

PUBLIC ACCOUNTS AND ESTIMATES COMMITTEE

Inquiry into the 2026–27 Budget Estimates

Melbourne – Thursday 21 May 2026

MEMBERS

Sarah Connolly – Chair

John Pesutto – Deputy Chair

Jade Benham

Michael Galea

Mathew Hilakari

Lauren Kathage

Aiv Puglielli

Richard Riordan

Meng Heang Tak

WITNESSES

Anthony Carbines MP, Minister for Police;

Emma Cassar, Secretary,

Bill Kyriakopoulos, Deputy Secretary, Community Safety, Victims and Racing, and

Nicola Quin, Chief Operating Officer, Department of Justice and Community Safety; and

Mike Bush, Chief Commissioner of Police, and

Karl Kent, Deputy Secretary, Corporate Services, Victoria Police.

The CHAIR: I declare open this hearing of the Public Accounts and Estimates Committee. I ask that mobile telephones please be turned to silent.

On behalf of the Parliament, the committee is conducting this Inquiry into the 2026–27 Budget Estimates. The committee's aim is to scrutinise public administration and finance to improve outcomes for the Victorian community.

I advise that all evidence taken by the committee is protected by parliamentary privilege. However, comments you repeat outside this hearing may not be protected by this privilege.

All evidence given today is being recorded by Hansard, and it is broadcast live on the Parliament's website. The broadcast includes automated captioning. Members and witnesses should be aware that all microphones are live during the hearings and anything you say, even if you say it quietly, can be picked up.

As Chair I expect that committee members will be respectful towards witnesses, the Victorian community joining the hearing via the live stream and other committee members.

Witnesses will be provided with a proof version of the transcript to check. Verified transcripts, presentations and handouts will be placed on the committee's website.

I welcome the Minister for Police the Honourable Anthony Carbines and the Chief Commissioner of Victoria Police, as well as officials from DJCS. Minister, I invite you to make an opening statement or presentation of no more than 5 minutes, after which time committee members will ask you some questions. Your time starts now.

Anthony CARBINES: Thanks very much, Chair and committee members. I would like to begin by acknowledging the traditional owners of the land on which we are gathered, the Wurundjeri people of the Kulin nation, and pay my respects to their elders, past and present. I would like to extend that acknowledgement to any Aboriginal people with us today.

I have alongside me of course Chief Commissioner Mike Bush, who is nearly a year into his term and who is making outstanding progress on his plan to get more officers on the beat, which the government fully supports; and I would like to acknowledge the DJCS officials here today and members of the committee.

Visual presentation.

Anthony CARBINES: Backing the men and women of Victoria Police and improving community safety is a top priority for our government. Since coming to office we have invested \$5 billion into Victoria Police to ensure it has the resources and tools required to keep Victorians safe. I am pleased to inform the committee that this includes important initiatives in this year's budget which will support the Chief Commissioner's plan to boost police frontline presence. The 2026–27 budget provides a \$62 million investment for up to 200 reservists, who will be deployed to operate police counters and perform other administrative roles. The government is also backing Victoria Police recruitment efforts and is providing police with the funding needed to attract high-quality candidates into Victoria Police careers. In 2025–26 the Victorian government invested over \$7 million in Victoria Police recruitment programs. This included \$4 million for the Made for More recruitment campaign to raise awareness around the diversity of roles with the organisation. The figures speak for themselves, with

8700 applications last year – a five-year record – resulting in a full police academy which is training 1300 new recruits each year. Victoria Police continues to be the largest police service in the country, as detailed on the slide.

The 2026–27 budget also demonstrates our commitment to investing in modern policing technology. Protective services officers play a critical role in keeping us safe. The visible presence they provide is greatly valued by the community. The budget is building this workforce further by investing \$44.8 million in an additional 50 PSOs. Victoria Police will be able to deploy those PSOs for longer hours at priority train stations and other designated places in response to major events. The additional investment will optimise the use of police resources by ensuring there is flexibility to deploy PSOs where they are needed most. An operation to deploy PSOs to major shopping centres, Operation Pulse, is also underway to reduce crime and provide assurance to the community. Again, the figures speak for themselves. In less than six months Operation Pulse has seen over 1000 arrests and more than 2000 charges laid. Operation Pulse has delivered strong results in enhancing community safety, with a 73 per cent drop in retail theft, stock losses, and a 50 per cent drop in violent incidents. At one centre 84 per cent of customers surveyed felt safe with the police and PSOs attending. Following the success, Operation Pulse has now been extended until 31 December this year, with an additional \$6.54 million in funding, bringing the total funding for the operation to \$8.84 million.

There are further initiatives in the budget which will build Victoria Police capacity and strengthen its ability to reduce crime and improve community safety. This year the funding provided focuses on key areas: intervening early to prevent young people from entering the justice system, enhancing frontline technology so police can spend more time focused on keeping the community safe, investing in police resources and custody facilities to support our courts and the implementation of our new tough bail laws. This includes doubling the number of prosecutors at the new Wyndham law courts.

The Victorian government continues to support Victoria Police with both the resources and powers it needs to target high-harm crime, with a focus on youth offending and organised crime. The Victoria Police gang crime squad remains committed to dismantling organised crime syndicates, including those in the illicit tobacco industry and those causing significant harm through violence and arson attacks. In April VicPol launched a specialist taskforce within Operation Eclipse as a targeted response to organised crime syndicates behind recent arson attacks against hospitality and other venues, and just last week I announced an additional \$5 million to boost the state command and coordination centre, which provides support to Operation Eclipse with real-time monitoring of CCTV footage. The VIPER Taskforce provides a statewide tactical investigative response to serious and organised crime, including youth gangs and their associated networks. The banning of machetes has also helped reduce dangerous weapons on our streets, supporting our police to keep our community safe. So far this year police have seized almost 5000 knives, building on last year's record of over 17,400 knife seizures.

The Victorian government has recognised the need to support police members, who are often exposed to traumatic events in the course of their work, and the BlueHub program ensures police have access to independent and timely mental health treatment delivered by clinicians with expertise in treating trauma and familiar with the work and culture of police. Thank you, Chair.

The CHAIR: Thank you very much, Minister. We are going to the Deputy Chair.

John PESUTTO: Good afternoon, Minister and senior officials. Minister, today there are reports that an application has been launched in the Supreme Court of Victoria to block the release of IBAC's long-awaited investigation Operation Richmond. As you know, IBAC reports do involve police from time to time in terms of prosecutions. Can you first of all confirm for this committee that the Victorian government is not the plaintiff or applicant in that application to block the release of that report?

Anthony CARBINES: I would say to the Deputy Chair that IBAC matters are not matters for me. They are not in my purview, as the responsible minister is the Attorney-General or the Special Minister of State, and you should direct your questions there.

John PESUTTO: But, Minister, your portfolio responsibilities are relevant to the release of that report. Can you advise the committee who is the applicant or the plaintiff in that proceeding if not the Victorian government?

Anthony CARBINES: I draw your attention to the administrative orders, and IBAC is not in my purview or responsibility as the Minister for Police. It is an independent agency. There is a very good reason why Victoria Police and my portfolio responsibilities do not include independent oversight bodies. It would be foolish for me to have oversight of IBAC and also have responsibility for Victoria Police.

John PESUTTO: I am not asking whether you have got oversight, but, Minister, you are responsible for the administration of the law.

Members interjecting.

The CHAIR: Excuse me. Deputy Chair, you have a question. The minister has just answered your question. And may I remind you, Mr Riordan, it is not an invitation to start acting silly. It is too early in the day still. Now, Deputy Chair, you can afford the minister the opportunity to respond to your question, and you will have the opportunity to speak with the Attorney-General tomorrow, if you have bothered to look at the agenda.

Anthony CARBINES: If I could just conclude my answer on this matter –

John PESUTTO: Minister, you are responsible –

The CHAIR: Excuse me, Deputy Chair. I just said seconds ago: allow the minister the opportunity to respond. You asked the question. You are asking the same question. Allow him to respond to it. Thank you. The minister to proceed.

Anthony CARBINES: Thanks, Chair. The Independent Broad-based Anti-corruption Commission is also a venue where people can make complaints about Victoria Police. It is absolutely appropriate that I do not have oversight of IBAC, because people make complaints to an independent oversight body, sometimes in relation to Victoria Police. So it would be totally inappropriate for me to have oversight of that body as well.

John PESUTTO: Minister, are you concerned as the minister, in effect, responsible for the administration of the law in this state that a report that began nearly a decade ago is being blocked from release? Do you not have a concern that that report should be released? Do you support the release of the report?

Anthony CARBINES: I am happy to answer any questions that relate to Victoria Police that you have.

John PESUTTO: You do not have a view on it?

The CHAIR: Excuse me, Deputy Chair.

John PESUTTO: Okay. We will move on. Minister, your government has a benchmark of 88.3 per cent in police attending 000 calls. I refer to the performance statement. Given police shortages, how many Victorians did not have their 000 calls to police answered?

Anthony CARBINES: You went to two matters. You went to police shortages and you went to 000. What I can assure the committee and all Victorians is that police in Victoria provide a 24/7 emergency response to all those who call 000. You can also call the police assistance line on 131 444 if it is not an emergency but you require police assistance, or you can use the online reporting arrangements that allow people to make reports to Victoria Police.

John PESUTTO: Do you have any data on how many people did not have their 000 calls to police answered, and if you do not have it now, can you undertake to provide it to this committee?

Anthony CARBINES: No. Victoria Police provided 24/7 –

John PESUTTO: You are refusing to provide the data?

Anthony CARBINES: Emergency Management Victoria is not under my purview either. I make it clear to you that Victoria Police –

John PESUTTO: What are you responsible for?

The CHAIR: Excuse me!

Anthony CARBINES: Victoria Police provide a 24/7 emergency response to all Victorians, and Victorians know that and the police respond.

John PESUTTO: Call, and you get a call back in 24 hours; is that what that means?

Anthony CARBINES: That is never the case.

John PESUTTO: Minister, under the mental health Act police must accompany the person to hospital and remain with them until they are seen by a medical professional. How many hours have been lost to police attending mental health-related calls rather than criminal matters?

Anthony CARBINES: Again, I see that you are going to the mental health Act, which is the responsibility of the Minister for Mental Health. In relation to Victoria Police matters can I say that Victoria Police provide security and support to all Victorians around community safety, and we make sure that when people seek Victoria Police attendance for emergencies they get a response from Victoria Police. We work very closely with Ambulance Victoria and our hardworking paramedics to make sure that those in dire need get the health responses that they need, and also, as we have seen in the community, to support our hardworking ambos by making sure they have community safety support from Victoria Police where people need that support.

John PESUTTO: Minister, how many times a day, on average, do police respond to a mental health call?

Anthony CARBINES: Victoria Police members respond to all calls for service, particularly 000 calls, and they respond to support Ambulance Victoria paramedics who work hard to keep them safe treating vulnerable people in our community.

John PESUTTO: Minister, how much does this cost the taxpayer? Each time police are required to transport and wait with those individuals requiring assistance, how much has it cost this year overall?

Anthony CARBINES: You cannot put a price on community safety. The Chief Commissioner would know, as I do, that Victoria Police members provide support and community safety to all Victorians when they need it most. The royal commission into mental health, a royal commission that has been supported in full by our government – and multibillions of dollars have been provided by our government to support vulnerable people in our community – has made sure, particularly around recommendation 10, that we advance the interests of ensuring that people in dire need of medical treatment do not just get a justice response when people call for support and assistance but they get a coordinated response to keep our paramedics safe to ensure they can provide the health responses that people in critical conditions need, but they can do so safely and be transported to hospital.

John PESUTTO: Minister, how many police spent more than 6 hours of their shift supervising these individuals?

Anthony CARBINES: You are conflating the difference between Victoria Police members keeping paramedics safe, keeping health workers in emergency departments safe and making sure that those who are in critical need of health care get that health care and are not a harm to themselves or a harm to the community.

John PESUTTO: There is no conflation, Minister. The issue is: under your watch do we have enough police out there keeping Victorians safe in the face of home invasions, carjackings and machete attacks? That is the issue. Will you address that, please?

Anthony CARBINES: Well, your question went to how we support mental health patients in the community, and we make sure we keep our health workers safe, those who need medical attention safe and those who care for them safe. That is the role Victoria Police play. They do it 24/7 and they do it extremely well.

The CHAIR: Thank you, Deputy Chair. We are going to go to Ms Kathage.

Lauren KATHAGE: Thank you very much, Chair, Minister and officials. Can I just start by correcting the claims of the Deputy Chair regarding the performance measure for dispatched police and explain to him that that is the number of dispatches, and it is based on how many calls for assistance are received. So I just want to make sure that that is very clear for everybody.

Now, Minister, I do also want to talk about supporting frontline police and what we are doing in that regard. Looking at pages 5 and 6 of BP3 and the investment that is set out there for 200 police reservists, which I understand is intended to ensure that frontline police can actually be on the front line, can you outline how this investment is designed to achieve that?

Anthony CARBINES: Thanks very much, Member for Yan Yean. As I mentioned earlier during my presentation, the government fully backs the Chief Commissioner's plan for a new-look Victoria Police and one which has more officers out from behind desks driving divvy vans instead. One of the key parts of delivering that is creating a modern, fit-for-purpose reservist scheme that will see former police officers come back to Victoria Police to provide administrative support. These are former and experienced officers who will have great institutional knowledge of the organisation, who will be willing to come back and support their former colleagues, with highly trained police officers that they will support to get out on the front line and free to respond to calls for service. Those that apply to become a police reservist will need to have at least two years of prior service. They will complete a short refresher and induction course before being deployed as the Chief Commissioner sees fit. When on duty, police reservists will have general duties and the powers of a constable at common law and may perform non-operational duties such as, but not limited to, tasks to support the commencement of an investigation; assisting with public inquiries; and other front-counter duties at police stations, such as taking crime reports at the front counter or over the phone.

Analysis by Victoria Police shows that officers spend some 4000 hours a day behind a reception counter or a desk, and it is my view that those 4000 hours per day would be better spent out in the community, in the vans, walking the pavements and responding to calls for service. That is what reservists will make possible. Police reservists will be able to be appointed on a part-time, full-time, fixed-term or ongoing basis. Victoria Police want to provide flexible working arrangements, as some who apply will be coming out of retirement to serve. Once again, it is important that their living arrangements are also taken into account. It is a new scheme, and it is made possible with this year's budget investment of some \$62 million to recruit these 200 reservists. I am pleased to report that Victoria Police has so far already received very positive expressions of interest from those wanting to rejoin the service – over 400, in fact. I am pleased to inform the committee of those 400 or 450 former officers that have expressed an interest in rejoining the service; it is an exceptional response received within just a week of the EOIs opening.

Members of the committee will know that this is not a new idea. Police reservists were first introduced in the 1950s, with the last reservist appointed in the 1990s. Those reservists did valuable work for Victoria Police. The role was never fully utilised to provide an essential administrative support that would see more officers deployed to the front line. That is why we have provided this funding, and it is why I have introduced legislation that will ensure the new reservist scheme is modern and fit for purpose by putting in place the appropriate legal framework. Legislation clarifies the roles and responsibilities of reservists and makes the important distinction between the roles of police officer and reservist. This is required, as a reservist scheme is now intended to play a long-term role within Victoria Police. It is just one of the many initiatives this government is funding to support the great work of Victoria Police, which includes the highly successful Made for More campaign. I would encourage anyone who is considering joining or returning to the service to go and sign up at police.vic.gov.au.

Lauren KATHAGE: Thank you, Minister. Just now and in your presentation you spoke about the efforts of Victoria Police to increase recruitment and get more police on the front line. Are you able to expand on improvements that are being made to the recruitment process itself?

Anthony CARBINES: Thanks, Member for Yan Yean. Victoria Police has made some outstanding progress as part of the Made for More campaign, which we provided \$4 million towards in the 2025–26 budget. As I mentioned in my opening remarks, we set a five-year record for police applications, and the police academy has, as of last month, doubled its intake of new recruits. Victorians and those from further afield are lining up to join the largest police service in the country, with 8700 applications submitted in 2025, and they come from all walks of life. Some of the newest recruits include a butcher, a concreter, a barista and a personal trainer. Others have served in other police jurisdictions or with the ADF, the Australian Defence Force. Commonsense changes have been made to the recruitment process which will streamline applications and ensure that there are no unnecessary bureaucratic barriers to joining up. For example, those who apply and already have favourable high school results or have recently worked in another emergency service are no longer required to sit the entrance exam. They have also modernised how the exam is run by providing an online

option, which has made it far more accessible for those applying from further afield. What that means is an extra 650 recruits going through the academy each year, with 1300 graduating every year. While we acknowledge that there is more work to do, these targeted and pragmatic investments go a long way to continuing to support the largest police service in the country.

Lauren KATHAGE: Thank you, Minister. Two CFA volunteers from my community have signed up, which makes me very proud.

Anthony CARBINES: Very good. Excellent. Have you got any more?

Lauren KATHAGE: Can I ask what other policy work is underway to free up police and also to improve community safety?

Anthony CARBINES: Thank you. Providing Victoria Police with the funding it needs to upgrade its capabilities is key to ensuring that our police have the tools required to help tackle crime. Particularly as criminals innovate, Victoria Police has to as well. That is why the budget provides funding for a complete refresh of Victoria Police's IT infrastructure, with a focus on cybercrime. Part of this is a \$40.98 million upgrade to technology systems that will provide fit-for-purpose and in some cases state-of-the-art equipment to speed up systems and deliver significant time savings to officers on the front line. This is about having a modern and well-equipped police service. In addition, we are providing \$7 million to beef up police cybercrime and digital forensic expertise. Thank you.

Lauren KATHAGE: Thank you, Minister.

The CHAIR: Thank you, Ms Kathage. Mr Riordan.

Richard RIORDAN: Thank you, Chair. Chief Commissioner, a question for you. The minister knows the professional backgrounds of recruits. He knows we have got baristas and we have got concreters joining the police force. He knows how much time people are sitting behind the counter for. But he does not know how much time your team are tied up in our hospitals with mental health patients. Do you record that data?

Mike BUSH: I very much doubt we would be able to give you accurate data, but what I can assure you of is we work with our partners to ensure that we do not overcommit time so we can deploy to other matters. We work with Ambulance Victoria, justice, health –

Richard RIORDAN: But are you monitoring the time that your police – I mean, we are monitoring the time behind desks. Are we monitoring the time that your staff, your people, are tied up in our hospital system looking after patients because there is not room to move them on?

Mike BUSH: We do not have a facility or an ability or a system to actually log every hour that our staff spend at those locations. We, as I said, are working closely with Ambulance Victoria and health to ensure that the appropriate people do that so we can free our people up to get out on the streets to prevent and respond to crime.

Richard RIORDAN: On the issue of freeing up your people, the minister has told us about the 200 retired officers he is planning to bring back in. Is it your ambition, or can you commit to this committee and to the people of Victoria, that those actions and the work that you are obviously doing with your other partners will see busy suburbs like Clyde North having their police stations fully operational 24/7? In small country towns like Birregurra in my electorate, which has had a vacancy for more than two years, are we going to see police officers available for those shortfalls?

Mike BUSH: What I can assure you of is that we are very committed to bringing our full profile of policing back up to in excess of 17,000, and we have a plan to do that. We are also committed –

Richard RIORDAN: When would you hope to achieve that 17,000 figure?

Mike BUSH: I will give you some numbers on that. It is quite a detailed answer.

Richard RIORDAN: Well, I just want to know the date.

Mike BUSH: Well, I think it is important to talk about the methodology as well, so I will talk about –

Richard RIORDAN: Well, for the purposes of this it is not, because we have got limited time and many questions. If you have a date, we would appreciate it, and you can supply on notice if you have got more methodology you want –

The CHAIR: Mr Riordan, if the Chief Commissioner wants to briefly go through the methodology, I think it is fair. You have asked the question –

Richard RIORDAN: I have asked the question. I have asked for the date. I have not asked for the methodology.

The CHAIR: and his answer goes to the question that you have asked.

Richard RIORDAN: Do we have a date on when we are going to get to the 17,000?

Mike BUSH: Our ambition, by increasing the throughput through our academy by actually doubling the throughput through our academy, because I do think this is important to explain the how – we anticipate that we will, just through doubling the throughput through the academy, and we are very confident that we can do that, increase over and above attrition staff into the organisation by 650 per annum. What we are also doing – and I think it is important to talk to this, because we have an uplift program –

Richard RIORDAN: So what is that, 35 years?

Mike BUSH: No. 650, plus we are embarking very early in the new year, in January, on establishing rural training academies. The first one will be established, we hope, in January of next year in Mildura. We hope to put an extra 100 per annum recruits through that. Now, that comes to 750, so over and above attrition.

Richard RIORDAN: Right. Over and above attrition. We are talking 26 years to get to that.

Mike BUSH: If you want to do that sums on that, if we are 1550 currently under, take away attrition, 750 per annum; our target is to achieve that – and it is optimistic – in two and a bit years.

Richard RIORDAN: Two and a bit years to get to that figure?

Mike BUSH: All going well. But that is our intention, which I think was your question.

Richard RIORDAN: Exactly how many of the 40 police stations will reopen 24/7 as a direct result of these changes? I am asking specifically for my own electorate. My electorate of 8500 square kilometres had one 24-hour police station that you cut – not you, but the system – to 16 hours then cut to 12. For this year it has been shut for nearly a month because you could not afford to fix the front door, and then it was shut on other days when we had protests in Melbourne – no police shopfront at all during business hours. Will communities like mine expect to see full police service guaranteed?

Mike BUSH: We will always have a full police service. Our real focus –

Richard RIORDAN: No, no, no.

Mike BUSH: We are talking about two different things here. One is open police stations –

Richard RIORDAN: I am talking about my thing, which is what I am asking you to answer.

Mike BUSH: Which I am talking about.

Richard RIORDAN: Your changes – will they restore the 40 closed police stations?

Mike BUSH: We do not close police stations. What we do is we manage the public counter facility.

Richard RIORDAN: With a 000 number. That is what they do; I have got photos.

Mike BUSH: What I can assure you is that we will operate 24/7 from locations where we deploy from. Our goal –

Richard RIORDAN: Chief Commissioner, I know you are not from Victoria, but you are aware that an electorate like mine –

The CHAIR: Excuse me. You are starting to border on disrespectful. Rein it in.

Richard RIORDAN: In an electorate like mine, when you have got only two police on for 24 hours, they can be well over an hour – an hour and a half – from their main population centres dealing with issues. That is not an immediate or helpful police service with that level of disconnection.

Mike BUSH: Very much to your question, we are very committed to bringing our full complement of police officers to 17,000 to ensure that everywhere in Victoria has the appropriate level of policing service, but our goal is to have those police officers out in the community – out patrolling, ready to respond to calls for service, particularly through 000. So we do have people to respond. Our goal is to prevent and respond to crime.

Richard RIORDAN: To a community –

Mike BUSH: To every community.

Richard RIORDAN: But particularly in regional communities a physical police presence can be an hour and a half or more away as the nearest you can get. In municipalities like mine – 15,000 people – it can be an hour and a half wait for a police car to come if it has gone to a car accident within its region. Do you think that is an adequate quick response, which communities expect?

Mike BUSH: That is why we are very committed to coming back up to our full complement so we can service the people of Victoria. I can assure you, we are here for everyone.

Richard RIORDAN: You mentioned your plan to recruit. Do you think it is realistic to –

The CHAIR: Thank you. Mr Galea.

Michael GALEA: Thank you. Chair. Good afternoon, Minister, Chief Commissioner, Secretary and officials. Thank you for joining us. Chief Commissioner, at the outset, thank you for the work that your members do each and every day, including in my electorate.

Mike BUSH: Thank you. I will pass that on.

Michael GALEA: Minister, I would like to talk about PSOs, specifically the output initiative on page 6 of budget paper 3, ‘Increasing PSO capacity and funding for Operation Pulse’. Can you please outline how this funding will be utilised and what it is intended for to support the work of our PSOs in our communities?

Anthony CARBINES: Thanks, Mr Galea. Thank you for the question. It is an important one because protective services officers, as members know, are the backbone of our community safety efforts at train stations and also some of our busiest shopping strips and shopping centres. They do outstanding work, and Victorians feel safe when PSOs are around. They play a crucial role in providing a visible presence, giving the community confidence, preventing crime or deterring offenders. This government values the work they do day and night, and that is why we have committed to boosting their numbers. The budget delivers an additional \$44 million for 50 additional PSOs. These PSOs will be deployed across the train station network. They will be riding the trains and preventing criminal behaviour. That is because a visible police and PSO presence in the community not only maintains public order; it reminds potential offenders that serious consequences are always nearby. We have also provided additional funding to extend the presence of PSOs in our shopping centres as part of this year’s budget because of the overwhelming results of feedback that we have had.

Michael GALEA: Thank you, Minister. I have similarly had overwhelming feedback in terms of Operation Pulse, as I have shared with you. And if I can pass on to the Commissioner as well the feedback from my community in relation to Fountain Gate shopping centre in particular, to the point of having people come up to me at the Berwick Show and raise it about seeing the difference.

Anthony CARBINES: At the Berwick Show?

Michael GALEA: The Berwick Show – one of the many great agricultural shows, one of the few that we have in the metropolitan area but a great show. Indeed I have heard as well from retail workers and other centres the profound difference to their personal safety it has meant for them. So can you talk to me a little bit more about how this operation works, Minister, and how that funding will be deployed to continue Operation Pulse?

Anthony CARBINES: Thanks, Mr Galea. I do appreciate your work and advocacy for retail workers too for some of the community safety initiatives that the government has been working on. Particularly through Operation Pulse, as you know, the operation deploys PSOs to some of our busier shopping centres and was stood up by Victoria Police in December just last year. All shifts as part of the operation are voluntary, meaning that there is no impact on the rail network as PSOs are working at shopping centres in addition to their existing shifts. The results of the operation were evident from the beginning, with more than 100 arrests in the first three weeks. I can update the committee with the results: as of last month over 1000 arrests, 2000 charges laid, 160 weapons seized, 300 fines issued and more than 13,000 vehicles checked. Almost half of those charges relate to retail theft, with a significant reduction in violent incidents since the operation has begun. And the operation has been instrumental in preventing crime. It is why we provided the additional funding in this year's budget, some \$6.54 million to keep the operation running through until the Christmas holidays. It will give Victorians the certainty of a highly effective police operation keeping them safe, and it sends a clear message that there is no place for criminal behaviour at our shopping centres.

Michael GALEA: Thank you, Minister. I am obviously very excited about the change I have seen in Fountain Gate and surrounds as a result of it, but it is obviously not just in Fountain Gate, it is across other centres as well. Could you please break down where it is operating and the feedback you have received? You touched on it briefly in your presentation, but if you could expand on the feedback you have had from shopping centres.

Anthony CARBINES: Sure. Certainly Fountain Gate has been one of the key areas that Operation Pulse has had success, but police and PSOs continue to patrol several major shopping centres each day, with sites focused on Pacific Werribee; also at Bayside, Frankston; at High Point; locally for me over at Northland in the northern suburbs; Watergardens; Southland; Eastland; and of course as you touched on, Fountain Gate. During the two months of the operation there was a 50 per cent reduction in serious incidents at shopping centres and more than a 70 per cent reduction in stolen goods. The feedback from customers and staff in shopping centres has been resoundingly positive. I referenced some of those figures in my opening remarks. Eight out of 10 customers surveyed said they felt safer since the operation had commenced and nine out of 10 retailers wanted the operation extended. The decision to extend those operations was informed by that feedback and also the very real results it has been achieving cracking down on crime. The investment in additional PSOs and extending Operation Pulse are other examples of targeted, evidence-based decisions and resourcing to keep Victorians safe.

Michael GALEA: Thank you, Minister. You have also spoken publicly about shifting to an intelligence-led model for the deployment of PSOs I believe across not just shopping centres through this operation but in a broader sense as well, including across the rail network. What does an intelligence-led approach look like specifically?

Anthony CARBINES: Thanks, Mr Galea. It is important, and there has been a lot of misinformation and confusion circling about what intelligence-led policing actually means. It does mean that PSOs are deployed where police intelligence says they are most needed based on data and statistics. It is unashamedly evidence based, and it is an approach that is not traditional – not a traditional approach. It is where the evidence tells us that crime is happening. It moves around. It is not static, and PSOs need to move around too. Crime patterns have changed since PSOs were introduced 14 years ago. It means in practice Victorians will see more PSOs for more hours in more places, and PSOs will clock in at key stations from as early as 9 o'clock in the morning, not 6 o'clock at night. They will not be confined to the platform. They will ride the trains with commuters. They will be around the stations to keep people safe. No station and no train will be unpatrolled. While PSOs are on shift, officers are constantly moving around the network, detecting and deterring crime. It is about using the data and technology to improve how we keep Victorians safe. As the approach is based on evidence, that means it will be continuously under review by the Chief Commissioner, and it allows for greater flexibility, to surge in

PSOs where the data shows they are needed rather than having them standing around stations where nothing is happening. The additional funding we have provided in this year's budget will go a long way to ensuring that we have the additional capacity for PSOs to deploy across the network and through Operation Pulse to keep the community safe and give them confidence.

Michael GALEA: Thank you.

The CHAIR: We are going to Ms Benham.

Jade BENHAM: Thank you, Chair. Afternoon, Minister, Chief Commissioner, officials. Can I just go back to one thing you mentioned, Chief Commissioner, during Mr Riordan's line of questioning: the Mildura regional academy will open next year – is that what you said?

Mike BUSH: That is our plan. We are very focused on it. We are very committed to it. We will be able to speak more publicly about it and the arrangements very shortly.

Jade BENHAM: Sounds like an announcement to me, Chief Commissioner.

Mike BUSH: Yes, well, it is.

Jade BENHAM: Excellent. That is good news and something that I know our police force, who do an amazing job in the north-west, have been asking for for a long time. That is fantastic news. Can I ask what the cost to establish that is?

Mike BUSH: We are costing it up at the moment, but our people, who you will know well, have been working hard on putting the model in place for a long time. They are negotiating with local providers, and it will be very economical.

Jade BENHAM: Excellent – and a hundred recruits per year?

Mike BUSH: That is the plan. What we would like to do is obviously – each wing goes for about 25 weeks, so we would like to put two through per annum. But two of two, and most of them are about 25 per person. This is the target, so this is what we will be encouraging and supporting our people in partnership with locals to deliver. We are very excited about it. I have been up there recently, as you know, and spoken to the staff. They are as excited about this as we are.

Jade BENHAM: Excellent. Great news – which means we will be able to have more than five police members throughout the Southern Mallee, which I know is putting a strain on them. Minister, I am sure you are happy with that announcement during a PAEC hearing. Great news. Can I go to you now about crime prevention funding. That funding has been cut by \$11 million, from \$28.1 million down to \$17.7 million, in the middle of a crime crisis, nonetheless. How many youth crime prevention programs have been lost because of that decision?

Anthony CARBINES: I am sorry, I am not clear where you are finding that reference. There have not been any cuts to –

Jade BENHAM: That is the 'Department Performance Statement', page 100, or the community crime prevention document, total cost output, page 100.

Lauren KATHAGE: Which measure, so we can follow along?

Jade BENHAM: Let me find that one. It is also listed in budget paper 3 on page 72.

Mathew HILAKARI: You should read that along with the note. There is a note there that provides some explanation.

Jade BENHAM: Okay. Let me rephrase the question, Minister: are you cutting crime prevention programs?

Anthony CARBINES: No, there have been no cuts to our crime prevention programs. In fact we have increased funding to our crime prevention programs this year. There are a very significant range of programs, including \$9.5 million for Blue Light and the work they will be doing in schools to support 500 individual

young people and visit some 3000-plus schools to provide tailored support to young people and a range of other programs that we are providing, including in Mildura, which I might come to in some other presentations today, around community crime prevention programs. I am very confident that they have been working effectively even over the hundreds of programs that we provide, and we also reassess those programs. Some of them are not as effective as we would like, and we do our assessments of those programs and appraisals and publish them on the DJCS website. I would also point out in relation to budget paper 3, page 5, the \$8 million for the youth crime prevention package initiative. That is our youth crime prevention program of \$5 million and our \$2.9 million for Westjustice to expand their youth crime prevention and early intervention program. There is also, as I touched on, the Blue Light funding. I should also mention – it does not sit directly with me – the Violence Reduction Unit funding of \$33 million. There had been earlier moneys of \$19 million to set that up, which picks up on some significant work internationally. I have also announced recently with the Chief Commissioner's team \$5 million for the state command and coordination centre – this is community safety funding; they are 24/7 operations that run from police headquarters – and \$10 million for the Hospitality Security Fund run by the small business minister.

Jade BENHAM: Terrific, got it. We might come back to that during community safety. Minister, can I talk to you about BlueHub. How many police officers are currently on WorkCover leave due to mental health injuries?

Anthony CARBINES: I am happy to stand corrected, but I believe the figure is about 650 that are currently on WorkCover at Victoria Police.

Jade BENHAM: Yes. Actually, I have got another question, given that we are talking numbers now. Before, during Operation –

Anthony CARBINES: Sorry, just on that, probably 500 of that 650 relate to mental health matters –

Jade BENHAM: That is specifically what I asked about.

Anthony CARBINES: because particularly, as you could imagine, while it is a physical job in many ways, it is the trauma-related elements that dominate our WorkCover statistics.

Jade BENHAM: Of course. So 650 is the total number and 500 are the mental health?

Anthony CARBINES: Yes, yes.

Jade BENHAM: Before, when you were talking about Operation Pulse, you mentioned that there had been 1000 arrests and 2000 charges.

Anthony CARBINES: Yes.

Jade BENHAM: That is right. How many of those have resulted in offenders being bailed?

Anthony CARBINES: Well, that would be a matter for the courts. I would not have specific data here in relation to that.

Jade BENHAM: You had those numbers.

Anthony CARBINES: In concluding my answer, though, what I would say to you is that bail revocations are up 84 per cent, that remand is up 70 per cent, and that means that 84 per cent more people are not getting bail than there were before.

Jade BENHAM: But you would not have thought to bring those stats?

The CHAIR: Excuse me.

Anthony CARBINES: Operation Pulse has been very successful and supports our traders, our retailers and our shoppers. And we have also seen, thanks to changes in the law, the revocation of bail up 84 per cent, which is also why there is a 70 per cent greater number of people on remand.

Jade BENHAM: Have you got the number of how many of those arrests were offenders that were already on bail?

Anthony CARBINES: The figures that I have for you are that there is an 84 per cent increase in the revocation of bail.

Jade BENHAM: So you have those numbers for Operation Pulse, not anticipating that we might ask other questions relating to bail.

Anthony CARBINES: If you have questions regarding courts and bails, you are free to ask the Attorney those questions.

The CHAIR: Which again, as I said, is first up tomorrow.

Jade BENHAM: Interesting. Okay. Going back to BlueHub, how can you justify calling BlueHub funded when only \$1.6 million has been provided up-front and there is no clear commitment to ongoing funding to sustain it?

Anthony CARBINES: There is funding for BlueHub.

The CHAIR: Thank you, Minister. We are going to go straight to Mr Tak.

Meng Heang TAK: Thank you, Chair, Minister and officials. I refer to budget paper 3, pages 5, 9, 72 and 79, which detail the \$138 million boost for equipment and resources for frontline police. Minister, are you able to give the committee some details on how this government is continuing to give Victoria Police the resources it needs to keep our community safe?

Anthony CARBINES: Thanks, Member for Clarinda, and I am always pleased to talk about the record \$5 billion that the Labor government has invested into Victoria Police since 2016. This has funded more than 3600 new sworn police officers, in addition to state-of-the-art intelligence systems, enhanced technology and new and upgraded police stations. I am pleased to advise that this government's investment in Victoria Police is seeing results. Police are holding more offenders to account, with record bail refusals and revocations, meaning courts are sending more people to jail and not granting bail. On top of our investment in PSOs and reservists, funding in this budget includes \$35 million for 3000 mobile devices for specialist police and upgraded digital evidence capture technology; \$7.1 million to respond to the threat of cybercrime and support police investigations and prosecutions; and \$1.6 million to deliver specialist psychological and counselling support through BlueHub – I just reiterate that there is \$1.6 million to deliver specialist psychological and counselling support through BlueHub in this year's budget; \$40.98 million for police information technology that strengthens security, protects sensitive information and supports frontline operations; and \$39.7 million for critical frontline support technology, including forensic laboratories, information management systems, intelligence software and digital fingerprint and facial recognition technology. This will also fund frontline protective equipment such as helmets.

We understand that operational decisions like the deployment of police resources are a matter for the Chief Commissioner of Police. What we are doing through this budget is backing his work and the work of Victoria Police by ensuring that they have the tools and resources they need to keep Victorians safe. We know Victoria Police are making record numbers of arrests, with over 78,000 last year alone according to the most recent crime stats, and I take the opportunity to thank the men and women of Victoria Police who are out there every day patrolling our community and keeping Victorians safe.

Meng Heang TAK: Thank you, Minister. If I can take you back to the \$35 million for 3000 mobile devices for specialist police and to upgrade digital evidence capture technology. I refer to budget paper 3 on pages 72 and 75. Minister, are you able to speak to the importance of providing equipment like this to Victoria Police?

Anthony CARBINES: Thanks, Member for Clarinda. I would like to reiterate the critically important role Victoria Police play and that they need the tools to keep the community safe. Advice we have received from VicPol was that specialist police did not have mobile devices that could access police systems, and it slowed them down in the field. The budget invests \$18.3 million for 3000 mobile devices for specialist police. This is tech that helps them in their everyday work – less time doing paperwork, more time protecting Victorians. It

means faster decisions on the ground with real-time information in their hands instead of back at the station, having to go back there. These advances will allow officers and the community to benefit from modern mobile solutions. The second initiative in this package, digital evidence capture, is a core capability used by Victoria Police to record interviews with suspects and persons of interest. These recordings are legally required under the *Crimes Act* to ensure evidence is admissible in court and to support the integrity of the justice process.

The funding for upgraded evidence recording systems aims to strengthen the reliability of recorded interviews and evidence for investigations, and the budget invests some \$18 million in upgrading this technology. Investing in mobile technology and modernising digital evidence capture will deliver significant benefits, whether that is increased police efficiency by ensuring officers can perform more high-value tasks in the field, reducing time spent on administration, improving community safety through enhanced responsiveness and an increased police presence and visibility or through better justice outcomes with reliable interview recordings and streamlined evidence capture and management. These technology improvements are just a small example of how this government is supporting Victoria Police members through this year's budget. We as a government understand that when you invest in Victoria Police you are investing in community safety. We have ensured our hardworking police have the equipment, facilities and resources they need to keep communities safe.

Meng Heang TAK: Thank you, Minister. Cybercrime is another thing. I refer to budget paper 3 on pages 5 and 9, which show \$7.1 million being provided to respond to the increased rates of cybercrime. Minister, how does this funding help VicPol investigate crimes?

Anthony CARBINES: Thanks, Member for Clarinda. I appreciate talking about our support for Victoria Police's cybercrime response in this year's budget. As you have said, some \$7.1 million has been provided to Victoria Police to support them in the prevention, detection and investigation of cybercrime. Victoria Police's cybercrime squad conducts specialist investigations targeting serious and organised crime and provides specialist capabilities and advice to assist investigations. The demand for digital forensic services continues to grow, as almost all crime types are now enabled by technology. Victoria Police continues to implement the Victoria Police cybercrime strategy 2022–27, focusing on prevention, reporting, victim support, investigation and disruption, and we continue to strengthen cybercrime prevention, public awareness and investigative capability through public-facing resources and targeted training initiatives. This includes updates to the cybercrime hub to improve community awareness and ongoing development and delivery of specialist training to uplift frontline capability. I would also briefly say that cybercrime and online abuse can be serious crimes. We have strong laws to respond to the harm caused by online abuse and illegal or restricted online content, but we know it is important that the community continues to report these crimes. When someone reports a cybercrime they help to stop other people from being victims of the same crimes or the same offenders. Victoria Police continues to reform the way Victorians report cybercrime and the way it records, triages and actions cybercrime reports.

Meng Heang TAK: Thank you, Minister.

The CHAIR: Thank you, Mr Tak. Mr Puglielli.

Aiv PUGLIELLI: Thank you, Chair. Good afternoon, Minister, Commissioner and officials. I will start my clock as well. Under the output 'Policing and community safety', budget paper 3, page 75, we see an item 'Delivering on bail reform for Victoria Police', which is for Victoria Police to maintain police custody cells and to support increased custodial medical capacity. During an outcomes hearing this committee heard that 94 people were held in police custody for more than 14 days for the 2024–25 period. Are you able to tell us: what is that figure to date this year?

Anthony CARBINES: I am happy to see if any of my colleagues want to give a more specific figure to date at the moment, and maybe while they just have a look to that I would also say that, as you have touched on, we have provided some further \$9 million in support for those who are held in police custody and the services that they need, because there has been an uplift in the numbers of throughput in police custody cells.

I have been to the Melbourne remand centre to meet with police and health officials and others that work there, and I commend them on the work that they do. It is tough work. It is hard work, particularly when people are in their care in custody. The numbers have moved around a little bit, and I suppose that is also why in last year's budget – and I will pass to my colleagues shortly – there was \$720 million to uplift the system, and we have

made harsher changes to the law, tougher laws. We have then got more people in custody and they are managing the throughput in police cells. But did my colleagues have any particular figure they wanted to add at this point?

Mike BUSH: I am sure we can find the number, but I can say that it has increased, and for that reason we are working very closely with justice and corrections to again bring that number down. Whilst it is not unlawful, it is undesirable to have them there, so that is why we are working very hard to alleviate that issue.

Aiv PUGLIELLI: Thank you. And when you are seeking that number out, are you able to inform the committee of how many were First Nations community members?

Mike BUSH: We will certainly be able to provide that detail.

Anthony CARBINES: Just on that too, I would just take opportunity to acknowledge the work of VALS, because they have drawn our attention to at times in their advocacy First Nations people who have been held in police custody for a period of time and making sure they get the supports that they need. But we will certainly come back with some more specific figures for you.

Aiv PUGLIELLI: Can I just ask you to expand on the comments that have just been made? Why has that number increased?

Anthony CARBINES: My view of why that number has increased in the first instance would be because of changes to the law that the government has made have seen bail revocations up 84 per cent and remand numbers up 70 per cent, where more people are held on remand, because we are making sure that those who breach their bail conditions or who commit more serious crimes find themselves in custody. We have increased numbers of prison beds. We have increased the number of people who are in our custody. Those changes of the law downstream in the justice system have also meant a greater number passing through police custody cells, and that has required coordinated management across the justice system with both corrections and my colleagues there but also with Victoria Police. I know they meet on a daily basis very early, at the start of the day, on how we move and provide support to people across the system where they are needed in the court system and appearances on that day, and also keeping people perhaps, for different criminal activity, apart as well. There are a lot of different elements that go into that work, but I would acknowledge that it also means a flexing up and further investment in the system to accommodate the fact that we have made policy changes in the law that are seeing more people in custody.

Aiv PUGLIELLI: Can I ask: do those align with your views, Commissioner?

Mike BUSH: Yes. The volume has definitely increased. We have more crime. We have different legal settings. So our people – and I want to acknowledge their good work – are out there arresting more offenders, putting them through the system. The volume has definitely increased for that range of reasons.

Aiv PUGLIELLI: Thank you. Can I ask: do you hold data on how many people were held in police custody between five and 14 days? Is that a dataset that you would record?

Mike BUSH: Possibly not the five and 14.

Karl KENT: Certainly the greater than 14 days.

Mike BUSH: Greater than 14.

Aiv PUGLIELLI: Okay.

Mike BUSH: And greater than 18, I think.

Aiv PUGLIELLI: Yes. I just ask given past Ombudsman recommendations around the maximum time spent in police cells, so that five-day mark, anything between there and the 14-day period. If you do not record that though, then obviously you cannot provide it to the committee.

Anthony CARBINES: I think we certainly have an understanding of who we have got and how long they have been where they are. And then of course our obligation is to make sure that they are where they need to be

to be able to appear in court. We are a part of the system in terms of where people need to be brought before the courts, where they need to be in remand facilities and in corrections facilities. But it is a dynamic environment that certainly had to become more match fit given changes to the law that we have made, but also this budget and the last budget, in terms of our investments in the justice system, have sought to flex up to meet that increased demand.

Aiv PUGLIELLI: Thank you. On another matter, I am very aware there is a parliamentary inquiry into LGBTQIA+ hate crimes being committed against those community members. Is Victoria Police going to be making a submission to that inquiry?

Mike BUSH: Good question. I can come back to you on that, but I can say that through various forums and our focus and our culture within Victoria Police, we are very focused on supporting all members of the community but also very much the LGBTIQIA+ community.

Aiv PUGLIELLI: Thank you. I will go back to police cells, which you were just discussing. Given this output that I am talking about is also to support increased custodial medical capacity, how many people held in police cells during that period we discussed before – the 2024–25 period – were taken to hospital?

Anthony CARBINES: I would probably have to take it on notice for those sorts of numbers, unless there was a particular number that you wanted the department to provide. I think we would have to check on that.

Aiv PUGLIELLI: That is all right.

Anthony CARBINES: I am happy to provide a level of detail that is reported. I have met with our medical teams at the Melbourne remand centre about the activities and support services they are able to provide, and of course there are people who come into custody who are arrested in different states of needing medical attention in some instances. There is a limited service provided, and then we have allocated further money in this budget, over \$9 million, to uplift some of our services to people who are in our custody.

Aiv PUGLIELLI: Thank you.

The CHAIR: Thank you, Mr Puglielli. Mr Hilakari.

Mathew HILAKARI: Thank you, Minister, Commissioner and all the bureaucrats in attendance this afternoon. Minister, I want to take this to road safety, if that is possible, with particular reference to the department performance statement, page 100. I am just hoping you could talk through some of the road safety measures and our partners, and how we are meeting our performance measures in this budget.

Anthony CARBINES: Thank you, Member for Point Cook. Can I just say, from the outset, that any life lost on our roads is one life too many. The impact of road trauma is felt very widely, and no-one in Victoria is unaffected by it. Last year some 288 lives were lost on Victorian roads, and this was four more than in 2024 and significantly higher than the state's five-year average. Already there have been over 100 people tragically killed on our roads this year. The Victorian road safety partnership is made up of Road Safety Victoria, the Transport Accident Commission, Victoria Police, the Department of Justice and Community Safety and the Department of Health. Their collective approach is informed by the 10-year *Victorian Road Safety Strategy 2021–2030*, which aims to halve road deaths and reduce serious injuries by 2030. The government is working across education, infrastructure, policy and technology to reduce the number of lives lost on our roads, and the road safety partnership allows for collaboration between organisations who are each separately working towards the outcomes of the road safety strategy and ensures effective information sharing and an evidence-based approach to policy and programs in this space.

I am regularly standing up with road safety partners and Victoria Police to announce new joint initiatives built out of this approach. As announced earlier this week, \$28.3 million has been funded by the TAC to deliver new road safety camera programs in my portfolio. The package includes upgrades to road safety cameras on the Western Ring Road and Eastlink; a new all-in-one road safety camera unit that can detect speeding, mobile phone use and seatbelt offences; and new mobile road-safety-trailer technology to increase the use of enforcement technology across Victoria. This is just one example of how collaboration between our agencies in the road safety partnership allows for positive outcomes for the Victorian community. What is very clear is that every Victorian has a role to play in driving down road trauma and ensuring every road user gets home safely.

The Department of Justice and Community Safety and Victoria Police work with their road safety partners to help achieve this goal across the state. I would like to thank them for the work they do in this very important area.

Mathew HILAKARI: Certainly, Minister, we all know the importance of that. I myself drive regularly on my own street past an incident site and a memorial, so that drives it home to me every day. Minister, the performance measure – on page 100, again – ‘Proportion of drivers tested by road safety cameras who comply with posted speed limits’ has a 99.5 per cent target and expected outcome. Could you talk through this and how this is improving safety for everybody using our roads across the state?

Anthony CARBINES: Thank you, Mr Hilakari. I would like to start by saying the performance measure proves that the vast majority of road users are doing the right thing. The driver compliance rate for the fixed and mobile road safety cameras remains consistently high at 99 per cent – over 99 per cent in fact. That said, statistics show that speeding offences continue to make up the bulk of road safety camera detected offences, and we know that one of the most important factors in reducing road trauma is travel speed. Road safety cameras have proven to be amongst the most effective ways to get motorists to slow down and save lives. Research by the Monash University Accident Research Centre, MUARC, shows a 47 per cent reduction in casualty crashes on stretches of road where fixed speed and red-light cameras are installed. I am pleased to advise that 35 new fixed digital road safety cameras have been installed across Victorian roads in recent years to enforce speed and red-light camera offences, thanks to a \$49.4 million investment by our government. It is part of more than \$1.1 billion being invested through to 2028, until that time, by our government, including \$350 million in new initiatives in the second road safety action plan to help prevent serious crashes and keep Victorians safe. This includes funding for our mobile camera program and our distracted driver and seatbelt cameras deployed across the state to catch those engaged in dangerous driving habits. Mobile road safety cameras can be used in unmarked vehicles parked on the side of the road. Victoria Police has approved some 2000 locations across Victoria where these cameras can operate at any time of the day. Similarly, our distracted driver and seatbelt cameras can be deployed across metropolitan Melbourne and regional Victoria. As we know, using a mobile phone while driving and failing to wear a seatbelt correctly are illegal behaviours that significantly increase the risk of road trauma, and it is important to note that every dollar received from road safety cameras goes to the Better Roads Victoria Trust, where it is spent on road projects such as road restorations, road surface replacement, bridge strengthening and other road safety improvements. The message here is that those who are doing the wrong thing will be caught, but it is great to see most Victorians are getting the message on road safety and doing the right thing behind the wheel.

Mathew HILAKARI: Minister, I would just like to add on to that in regard to the *Victorian Road Safety Strategy 2021–2030*. We are at more than the halfway point of that strategy, but the particular reference is to the \$20 million that we announced in December. How does that go to supporting that strategy, and how is that strategy going?

Anthony CARBINES: Thanks, Mr Hilakari. The Allan Labor government is making Victorian roads safer with over \$20 million boost to road policing. It will see more roadside drug tests and improved technology to catch those doing the wrong thing on our roads. The \$21.1 million investment through the TAC is delivering five Victorian police projects: an extra 25,000 roadside drug tests each year; roadside impaired-driver evidence technology to reduce the paperwork required at roadsides to process drug and alcohol data collection; an extra 88 vehicles fitted with automatic number plate recognition technology – ANPR – to help detect dangerous and unauthorised drivers; the replacement and upgrade of police in-car video technology; and of course the purchase of new and replacement evidentiary breath testing instruments used to detect drink-drivers. The funding is increasing drug testing, expanding the use of technology and reducing paperwork so police can spend more time out on the road and in the community.

The CHAIR: Thank you, Minister and Mr Hilakari. Minister, officials and Chief Commissioner, thank you very much for taking the time to appear before the committee this afternoon. The committee will follow up on any questions taken on notice in writing, and responses are required within five working days of the committee’s request. The committee will take a short break before beginning its consideration of the portfolio of victims at 3 pm. I declare this hearing adjourned.

Witnesses withdrew.