

## Responses to Questions on Notice or further information agreed to be supplied at the hearings

Witness	Minister Gabrielle Williams and Elly Patira
Committee member	Danny O'Brien
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### Question

**Danny O'BRIEN:** Minister, page 50 in the DPC questionnaire shows that \$7 million was repurposed from the Treaty Authority in 2022–23 to support:

... Meeting the State's legal requirements to enter Treaty negotiations in 2023–24 ...

and the First Peoples' Assembly. Was any of that \$7 million used to prepare the government for hearings with the Yoorrook commission?

**Gabrielle WILLIAMS:** Not to my knowledge, Mr O'Brien. I think that funding is about, effectively, funding for the First Peoples' Assembly in the next stage, which is the commencement of treaty negotiations from the end of the year.

**Danny O'BRIEN:** No, it was funding for the Treaty Authority that was repurposed.

**Gabrielle WILLIAMS:** Yes. But the funding is going to the First Peoples' Assembly to prepare for treaty negotiation.

**Danny O'BRIEN:** Okay. So none of it was used for government legal fees then?

**Gabrielle WILLIAMS:** Not that I aware of, no.

**Danny O'BRIEN:** How much did the government spend to prepare for the Yoorrook commission's hearings earlier in the year?

**Gabrielle WILLIAMS:** Bear with me.

**Danny O'BRIEN:** I note, while you are looking for it, that the commission itself was very critical of the government's delays, which forced them to reshuffle hearings because the government just was not ready.

**Gabrielle WILLIAMS:** I think that is a somewhat inaccurate construction of the reasons behind the criticism. I take absolute ownership, as does the government as a whole, of the criticisms that were levelled about delays in providing documents, particularly out of the Department of Justice and Community Safety. Now, the reason for those delays, as explained in the directions hearing, was that there was a very large volume of documents requested, which took extra time to be able to deliver.

**Danny O'BRIEN:** Thank you for clarifying. That actually was not the question.

**Gabrielle WILLIAMS:** Apologies were issued, as they rightly should have been, and in the end all documents were provided as requested by the commission.

**Danny O'BRIEN:** Do you have the data I have asked for?

**Gabrielle WILLIAMS:** The Deputy Secretary might want to add to that.

**Elly PATIRA:** In the 2021–22 state budget there was \$13 million allocated over four years to support the government’s response to Yoorrook commission. That includes the entire resourcing for legal fees. So there were not any additional resourcing requirements to meet the state’s obligations in terms of responding to Yoorrook Justice Commission. It falls within that \$13 million application.

**Danny O’BRIEN:** Can you tell me how much of that has currently been expended?

**Elly PATIRA:** I can tell you it has been expended year on year. In 2020–21 there was \$517,000 allocated; in 2021–22, \$4.249 million allocated. In terms of expenditure, I can take that on notice.

**Danny O’BRIEN:** Sorry, I thought you said 2021–22 there was \$13 million allocated. Did I misunderstand?

**Elly PATIRA:** In that state budget over four years.

**Danny O’BRIEN:** Right. And there had been money prior to that allocated – the \$517,000?

**Elly PATIRA:** That is correct.

**Danny O’BRIEN:** If you could provide a breakdown on notice for us on what has been spent and what it has been spent on by classification, that would be wonderful. Thank you.

**Answer:**

Of the funding allocated to supporting the government’s response to the Yoorrook Justice Commission (Commission), a total \$396,838 net expenditure has been incurred for legal fees up until 7 June 2023 for the financial years 2021-22 and 2022-23.

Please note that expenses reflect the invoices received from the Victorian Government Solicitor’s Office up until 7 June 2023.