

Public Accounts and Estimates Committee
Inquiry into the 2024-25 Financial and Performance Outcomes – 25 November 2025

**Responses to Questions on Notice or further information
agreed to be supplied at the hearing**

Witness	Lisa Gandolfo
Committee Member	Roma Britnell
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Question 1

Did the department pay any external third parties or consultants in relation to designing, developing or deploying the Servo Saver feature? (pg 4)

Can you give me a full breakdown of the costs of that and provide those to the committee on notice? (pg 5)

Transcript extract:

Roma BRITNELL: So they cannot do that. No worries. Did the department pay any external third parties or consultants in relation to designing, developing or deploying the Servo Saver feature?

Jo de MORTON: No.

Lisa GANDOLFO: Except for the regulatory impact assessment, which is a specialist skill that we needed for the regulations and legislation. But apart from that –

Roma BRITNELL: So you did use a third party for that?

Lisa GANDOLFO: Only for the regulatory impact assessment, yes.

Roma BRITNELL: Can you give me a full breakdown of the costs of that and provide those to the committee on notice?

Lisa GANDOLFO: That will be provided by the Department of Government Services in the Public Accounts and Estimates Committee at the end of the 2025–26 financial year, but that –

Roma BRITNELL: So you cannot supply that to the committee?

Lisa GANDOLFO: Not today, because it –

Richard WELCH: Well, no. You know how much you have spent on it. You can let us know how much you have spent on it.

Lisa GANDOLFO: It was less than \$300,000, but I do not have the exact amount today.

Roma BRITNELL: That is okay. Can you take that on notice?

Lisa GANDOLFO: I can provide that.

Response:

The department engaged an external consultancy to prepare the Regulatory Impact Statement for the *Australian Consumer Law and the Fair Trading (Code of Practice for Fuel Price Reporting) Regulations 2025* (Vic). These regulations require fuel retailers to provide business information to the Director of Consumer Affairs Victoria and report changes to fuel prices, which is displayed on Servo Saver.

The total cost for this work across 2024–25 and 2025–26: \$118,175 (ex GST).

Witness	Lisa Gandolfo
Committee Member	Roma Britnell
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Question 2

Can you provide the committee on notice with the dates of all these meetings and an indication of who they were with?

Transcript extract:

Roma BRITNELL: Can you provide the committee on notice with the dates of all these – sorry, did the government meet with New South Wales or any other jurisdiction to learn from various fuel applications that are already in –

Lisa GANDOLFO: Yes. That was part of our extensive consultation. The Department of Government Services did meet with officials in other states and territories.

Roma BRITNELL: Can you provide the committee on notice with the dates of all these meetings and an indication of who they were with?

The CHAIR: Deputy Chair, I am just going to interject there. I know this is your first time with the FPO, but the purpose of public hearings is for the committee to ask and afford witnesses the opportunity to respond to that here on the live stream. If you wanted to rephrase that question – it is a very different thing if the witnesses do not have the information and you want to take it on notice, as opposed to prefacing the question thinking they will take it on notice.

Roma BRITNELL: All right. I am comfortable with whichever way you would like to do that, but can you provide us with the dates of the meetings and an indication of who those meetings were with?

Lisa GANDOLFO: We can provide that on notice.

Response:

The department undertook engagement with other Australian jurisdictions to understand the design and functionality of their fuel price comparison apps.

This engagement was conducted to inform the development of the Servo Saver module within the Service Victoria app. These discussions were focused on technical and operational learnings.

- New South Wales Fuel Check Team:
 - 12 December 2024

- 13 December 2024
 - 17 January 2025
- Northern Territory MyFuel Team:
 - 18 December 2024
- Queensland Fuel Finder Team:
 - 20 December 2024
 - 23 December 2024
- Western Australia FuelWatch Team:
 - 31 January 2025
- South Australia Fuel Team:
 - 12 February 2025

Witness	John Batho
Committee Member	Richard Welch
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Question 3

What is the current status of the CDC? (pg 17)

Where would I find that funding? (pg 18)

Is it still operating, and how many staff does it have? (pg 18)

Transcript extract:

Richard WELCH: Thank you, Chair. Secretary, cybersecurity is obviously a major concern. In 2023 there was the cyber strategy set up for a whole of government solution, significantly underpinned by the cyber defence centre. There was funding for that in the 2024–25 budget but no funding in the 2025–26 budget. What is the current status of the CDC?

John BATHO: Mr Welch, I think there was funding in the 2025–26 budget as well as the 2024–25 budget for cybersecurity.

Richard WELCH: There is a line item in 2024–25. There is no equivalent line item in 2025. Has it gone to another –

Jo de MORTON: It could have a different name.

Richard WELCH: Where would I find that funding?

John BATHO: If you bear with me, I will see if I can –

Richard WELCH: You can provide that on notice if you like, if it is going to take some time.

John BATHO: Yes, I am happy to confirm the funding. But you are right: there was investment in 2023–24 for the cyber defence centre and then some further investment in 2024–25 for core cybersecurity controls, which is all part of the department's cybersecurity capacity at the moment.

Richard WELCH: So it has been absorbed within another line item in the budget.

Jo de MORTON: It is a different initiative name, I think. I am pretty sure we said it in our questionnaire, but I am scuffling to find that as well.

Richard WELCH: Let us take that on notice if we could.

John BATHO: Yes.

Richard WELCH: Thank you. Is it still operating, and how many staff does it have?

John BATHO: I have not got the exact number of staff, but I am happy to talk you through the core capabilities that the –

Richard WELCH: That is fine. I am just interested in the number of staff. Can you provide that on notice?

John BATHO: I am happy to provide that.

Richard WELCH: Thank you. The funding was \$3.6

Response:

The Cyber Defence Centre is part of the Digital and Government Services Group of the Department of Government Services.

In the 2025/26 Victorian Budget, the Department of Government Services received \$37.47 million over 3 years for cyber security and open data. This funding delivers continued cyber security controls that safeguard Victorian Government systems and provides continued public access to Victorian Government data.

The 2024/25 Victorian Budget allocated \$10.8 million over 3 years to deliver cyber incident response capabilities and enhance data security. This built on the government's \$34.7 million cyber security reform investment in the 2023/24 Victorian Budget.

There are 58 FTE currently employed to support the activities of the Cyber Defence Centre.

Witness	Dovid Clarke
Committee Member	Richard Welch
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Question 4

How many service providers do we have in this field?

Transcript extract:

Richard WELCH: Okay. Now, Cenitex is the state centralised IT provider. Why was it unable to prevent a complete server inventory?

Dovid CLARKE: Cenitex do not provide services across all departments, and they do not manage all the servers. Those that were in scope were deemed compliant under the audit.

Richard WELCH: Right. Those were deemed in scope. So which were out of scope?

Dovid CLARKE: As in, ones that are not managed by Cenitex at this point.

Jo de MORTON: Every department uses –

Richard WELCH: How many service providers do we have in this field?

Dovid CLARKE: I would need to take that on notice.

Richard WELCH: If you could, that would be helpful. Thank you. In the 2025–26 budget there does not appear to be much new investment in your broader digital government reform

Response:

The Department of Government Services does not have access to information about the number of providers engaged by other departments and agencies for ICT managed services in relation to ongoing monitoring, maintenance, and support of IT environments.

As at 27 November 2025, there were 1,226 suppliers who have registered on the relevant State Purchase Contract to provide one or more of these services.

Witness **Jo de Morton**
Committee Member **Jade Benham**
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Question 5

So can you provide the committee with a full list of all the other services that are duplicated between Service Victoria and other agencies in 2024–25? (pg 11)

Why have the agencies not retired their duplicative systems? (pg 12)

Transcript extract:

Jade BENHAM: Great. Thank you. Also, Service Victoria was supposed to remove the duplication across government, yet major services are still running in parallel. For example, the digital drivers licence is delivered by both Service Victoria and VicRoads. So can you provide the committee with a full list of all the other services that are duplicated between Service Victoria and other agencies in 2024–25?

Jo de MORTON: Yes. Are there any others?

John BATHO: No, I think that is the only one that I am aware of, which has one product across two channels.

Jo de MORTON: Two channels, being the joint venture arrangement, which is a bit unique. We can double-check, but as far as we know that is the only one.

Jade BENHAM: Okay, great. Thank you. What was the total cost in 2024–25 to taxpayers of maintaining both parallel systems, including the staffing, IT platform, maintenance and contract costs?

Jo de MORTON: Again, we would have the Service Victoria cost but not itemised by the drivers licence, because that is not how they deliver the product. They will have a cost of creating the mobile wallet for all the licences in there. They will have a cost of creating accounts for all the account holders. They will have a cost for payments – you know, whatever else. They do their work by reusable capability, not by service line like that.

Jade BENHAM: Okay. Earlier, also, Mr Batho, you stated that the app was developed using a modular system and that was much cheaper than using an app built from scratch. Given that answer, you would obviously have the comparison figures for that between from scratch and from a modular system. Do you have those?

John BATHO: Yes. Do you want to go?

Jade BENHAM: That would provide more clarity on that question.

Jo de MORTON: Thanks for the extra time to talk about it. I think where we were trying to go was that the cost of anything starts with: what is the right solution? So the first thing they do is the technology assessment about how to provide it.

Jade BENHAM: I am just looking at the comparison costs.

Jo de MORTON: But then what they say is, 'Well, we need an API,' and there will be an API, right? But then if you try to take a purpose-built app, then someone has to maintain that ongoing. You need a squad of people.

Jade BENHAM: I understand that, but obviously given the road that you have gone down using the modular level – I am after the figures: how much it would have cost in one scenario and how much it has cost in the current scenario.

Jo de MORTON: Yes. We would not have done those costings because –

Jade BENHAM: Then how do you know?

Jo de MORTON: because technologically that is not the way to deliver that service, because we would not have been able to support it in that way.

Jade BENHAM: That was not the answer that was given, but I am going to move on. Why have the agencies not retired their duplicative systems? Because there is more than VicRoads; there are also fines, ambulance membership, vehicle registration, which is obviously part of VicRoads. So why have the other agencies not retired theirs?

Jo de MORTON: Fines are not on Service Victoria or DGS. It is a link across to the fines system. Ambulance Victoria – that is one, actually, yes. We have already said we will take on notice and double-check if there are any others.

Response:

The following entities have duplicate products and services with Service Victoria:

- VicRoads (digital drivers licence and check/renew registration).
- Ambulance Victoria (Ambulance Victoria membership).

The reason for continuing to offer these services is a matter for these organisations, having regard to their organisation objectives and strategy.

Witness	John Batho
Committee Member	Jade Benham
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Question 6

What is exact split of the \$25.9 million provided for Births Deaths and Marriages, and Worker Screening?

Transcript extract:

Jade BENHAM: Back to births, deaths and marriages, why is the funding initiative of a part of \$26 million and \$24 million needed over this year and next year?

Jo de MORTON: The funding is for both births, deaths and marriages and workers screening. In both of those areas what we have been doing is trying to reform those services. Particularly in BDM, I think we talked a lot at the last hearing about improving those turnaround times and getting digitisation in there. One of the things that the Treasury officials are doing is really working with us on what that will do to the cost of the service. They are really interrogating how we are using it – back to our earlier conversation about all the reusable capabilities. So for example, if the whole-of-government call centre is able to answer the calls instead of separately to BDM, then we are leveraging all of that technology. They are really just making sure that we have properly costed, and that is continued work in progress.

Jade BENHAM: So how much of that funding then goes back to the Victorian registry?

John BATHO: Is your question in relation to the budget allocation – the \$25.9 million?

Jade BENHAM: Correct.

John BATHO: I have not got the exact split, but it is roughly 50 per cent BDM and the other 50 per cent is worker screening.

Jade BENHAM: If you have not got the exact amount, could you supply that?

John BATHO: Yes, that is not a problem.

Response:

\$25.87 million was provided to the Identity and Worker Screening output in 2024/25 as part of the 2025/26 Budget. The split of the funding is as follows:

- \$12.44 million – Worker Screening Unit
- \$13.43 million – Birth Deaths and Marriages

Witness	Jo de Morton
Committee Member	Aiv Puglielli
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Question 7

Are we able to know who those people were, even on notice if necessary?

Transcript extract:

Aiv PUGLIELLI: Thank you. You touched on competition. Given three of the big four banks in this country are panel banks.

Jo de MORTON: Sorry, in the meantime, it is all available on the tenders website, but it is not at that granular – it gives the categories. I will see if there is something more granular.

Aiv PUGLIELLI: Thank you. That is much appreciated. Just on competition, which I was getting to, three of the big four banks in this country are panel banks under this arrangement. Is that truly competitive?

Jo de MORTON: Well, like I said, we did our best in the tender to break it down into those modular components to try and get the competition from those smaller vendors and from the fintech companies. But at the end of the day there was an evaluation panel of about 25 people that looked at all those bids. That was before my time – that was back in 2021 – so I cannot speak to how much of that came out through that tender process.

Aiv PUGLIELLI: Okay. Are we able to know who those people were, even on notice if necessary?

Response:

The RFT process was overseen by an independent probity advisor. Probity protocols include ensuring the names of individual evaluators is kept confidential and all evaluators must make conflict of interest declarations.

All evaluators are subject to strict probity requirements, meaning procedural integrity, whereby all bidders have equal opportunity to participate, and the assessment of bids is fair, objective, impartial and transparent.

Witness	Jo de Morton
Committee Member	Aiv Puglielli
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Question 8

Is it possible for the committee to be provided with a breakdown of what services are provided from which bank, so we can have more of a thorough assessment of what is going on?

Transcript extract:

Aiv PUGLIELLI: Thank you, Chair. Good afternoon. To start can I take us to the banking and financial services state purchasing contract? You might have had a heads-up about this because I raised it with DTF yesterday. Can you provide the committee with the amount of bank fees and charges paid by the state to each of the banks as part of that contract for management of the state's accounts?

Jo de MORTON: Thanks. Yes, I did see you ask that question yesterday. I cannot. The contract applies to over 1800 departments and agencies subject to the standing directions, and the contract value is around \$200 million over the five-year period. But the specific fees were commercial in confidence for those vendors who bid for the contract. You mentioned – I know you know – three of the four large banks bid at different rates. So what happens is those 1800 departments and agencies can look at the different prices across the different types of services offered and pick the ones that are the best value for money for them. Given that competitive nature of that tender, those fees are commercially sensitive to the vendors that bid for it.

Aiv PUGLIELLI: Okay. Can you tell the committee a bit more about what those fees and charges are that we would be paying for management of those accounts?

Jo de MORTON: Yes. Let me have a go. The main ones I think would be the merchant fees for payments by credit cards, for example. Just like in the private sector, you pay a percentage of the transaction. The other ones are around interest, but of course then we earn interest and it offsets as well. There are fees for things like cheques that are quite high because the banking sector is trying to phase them out, and indeed will. So you find worse pricing for the areas they are trying to incentivise people to not use. They are the main ones: fees on transactions and then interest fees on money that is offset against interest earned.

Aiv PUGLIELLI: Okay. And that figure you gave earlier of the total in fees paid – was that an exact number, or do you want to come back to the committee?

Jo de MORTON: No, that is the total value of the state purchase contract. I would not be able to give you the specific fees.

Aiv PUGLIELLI: Okay. Thank you. And those three panel banks – do they offer different services to the government?

Jo de MORTON: You asked a really good question about competition in the marketplace as well. What we did through the tender was we put out a range of modules, so the core transactional banking, the merchant services, those kinds of things – purchasing cards, for example. The market was able to bid for some or all of those services, and we were trying to make sure that we could encourage a range of suppliers, including smaller suppliers and some of the more specialised banks who cannot offer the full suite of services, to participate just in some of the modules. That panel arrangement replaced the previous sole provider arrangement in trying to get that wider range of reporting capabilities, alternate products and services, a bit of innovation, things like payment gateways and such. I do not know, but again, in the schedules, departments can pick from the services offered by the different institutions the ones that suit their particular business needs.

Aiv PUGLIELLI: Okay. Is it possible for the committee to be provided with a breakdown of what services are provided from which bank, so we can have more of a thorough assessment of what is going on?

Response:

Information about services provided by the panel banks under the State Purchase Contract is available <https://www.buyingfor.vic.gov.au/banking-and-financial-services-contract#what%E2%80%99s-covered>. The services are grouped under 4 modules:

Core transactional banking

- transactional banking arrangements, bank account structures (including pooling arrangements), and ancillary services such as account maintenance
- a branch network to receive cash and cheques and offer encashment facilities
- cheque issuance and collection/negotiation
- BPay
- electronic payment services including payroll and outsourced payments
- electronic banking system capabilities, including an interface to receivables and general ledger systems

Merchant services / acquiring

Inbound credit card and debit card receipts including through:

- electronic funds transfer at point of sale
- interactive voice response

- operator assisted payments
- gateway services

Purchasing / Procurement cards

- procurement cards
- virtual cards
- prepaid, rechargeable and one-off cards
- interfaces to expense management systems

Omni Payment Channels

- collection services including over-the-counter bill payments
- other collection/payment services both in Australian Dollars and foreign currencies.

All panel banks provide some or all services under each module. Government agencies can choose to use one bank or a combination of panel banks to meet their banking needs. Disclosing a further breakdown of service offerings for each panel bank under the SPC would reveal information that is commercial-in-confidence and may impact the State's ability to achieve optimal procurement outcomes.

Witness	Nicole Rich
Committee Member	Aiv Puglielli
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Question 9

Can I ask: of the 74 minimum standards inspection blitzes that were conducted, how many of them identified minimum standards breaches?

Transcript extract:

Aiv PUGLIELLI: Okay. Thank you. Can I ask: of the 74 minimum standards inspection blitzes that were conducted, how many of them identified minimum standards breaches?

Nicole RICH: That is a good question. I will have the stats for that, but I will have to take that on notice.

Response:

17 of the 74 rental properties inspected through inspection field operations during the 2024–25 financial year were found to not meet one or more of the minimum standards.

Witness	Nicole Rich
Committee Member	Aiv Puglielli
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Question 10

Can I ask: how many of the 89 infringement notices have been paid in full?

Transcript extract:

Aiv PUGLIELLI: Okay. Thank you. Just moving on, looking at the Consumer Affairs annual report, page 25. In terms of Consumer Affairs Victoria's renting taskforce activities for the budget period, of the 1523 assessed rental property cases, how many of those resulted in enforcement action?

Nicole RICH: Thanks, Mr Puglielli. Yes, that is correct; that is the number of cases we have assessed. I think the stats are in the annual report as well. They are not necessarily directly referable, because we do different things depending on what the nature of the issues are that we are concerned about in the cases and what we are assessing for. For example, we do report on direct engagements with renters there. That would be an example of where we are sort of working with renters to see if they will give us more information about what is happening in the case et cetera. Sometimes we need that for evidence. We did issue, as I said, nearly 130 official warnings for the year and 89 infringements – they are examples of formal enforcement actions that arise; and we did initiate five criminal prosecutions during the financial year as well – they are obviously pointier actions. There are other examples of things that can arise from the cases.

Aiv PUGLIELLI: Okay. Thank you. Can I ask: does CAV collect data on renters choosing not to report due to fear of retaliation?

Nicole RICH: Look, no, it is not possible I guess for us to know the counterfactual of people who do not contact us, but I understand the point you are making. It is certainly a concerning issue. We did commission some research recently from the Consumer Policy Research Centre into the experience of renters and also the experience of rental providers. That has been published obviously in the current financial year. But the CPRC report into the renter experience does report on the percentage of renters that reported fear of retaliation as a factor, so I definitely commend that research to you. It is definitely informing our thinking as a regulator.

Aiv PUGLIELLI: Okay. Thank you. Can I ask: of the 74 minimum standards inspection blitzes that were conducted, how many of them identified minimum standards breaches?

Nicole RICH: That is a good question. I will have the stats for that, but I will have to take that on notice.

Aiv PUGLIELLI: Yes, that is okay. Thank you. Does CAV record how many complainants discontinue complaints processes part way through, prior to resolution of the issue that they had?

Nicole RICH: I am not aware that that is a data point specifically that we collect, sorry. Different cases I say go through different pathways. There might be a range of reasons why something might not result in a formal enforcement action. I mean, yes, it is possible that it could be because a witness does not want to proceed, but I would not say that is overly common. It is just not something we capture data on.

Aiv PUGLIELLI: Okay. Thank you. Can I ask: how many of the 89 infringement notices have been paid in full?

Response:

Fines Victoria is responsible for the administration and enforcement of infringements issued by enforcement agencies such as Consumer Affairs Victoria. Fines Victoria has advised that:

- 15% of fines have been paid in full to date
- there may be a range of reasons why an infringement has not been paid in full, including because a payment plan is in place or a request to have the infringement reviewed or heard in court has been made.