the union is to support members to assert their right to natural justice and fair process.

Mr Smith's attention was drawn to a letter of support that the AEU sent to the Teachers Registration Board in support of Wayne in 2009. The letter said in part:
[We, the Australian Education Union] are confident from the evidence that the board can be satisfied that Wayne has learned his lesson and will not re-offend in the future.

The AEU accepted that this sort of advocacy on behalf of an educator accused of child sexual abuse was entirely inappropriate and gave an assurance it would not happen again.

Following this, we had the benefit of hearing about how other jurisdictions, such as South Australia and Victoria, had grappled with the challenge of fairly balancing child safety with the rights of employees whose conduct has come into question. We were assured that these concepts need not be seen as mutually exclusive.

Implementation of the recommendations of the 2012 Debelle Inquiry in South Australia has profoundly shaped the culture and practice of that state's Education Department as it relates to child safety. Ms Girvin's evidence about the impact of the review was powerful, passionate and urgent. She spoke about the specialist unit and procedures that were established to provide a robust and clear process where issues of child sexual abuse are raised.

Ms Sanders spoke with equal force about Victoria's

Reportable Conduct Scheme, which provides their Commissioner for Children and Young People with broad powers to monitor and oversee how institutions engaging with children, including schools, respond to allegations of Reportable Conduct, including sexual misconduct and abuse.

We heard from them both about what good investigations look like; the importance of centring and listening to children within the process, and the process being fair and transparent to employees and volunteers, but flexible and responsive enough to properly manage risks to children.

They reminded us, Commissioners, that the priority of these processes are to be protective rather than punitive.

Mr Tim Bullard gave evidence on Wednesday afternoon, Thursday morning and earlier today. He acknowledged the courageous evidence given by former students in relation to abuse they had suffered while in the care of the department. He apologised for the abuse and the various ways in which the department's responses had compounded their suffering.

Although steps have been taken in recent times to improve the department's response, Mr Bullard frankly acknowledged capacity issues in relation to independent investigations and suggested there would be merit in the creation of a centralised Investigations Unit to conduct Code of Conduct investigations across the State Service.

Mr Bullard gave evidence about the experience of the operation of the State Service Code of Conduct and the way it interacted with ED5 investigations.

At a high level, it may be said that an ED5 is an investigation process that is designed to facilitate a determination by the Secretary of the question of whether an employee has breached the Code of Conduct. Mr Bullard's evidence is that the ED5 process requires significant modification to deal effectively with issues related to child sexual abuse.

Commissioners, it may be the evidence suggests that it is not a process that is fit for purpose if the purpose is protecting children.

Mr Bullard said that the custom and practice has been
that section $9(4)$ of the Code of Conduct is engaged when there has been a finding of a breach of Australian law as found by a court, and when it was suggested that it might be engaged where he is satisfied that there has been a breach of Australian law on the balance of probabilities, Mr Bullard said it hadn't come up and he would need to seek advice if that issue arose.

The evidence of Mr Bullard as it relates to the case studies highlighted a range of deficiencies in the department's handling of child sexual abuse allegations in the past. The extent to which those deficiencies have been addressed in a sustained way at a systems level is, in our submission, open to question.

When asked what system changes had been made in relation to investigations, he said that all investigations are now independent, but conceded there were no formal changes to ensure a gender balance or evidence of trauma-informed practice by those carrying out the investigations, although these are the matters which he gave evidence are under active discussion.

He identified further changes that he said had taken place to ensure that what was captured by the phrase "in the course of employment" was expanded, and he pointed in this respect to expanded definitions in departmental policy. He spoke of a general direction to raise issues of concern with him directly. He said that he had a clear expectation that he had communicated to staff that all complaints would be directed to him through the Workplace Relations Unit and escalated to him personally. He said there would be additional training.

Mr Bullard accepted that these changes were dependent upon his personal commitment, and while this Commission no doubt welcomes and supports that commitment, it is a matter that needs to be embedded and systematised. And, in our submission, that's a matter that was properly acknowledged by Mr Bullard.

Mr Bullard said that in the past there had been a tendency to look to external bodies to determine fitness to teach, but that he now takes no signal from an external body, and he takes responsibility for decisions himself.

In the course of some further case examples,

Mr Bullard accepted additional issues and failings in. In relation to the matter of Jeremy, there were boundary breaches that went unrecorded in 2012 and, when there had been further conduct in 2016, there was no record on the school systems of the course of conduct.

In the case of Brad, again a pseudonym, there was very concerning conduct that evolved to become more overt over time. This conduct took place over 2018, 2019 and 2020, and it went undetected, Commissioners, because of a lack of systems to record the conduct. Brad was a relief teacher who was entitled to keep teaching because his name was on the register of relief teachers. The part of the Department of Education that was dealing with the individual issues as they arose did not know that he could be removed from that register. As a relief teacher, he was not susceptible to an ED5, so there was simply no sanction and his entitlement to teach went on uninterrupted. This is a recent example, Commissioners, of the way in which the system failings continue until recently.

Mr Bullard further noted that it was his understanding that the Personal Information Protection Act prevented disclosure of all relevant information to the TRB and Working with Vulnerable People register. He talked about a work-around, being that people were interviewed and at the time of their interview were told that their statement would be or might be provided to the Teachers Registration Board or other body. The evidence of Ms Moxham casts doubt on the efficacy of that work-around, and this is an issue to which we anticipate inviting you to return, Commissioners.

Mr Bullard frankly acknowledged that the ED5 process was not best practice and that it had at times fallen short of community standards expectations. He said that there remain improvements for the department around culture, the provision of support for children, and a further emphasis on training.

On Thursday afternoon, the registrar of the Teachers Registration Board, Ann Moxham, gave evidence that the board's ability to regulate for the welfare and best interests of students was hampered. The factors that she identified included restrictions on what information could be shared with the board under its own Act, as well as what she perceived to be restrictive interpretations of the

PIP Act, and the Commissioners will know that that characterisation was a matter with which Mr Bullard took issue earlier today.

Ms Moxham also said that resourcing and staff issues made it difficult for the board to fulfil its role. She described as "scary" the fact that the board was unable to adequately keep track of the location of particular relief teachers where they were teaching on any given day due to gaps in its legislation. There were a range of other concerning matters raised by Ms Moxham in her evidence.

Commissioners, you then heard from a panel of plaintiff lawyers, Mr Warren Strange and Ms Angela Sdrinis, and they talked about the options available to victim-survivors, including the National Redress Scheme and civil litigation. They emphasised the importance of having options available as the adversarial system can be "blunt and cruel" for survivors. They expressed their concern that the National Redress Scheme is due to end in 2028.

Both Mr Strange and Ms Sdrinis emphasised how important it is that these legal processes are trauma-informed. They reminded us that when survivors make claims against these institutions which are responsible for the abuse they have experienced, dealing with these institutions can re-trigger their trauma experiences.

While both witnesses agreed and accepted that institutions have right to make legal arguments to defend their matters, they can elect to do so in more trauma-informed ways or less trauma-informed ways. Indeed, we heard that the model litigant guidelines, which apply to the Tasmanian Government when defending child sexual abuse claims, are broadly consistent with trauma-informed practice.

Ms Sdrinis recounted some disturbing examples where the Office of the Solicitor General had perhaps elected to be more adversarial and less trauma-informed when adopting technical and legalistic arguments to defend claims.

Mr Bullard this morning said these were matters entirely within the determination of the Office of the Solicitor General. He said that even where he or his office were a defendant in the matter, he could not instruct lawyers with carriage of the matter to take a
particular approach, even if that approach were, in his view, in the interests of victim-survivors.

Both Ms Sdrinis and Mr Strange gave evidence of their opinion that it is fundamentally important for the Tasmanian Government to be advised, rather than directed by its lawyers, in their actions as it takes the actions and steps that it takes in civil litigation and Civil Redress.

In our last session for the week, Commissioners, we heard from Professor Walsh from the School of Early Childhood and Inclusive Education at the Queensland University of Technology. Professor Walsh was joined by Ms Jack, the executive director Safeguarding Children and Young People at the Department of Education. Ms Jack's role has been created to lead the department's response to the report of Professors Smallbone and McCormack.

The evidence led in this session focused on the importance of mandatory prevention education in school curriculums as well as mandatory Protective Practices training for school staff.

Professor Walsh spoke of the potential benefits of specialist portfolios to recognise and reward the expertise involved in safeguarding children. Ms Jack said the school Safeguarding Officer roles that are to be created in response to the education report might fill this role.

She also heard about the need for appropriate training. We also heard, Commissioners, about the need for appropriate training and support to assist schools to respond to harmful sexual behaviours within schools.

Commissioners, in due course consideration will need to be given to a range of findings which might arise out of the vast body of materials that are before you. At this stage, we propose to identify only some of the most immediately apparent issues which may arise from the evidence that has been high1ighted this week and they are not exhaustive.

But these matters are urgent, Commissioners. We want to give some notice of what, in our submission, is available as a preliminary position before further information or proposed findings are provided in due course.

As we set out at the start of this week, we are focused on the role of the Tasmanian Government in preventing, identifying and reporting and responding to child sexual abuse. We are not seeking to make findings about any criminal responsibility of any individuals; those are properly matters for the police and the courts.

But in relation to the various case studies, it appears to us, Commissioners, as a preliminary position that it is open to this Commission to find that the Department of Education failed to properly respond to or investigate the complaints made by Rache1 in 2007; that the Department of Education took too long to investigate the allegations and complaints by Rachel; that it misled the Teachers Registration Board and the public by implying or stating that investigations brought to its attention about Wayne had been fully investigated when there were a number of outstanding matters that it had not investigated.

In relation to Ms Collins, it is open to find that there were a range of failings, including that the Department of Education failed to provide support to Ms Collins either as a child when allegations were made or following the commencement of legal proceedings in 2001; that the letter from the Department of Education to the Teachers Registration Board in October 2004 urging the registration of John was entirely improper; that the Teachers Registration Board's registration of John and dismissal of the concerns of Ms Collins is properly described as a "black stain" on the record of the Teachers Registration Board. It is a monstrous failing, Commissioners. It's open to find, I should say.

In relation to Brad, the Department of Education inappropriately failed to remove Brad from the register of relief teachers after being notified on multiple occasions that there had been concerns about his conduct related to children.

In relation to Mr Leishman, there was a failure to proactively provide support after the Department of Education became aware that he had suffered child sexual abuse while a student, and that communications with him were unjustifiably delayed. It may be open, Commissioners, to make the same findings in relation to the response of the department to the matters raised by Ms Munting.

We anticipate that, following further review of documents and other materials and consideration of any submissions which may be made by the Department of Education, there may be further or different findings that the Commissioners feel it's appropriate to make.

We feel it appropriate at the same time to identify other areas for concern that it might be the Commissioners instruct us to return. The Teachers Registration Board, for example, appears to believe it is underfunded and under-staffed to carry out its duties as they relate to the intersection of teacher regulation and protecting children from child sexual abuse.

It may be, Commissioners, that the Teachers Registration Board lacks the legislative power to adequately ensure that teachers who pose a risk to students and do not comply with the Teachers Registration Act are appropriately penalised.

It may be the Teachers Registration Board feels it is fettered by the interpretation or operation of the Teachers Registration Act and the Personal Information Protection Act as they apply to the provision of information by the Department of Education to the Teachers Registration Board.

We also expect to return to the issues surrounding the question of whether the Department of Education fails to provide all of its investigative material to the Teachers Registration Board and whether, if that is the case, that impedes the Teachers Registration Board in carrying out its functions in a trauma-informed way or at all.

We recognise, and applaud, that Mr Bullard accepted that there had been multiple failures by the Department of Education over time, particularly prior to him being Secretary. We also recognise that he has specifically identified opportunities for improvement, and we heard from Mr Bullard about the leadership he is seeking to exercise and the culture he is trying to build within the department, and we welcome and we anticipate that the Commissioners welcome a commitment to a child-centric approach.

At the same time, as I noted earlier, we are concerned that many of the changes depend upon the leadership of a
particular Secretary, and Mr Bullard acknowledged this risk. We will continue to consider whether and how fundamental change within the department can be embedded in a way that does not rely on one or more key individuals in a context of a large organisation with perpetual success session. This is a particularly important matter in light of the recently announced merger of the Department of Education and the Department of Communities.

Commissioners, we will continue to consider more broadly the other matters that have arisen this week, including the role of the Office of the Solicitor-General and issues which arise where it provides the sole source of advice to Tasmanian Government departments and agencies, as well as its role in the conduct of civil litigation; the role of the ARL and the Child Safety Service in receiving, reporting and responding to notifications that could trigger concern over institutional child sexual abuse, and whether that system is fit for purpose; the flow of information generally between organisations tasked with carrying out regulatory oversight functions within Tasmania; and impediments to keeping children safe from child sexual abuse due to limitations that might be imposed or read into information sharing between Tasmanian Government departments and agencies.

We will continue to ask whether the current disciplinary processes provide a framework for departments with responsibility for children to take appropriate action in relation to the actions of relevant state servants, and we will continue to consider the difficulties faced by victim-survivors in obtaining information from different government bodies in relation to their disclosures, investigations into those disclosures, and the action or lack of action against the alleged perpetrator of the abuse. Underscoring this in all of our enquiries, Commissioners, will be, "Does it help?", and, "Does it help on a human level?"

Commissioners, this week we heard from victim-survivors who generously and courageously shared their terrible experiences that have changed their lives. We have also heard how, through their careers and advocacy, they have sought to make a difference and to keep children safe.

We also heard of a commitment by the Secretary and the
department to improving policies, procedures and culture. We will continue to examine and consider that commitment, how it manifests in laws, policies and procedures, and how all of these are implemented in reality so that any improvements endure.

If the Commission please.
PRESIDENT NEAVE: Thank you very much, Ms Bennett.
AT 4.00PM THE COMMISSION WAS ADJOURNED TO
TUESDAY, 14 JUNE 2022 AT 10.00AM


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