



YOUTH JUSTICE REFORM SELECT COMMITTEE

Members present:

Ms SL Bolton MP—Chair
Ms MF McMahon MP
Mrs LJ Gerber MP
Mr AD Harper MP
Mr JJ McDonald MP
Mr DG Purdie MP
Ms JC Pugh MP

Staff present:

Dr A Beem—Committee Secretary
Dr S Dodsworth—Assistant Committee Secretary

PUBLIC BRIEFING—INQUIRY TO EXAMINE ONGOING REFORMS TO THE YOUTH JUSTICE SYSTEM AND SUPPORT FOR VICTIMS OF CRIME

TRANSCRIPT OF PROCEEDINGS

Wednesday, 21 February 2024

Brisbane

WEDNESDAY, 21 FEBRUARY 2024

The committee met at 11.05 am.

CHAIR: I declare open this public briefing for the committee's inquiry to examine ongoing reforms to the youth justice system and support for victims of crime. My name is Sandy Bolton. I am the member for Noosa and chair of the committee. I would like to respectfully acknowledge the traditional custodians of the land on which we meet today and pay our respects to elders past and present. We are very fortunate to live in a country with two of the oldest continuing cultures in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, whose lands, winds and waters we all share. With me here today are: Melissa McMahon, member for Macalister, who is substituting for the member for Cooper; Aaron Harper, member for Thuringowa; Jim McDonald, member for Lockyer; Dan Purdie, member for Ninderry; Jess Pugh, member for Mount Ommaney, who is substituting for the member for Hervey Bay; and Laura Gerber, member for Currumbin.

The purpose of today's proceedings is to assist the committee in its inquiry into youth justice reform in Queensland. This briefing is a proceeding of the Queensland parliament and is subject to the parliament's standing rules and orders. Only the committee and invited witnesses may participate in these proceedings. Witnesses are not required to give evidence under oath or affirmation, but I remind witnesses that intentionally misleading the committee is a serious offence. I also remind members of the public that they may be excluded from the briefing at the discretion of the committee. These proceedings are being recorded and broadcast live on the parliament's website. Media may be present and are subject to the committee's media rules and the chair's direction at all times.

Witnesses before the committee have called on all sides of politics to deliver bipartisan youth justice reform. I would like to restate the bipartisan approach that each member has committed to in the undertaking of this important inquiry. As chair, I remind all members of this committee that questions put to witnesses must be relevant to the inquiry, and it is my expectation that these are asked in good faith.

I remind everyone that you may be filmed or photographed during the proceedings and images may also appear on the parliament's website or social media pages. I ask everyone to turn mobile phones off or to silent mode.

MARSHALL, Ms Penny, Assistant Government Statistician, Crime Statistics and Research, Queensland Government Statistician's Office

SKINNER, Mr Antony, Government Statistician, Queensland Government Statistician's Office

CHAIR: Good morning to you both. Thank you for joining us. Would you like to make an opening statement before questions are put to you by the committee?

Mr Skinner: Thank you, Chair. Firstly, I acknowledge the traditional owners of the lands on which we meet today and pay my respects to elders past, present and emerging. Thank you for the invitation to provide a briefing on the role of the Queensland Government Statistician's Office in publishing crime statistics and research. In the interests of time, we would be more than happy to move to questions.

Mr PURDIE: To confirm, your department does the annual statistics review for the Queensland police? They used to do it in-house but you have now done it for some time?

Mr Skinner: Yes. We publish the Queensland crime report, which incorporates much of the information that was previously published in the annual statistical review, but that has expanded with a range of other information compiled in the report.

Mr PURDIE: Do you do that through QPRIME? Do you have access to QPRIME? Do you have any vision on how police classify different offences and how they group them? Recently I have heard that they are changing the way they are grouping offences. Some offences that used to be particularised individually are now just classed as one offence. Do you have any vision on those types of procedural matters?

Mr Skinner: As government statistician administering the Statistical Returns Act, I am able to access government information. Yes, we access the administrative data from Queensland police. We apply statistical standards to that. As statistical standards change, we endeavour to incorporate those. In terms of operational changes to police reporting, we are aware of when changes are happening. The specifics of how that impacts on the statistics, though, is probably a question for Queensland police.

Mr PURDIE: If the Queensland police internally recently have changed the way an offence, for example a stealing offence, is recorded—it used to be the case that if one offender committed multiple stealing offences on the one victim that was recorded as separate offences but is now being recorded as one offence between dates—is that something you would refer to in your report to say that the reporting parameters have changed?

Mr Skinner: If you refer to the 2021-22 report that is available on our website, we are quite clear about where there have been changes to either policing practices or legislation that impact on the statistics. In ingesting the administrative data, we do quality checks. Where we identify something that is a bit different that we have not seen before, we will inquire back to police to understand what has changed.

Mr PURDIE: When is the one for the year we have just finished due to come out?

Mr Skinner: That is going through the production process at the moment. I would anticipate the 2022-23 report to be available within the next six to eight weeks.

Mr HARPER: Thank you both for coming in. There is a lot of data out there. Most people, including ourselves, can have trouble interpreting that. Can you help us understand why crime trends can be difficult to interpret? There is this narrative out there that crime overall has been declining for a decade yet some crimes are increasing. It is a mixed bag when you try to look at the data. Can you help us to understand it better?

Mr Skinner: Across any content matter you will get different statistical measures from different sources reported by different organisations but on the same topic. It is important to look at each information source within its own context to understand the scope, coverage and definitions that are being used within that. In the crime statistics context, the ABS data is frequently referred to. They are preparing a nationally consistent information set so that there is comparability across states and territories. For a range of reasons to do with data quality, data availability et cetera, they may exclude certain things from the scope and coverage of what they report on. If you are looking at the ABS data versus what we publish in the crime report, there is a difference in certain offences that are included and excluded in the ABS report. It is important to go to the explanatory notes, as we do in ours, to explain what those differences are. Specifically in terms of the ABS data and ours, they exclude an offence code related to traffic offences, whereas we include that in the data that we report.

Mr PURDIE: I go back to that question, which is sort of the nub of why you are here. As the member alluded to, he is a bit confused by different statistics. That is the problem we have: there are members on this committee who seem to be confused by the crime statistics. Is there any statistic over the last 10 years that shows that crime, over any crime class in any place in Queensland, has gone backwards? Be mindful that we are talking about the Youth Justice Reform Select Committee? I am not concerned about traffic offences and we are not looking at DV offences, which are recorded differently. In terms of those crimes that are predominantly committed by young people—unlawful use of a motor vehicle, unlawful entry, robbery—can you point to any statistic that shows a downward trend in those crimes being committed across Queensland?

Mr Skinner: There is lots of data. In terms of crime statistics, you have to look specifically at what you are looking at. An offender—

Mr PURDIE: What we are looking at is crimes—

CHAIR: Member, can you please—

Mr PURDIE: It is not that hard—that is for someone on the committee, not you. We are talking about victims and offences. Is there any stat that has shown that the number of victims or the number of crimes being committed is going down?

Mr Skinner: It is difficult to answer that general question in a specific way because you need to be very clear about what the indicator is that you are describing.

Mr PURDIE: I do not think it is that difficult in that—

Mrs McMAHON: Point of order.

CHAIR: Member for Ninderry—

Mr PURDIE:—it is offences and crimes and victims. That is all we are really looking at.

CHAIR: Member for Ninderry, the answer has been given and we need to move on.

Mr McDONALD: Point of order. The gentleman would like to answer the question.

Mr Skinner: I am happy to take that question on notice.

CHAIR: Lovely. Thank you so much.

Mrs McMAHON: Thank you very much for coming in. I did briefly have interactions with the Government Statistician's Office when we used to do the police annual reviews and we started including data like domestic and family violence data. It is always said there are three types of lies out there. Can you identify how two different people could look at the same set of statistics and come up with two very different readings of it? I do not want to use the word cherry-picking of data, but how you interpret statistics can vary depending on what you want to prove out of statistics; would that be right?

Mr Skinner: If you want to put it that way, yes. I would use the example of offenders—and I know there has been discussion about statistics and there is various other commentary out there around the data. Again, you have to be very clear about what you are looking at. If you look at just using the term 'offenders', you could look at one statistic that shows it has gone up and another that shows it has gone down. However, when you look at the detail of it, offenders where the data shows it has gone up is based on the count of offenders against all offences. The data that shows that offenders have gone down is based on a count of unique offenders. Within a reference period—within, say, a financial year as we report—we do a count of unique offenders, where they are only counted once regardless of how many times they may have committed an offence across the reference period.

Mrs McMAHON: It would be important when reading data presented in simple formats like tables and charts to actually interrogate what data is included and what data is excluded in order to determine the truth of the statistics?

Mr Skinner: Correct, and that is where in our annual reports and in our research reports we go at length to try to help with that transparency, first of all by giving general advice around things that might be impacting on the data. Then when you are actually looking at a specific chart or a table, there will sometimes be quite a lot of very detailed, dense explanatory notes referencing various cells, rows and columns that attempt to help give that understanding of what is behind those numbers.

Mrs McMAHON: There is an education aspect to your office in terms of providing not only data but also education on how to read the data if someone is inclined to educate themselves?

Mr Skinner: We are always happy to take questions for clarification.

Mrs GERBER: I want to pick up on something that you just said and get some clarity. You said that one way of calculating is using the unique offender. That unique offender is counted once, but they may have committed offences multiple times over the year period. Practically, you could have a 14-year-old who has stolen 20 cars. There are 20 victims, but that 14-year-old is only counted once?

Mr Skinner: There is also a way to count unique victims in a similar way.

Mrs GERBER: Stealing cars? I am just looking at your annual report, and offences against the person are the victims you count. Do you count victims of property crime?

Mr Skinner: Again, you have to look at the scope and coverage of what is being reported. As the member for Ninderry mentioned in his first question, we have taken over reporting what was the annual statistical review. We have picked up that methodology. The methodology there is that 'victims' is only for offences against the person. There is a range of reasons for that, because police need to be able to identify a victim of a crime; not all offence types are able to do that. That is why for offences against the person predominantly there would be a victim identified against that crime.

Mrs GERBER: Could you give us the figure? What is the current figure that the statistician office has in relation to how many victims we had in Queensland in the last financial year?

Mr Skinner: Are you talking count or unique?

Mrs GERBER: Count, definitely not unique.

Mr Skinner: In terms of 2021-22, total recorded victims was 64,540.

Mrs GERBER: Can you give us the comparison of unique?

Mr Skinner: It was 52,202.

Mr PURDIE: What was that five years ago?

CHAIR: Excuse me, member for Ninderry—

Mrs GERBER: That is a great question. What was that five years ago?

Mr Skinner: It is difficult to do that time line comparison, because the 2021-22 data was impacted by the change in police recording practices around domestic and family violence offences.

Mrs GERBER: Could you take that on notice?

Mr Skinner: We can.

Ms PUGH: How many staff does your team currently have working in the Crime Statistics and Research unit? Has that crime and statistics unit done any research on youth crime since publishing the 2021 report that you did?

Mr Skinner: There are two parts to the question of how many staff because we have a content area of crime statistics and research, but that also draws on the broader capability of the office in terms of what you see on the website and the business applications that go behind it. I cannot give you a global total on that because it is a bit of this and a bit of that. In terms of the Crime Statistics and Research unit itself, there are 12 FTEs associated with that.

Ms PUGH: Is there anything you could furnish about any further research you have done since that report was published in 2021?

Mr Skinner: You are referring to the youth offender report?

Ms PUGH: Yes.

Mr Skinner: There is nothing that we have published as yet.

CHAIR: You have mentioned that the national data is being brought into a framework which gives comparisons. Our role here is to basically look at how we reduce recidivism and prevent crimes not only now but also heading forward. The reality is that data is important not for some of the reasons that I am seeing in the tit-for-tatting but to be able to work out what is working and what is not working and what the trends are. My question is: who determines the content? For example, if we have stats on offences or offenders, is that taken from a judicial aspect as in a charge and a court appearance, or does it include those who have been cautioned by police? To get a real feel about not only what is happening but where the improvements need to be made, those statistics would help enormously. Do we have that?

Mr Skinner: If I understand your question correctly, we do in that we publish a crime and a justice report. Crime is all about reported offences, and that is within the police purview. In the justice report we look at flows through the system around courts and then corrections. The numbers in terms of offenders in the crime report will be different from what is in the justice report for courts because only certain police actions flow once the crime is detected or reported and an offender is identified; only a proportion of those police actions flow through to the courts.

CHAIR: We are capturing those who are just cautioned?

Mr Skinner: Yes.

CHAIR: For offences? All offences or is it only offences that are identified as having a victim? For example, are stolen cars captured in that data?

Mr Skinner: Again coming back to being clear about measure for offences, yes.

Mrs GERBER: But not for victims?

Mr Skinner: Consistent with the annual statistical review, we categorise reported offences under three broad categories: offences against the person, offences against property and other offences. You are correct, member for Currumbin: victims are only recorded against offences against the person, for reasons that I broadly outlined, but the offences across those three are all captured.

CHAIR: They are all captured, but a car theft is not classified as within those three categories for the victim?

Mr Skinner: In the data you will not get a victim of a car theft, no, because that is an offence against property.

CHAIR: It is still captured in the data?

Mr Skinner: In the offences, yes.

Mr McDONALD: It is quite clear to me that there has been an inconsistent measure of statistics going back to a period of time and there have been changes through methodology and scope that you have been asked to measure. Would that be a fair statement?

Mr Skinner: Are you able to give me an example?

Mr McDONALD: Yes, I can. It is very hard to find the number of cars that were stolen in Townsville in 2015 versus the number of cars that were stolen in Townsville in 2022, whereas it is quite easy to find the rate of unique offenders with a proven offence—one, not 75—per rate of population, per 100,000, which makes it start to go down. In terms of consistency, methodology and approach, that did not even exist back in 2015.

Mr Skinner: I am sorry. Could you repeat that?

Mr McDONALD: I think what is clear is that there is inconsistency, so has there been—

CHAIR: What is the question? Member for Lockyer, what is your question?

Mrs GERBER: He is asking it.

Mr McDONALD: Is there a consistent measure of statistics from 2015 to 2022 in terms of offences?

Mr Skinner: My initial response—and I will take the question on notice and come back to you—is that we have applied a consistent methodology to the measurement since we began publishing the crime report from the 2017-18 reference year.

Mr McDONALD: There is a reason this committee was set up and that is because youth crime is out of control, so the statistics I am talking about need to be consistent.

CHAIR: Member, again, please—I am going to move on. It is about asking a question. We are not here as committee members to make statements or ask leading questions. We are here to ask questions.

Mr McDONALD: We are here to discover the truth.

CHAIR: Ask your question or I will move on to the next member.

Mr McDONALD: Mr Skinner—

Mrs GERBER: Point of order.

CHAIR: There is no point of order, member for Currumbin. Please move on.

Mrs GERBER: You need to hear a point of order before you can rule on it, Chair.

CHAIR: Member.

Mrs GERBER: I have a point of order.

CHAIR: What is your point of order?

Mrs GERBER: Unless you are prepared to acknowledge a problem, you cannot fix it.

CHAIR: And our role—

Mrs GERBER: The member for Lockyer is simply trying—

CHAIR: Member for Currumbin, we know what we are here to do. We are not here to continually tell witnesses; we are here to ask questions.

Mr McDONALD: Thanks, Chair. In terms of victims, it is very important for Queenslanders to understand the rate of offences that are occurring versus victims. I understand that back in 2015 there was a number of victims and in 2022 there was a number of victims. Can you tell us what happened to those two figures?

Mr Skinner: Again, this is only in the context of the victims of offences against the person. Can I come back to the previous point about consistency, Chair? What I will say is that, as a statistical office, if there is a change of methodology we will be transparent about that in the publications that we report.

Mr McDONALD: Who asks you—

CHAIR: Can he just please answer the question you already had? Thank you.

Mr Skinner: This is not unique victims; this is the total count of victims for offences against the person. In 2021-22, as I said previously, the figure was 64,540. Depending on how you define 'five years', in 2016-17 it was 31,199. I am referring to figure 22 on page 66 of the crime report. In 2015-16 it was 28,389. As I said before, there have been some significant changes in reporting practices towards the end of that time series. That is not to discount that change, but it needs to be read in that context.

Mr McDONALD: That is in terms of how police deal with them?

Mr Skinner: Correct.

Mr McDONALD: The figures I have are 25,900 back in 2015 through to 80,900 in 2023?

Mr Skinner: I am not aware of your source of where—

Mr McDONALD: That is from the Queensland Police Service data—their annual report.

Mr HARPER: Is that all offences?

Mr McDONALD: No, that is offences against the person. We can go to property, if you would like, where there is quite a significant increase.

Mr Skinner: When you say ‘annual report’, as in the Police Service’s—

Mrs GERBER: The website. Go on the website.

Mr PURDIE: Data mapping statistics online.

Mr Skinner: I would need to take that on notice and explore that and consult with Queensland Police.

Mr HARPER: I am not sure whether you can answer this, Mr Skinner. Last year there were two laws passed in the House—breach of bail as a first offence and declaration of serious repeat offenders. Are you able to provide the committee with data capturing how many have been charged with breach of bail and/or declared? You mentioned before that you require data, but the justice report and the crime report—are you able to delve into that? I am happy for you to take that on notice.

Mr Skinner: I would need to take that on notice. We ingest the administrative data as reported. It is not necessarily individual records allocated to specific pieces of legislation.

Mr PURDIE: We saw in the Auditor-General’s report last year that 96,000 calls to Policelink were abandoned. This committee heard in Mount Isa and other places that people have often given up trying to get through to report crime. Have you been asked to try to work out a figure of the true picture of criminality, knowing that almost 100,000 people abandoned their call to Policelink? By the nature of policing, you assume they are ringing to report a crime or have been a witness of crime. Have you been asked to try to work out what we are missing?

Mr Skinner: No.

Mr PURDIE: In relation to these unique offenders, we have clear-up rates. I do not have them in front of me, and there is a fair bit of data there, but in relation to unlawful entry, I think I remember that that has gone down a fair bit. If there is, say, 70 per cent of crimes that are unsolved, are you in a position to identify who those offenders are—whether they are unique offenders or repeat offenders?

Mr Skinner: If the crime is unsolved, one contributing factor is that they have not been able to identify an offender.

Mr PURDIE: That confirms my point, thank you. I will give you that question on notice about identifying a crime stat that shows crime is decreasing. Can you tell me how many cars were stolen in Townsville in 2015 and how many cars were stolen in Townsville in 2023? I do not think we need the education unit to help us with that one. Is that something you can bring up pretty quickly?

CHAIR: Member, may I remind you of what I said at the beginning of how you preface your questions but also treating witnesses with respect in your commentary.

Mr Skinner: We are just seeing if we can identify that quickly in the reports for you, but we would not have the number of cars, per se.

Mr PURDIE: Why is that?

Mr Skinner: That is not part of the information that we use to compile the reports.

Mr PURDIE: Unlawful use of a motor vehicle is a stolen car. You need a complainant or a victim—a complainant is a victim—for the police to record that. Is that not necessarily then that the amount of stolen cars is the amount of complainants and number of victims—

CHAIR: Member for Ninderry, please, the witness is trying to answer a question and you just continue. It is almost becoming harassment.

Mr PURDIE: I apologise if it is coming across that way, Mr Skinner. I am trying to unpack this as quickly as we can.

Mr Skinner: Again, it comes down to what you are trying to measure. It depends on whether you are looking at police incidents or unique offenders.

Mr PURDIE: No, stolen cars. How many cars were stolen?

CHAIR: Member, I am going to move on—

Mr PURDIE: I am not talking about unique offenders and incidences.

CHAIR: Please allow—

Mr McDONALD: With respect, Chair, Mr Skinner is engaging with Mr Purdie while his assistant is looking up the figure. He is not interrupting him.

CHAIR: Yes. However, can I point out that he continues to keep adding bits and pieces. Ask the question and allow—

Mrs GERBER: This is a protection racket.

Mr PURDIE: Or even across the state. If it is easier, so that you are not drilling down on one specific place, across the state how many cars were stolen in 2015 and how many were stolen in 2023?

Mr Skinner: I cannot say equivocally how many cars. What I can say to you is that the number of offences against property classified under unlawful use of a motor vehicle in the Townsville district was 49 in 2021-22.

Mrs GERBER: And in 2015?

Mr Skinner: I do not have that in the report, but I can take that on notice.

Mr PURDIE: Forty-nine?

CHAIR: If you can take it on notice, thank you.

Mrs McMAHON: I note that we have had some interesting and robust discussions about how to classify and how police classify offences. Noting that crime stats are quite important, does your office do any other work in and around factors contributing to crime such as traits of victims and/or offenders, or is it purely just the act of the crime? In terms of recording traits or characteristics of offenders or victims, is that something your office looks at as well?

Mr Skinner: It is a good point. The function of statistics is one; research is another. There are a range of research reports across a variety of research areas that are delving into unpack some of those offender and victim traits.

Mrs McMAHON: If we want to get to the bottom of decreasing youth offending, are there any of these traits or trends that you are finding in youth offenders that are either trending up or trending down or something that this committee should take notice of?

Mr Skinner: There is probably one very interesting report that I would point to and that is a report on the victim-offender overlap, showing that—and correct me if I am wrong here, Penny, please—16 per cent of victims are also offenders.

Mrs GERBER: Mr Skinner, to ensure victims are really at the centre of my questioning and what I am talking to you about, I want to go back to the conversation around victim numbers and victims not being counted when it comes to property offences. We have heard some horrific stories about the impact that the property crime has had on victims. Their children's rooms have been ransacked, they are absolutely distraught, it has left lasting anguish and scars on them and they are still trying to deal with it throughout their whole life. I want to understand why they are not counted.

CHAIR: I think you are asking for an opinion.

Mrs GERBER: No. I want to understand why the statistician's office does not count them in the facts.

CHAIR: Could you provide that, Mr Skinner? From my understanding, that would probably be more appropriately directed to QPS.

Mr Skinner: We report based on the data that we have available, and what we publish in the crime report is victims of offences against the person. To improve that administrative data is a question for Queensland Police.

Ms PUGH: I want to return to the line of questioning from the member for Macalister. You talked about the overlap between victims and offenders and the statistics there. With a gender breakdown as well, is there significant disparity between men and women where there is an overlap?

Mr Skinner: Yes. Not only men and women but also the Indigenous status. For Indigenous women—this is where an offender is also a victim, and this is young people that I am talking about here—32.5 per cent of victim-offenders are Indigenous women. That compares to 16.1 per cent for non-Indigenous. It is 21.6 per cent for Indigenous men and 12.5 per cent for non-Indigenous men.

Ms PUGH: Can I ask you to speak generally to any trends in crime you are seeing as they pertain to this committee over the last 10 years that are going dramatically up or that are going dramatically down? I would be very interested if you could expand on that a little further. It is quite a broad question.

Mr Skinner: I can refer to the report that is published. The unique offender rate over the period 2012-13 to 2021-22 has declined from 2,792.8 to 1,926.4. That compares to the adult unique offender rate from 2,811.3 to 2,276.6. In terms of unique offenders, that has been a trend down over that time period. That said, though, within the offenders, child offenders account for nearly one-fifth of all proceedings against offenders, and there were seven offence types where more than 30 per cent were child offenders and three of those were half or more of all offenders. They were unlawful use of a motor vehicle, then robbery and unlawful entry.

CHAIR: Further to what I was asking previously and the role of this committee in endeavouring to reduce recidivism and youth crime, is there anything that you could suggest, besides some of the things we have brought up, that would improve the ability for the community to see data? It can be very difficult. An example is within the portals available to see youth offenders and what crimes are actually being committed and that consistent, easy-to-use reference point. Is there anything you can suggest so that, as communities, not only do we have that data available very easily to stop the arguments going on about what is the correct amount or what is the incorrect amount but also we have some solid baselines, especially when we are looking at what actually works in terms of programs? We need some kind of gauge as to how they are going.

Mr Skinner: I cannot necessarily comment on the effectiveness of programs, per se, but, in terms of data, when we commenced our work program in this space we were beginning on a system view, and that is why we have a crime report and a justice report. Another way to slice that, though, would be to bring information sources from across the system under the banner of a particular cohort of the population—for example, youth versus adult; Indigenous versus non-Indigenous—and report across the system on that population cohort.

CHAIR: That would be totally possible?

Mr Skinner: It would depend on what the administrative data that is accessible can support—again, needing to be very clear about the definitions of what has been reported and how it should be analysed and where caution should be placed.

CHAIR: Where would responsibility for doing that lie? Would that be with QPS to make determinations about the data being sent through?

Mr Skinner: I could not really comment on who would have responsibility for making those calls.

Mr McDONALD: I want a bit of clarity around how your office works. I understand you are like a contractor to each of the different departments. Who determines your methodology and scope, particularly around these statistics? Does that come from the Police Service to you?

Mr Skinner: We are not necessarily contracted. The office itself is a function of Treasury. We provide statistics and research services for government. We do that across a number of areas. As I mentioned, we operate a large part of our program under the Statistical Returns Act. That provides the statutory position of Government Statistician that I currently have the honour of serving in. As experts in field, we would generally be looking to implement methodologies and practices that are best practice and apply those across whatever content area we are providing services on.

Mr McDONALD: Take the example of the change back in 2021, I think you said, to 'unique offender'. Where would that change have come from? Would that have come from the Police Service or from Treasury?

Mr Skinner: I am sorry: by your reference to the change in 2021 to 'unique offender', I think you might be referring to the change in police reporting practices. Changes of that type are determined by, in this case, the Police Service, and we try to understand as best we can and provide transparency about where that impacts on the aggregate statistics that we publish.

Mr McDONALD: I understand—as is footnoted in your report, yes.

Mr HARPER: Mr Skinner, just to confirm, you gave a figure of unique offender rates from 2012 to 2022 of 2,792 down to 1,926. What percentage drop is that approximately?

Mr Skinner: You have got me there with my mental arithmetic, I am sorry.

Mr HARPER: Perhaps for the members of the public, could you define what is a unique offender? What is the criteria? How do you capture that?

Mr Skinner: In this context, we employ a counting rule within a reference period where the reference period is, in this case, a financial year. Where there is a crime reported or detected by police, an offender identified associated with that, they will get counted the first time. Then regardless of the number of times they may come to the attention of police for different offences over that reference period, they are only counted once.

Mr HARPER: From 2012-2022, has that data always been publicly available?

Mr Skinner: For that time period, yes.

Mr HARPER: Reporting annually?

Mr Skinner: Yes.

CHAIR: Even though you are under Treasury, you are an independent entity?

Mr Skinner: I think the term used is 'administratively separate' in that we are a function of the department but, because of the legislation that we administer and the policies and procedures that go with that, we are administratively separate, and that gives a level of independence. Also in terms of the powers that I have as Government Statistician under the act in terms of what is under section 4 in terms of topics that can be collected, section 6 of the secrecy provision, and section 7, powers to release, I have independence to exercise those powers.

Mr PURDIE: Mr Skinner, you mentioned earlier a detailed stat and I missed the end of it. You were talking about young offenders, 30 per cent, and a list of offences. Can you explain that to me again?

Mr Skinner: That was the victim-offender overlap. Again, this was a piece of research applying counting rules to the data where over the period 2008-09 to 2021, where a victim is identified, we apply a counting rule to see if they then show up in the data as an offender. Across that—and this is for the total young people—16 per cent of that population were both victims and offenders.

Mr PURDIE: To dumb it down, essentially, I asked before about stolen cars in Townsville—I am mindful that Ms Marshall was frantically trying to find it and that you would not have it off the top of your head—and I think you replied that there were 49 stolen cars.

Mrs GERBER: Unlawful use of a motor vehicle.

Mr PURDIE: Unlawful use of a motor vehicle offences in Townsville in 2015. The stats I have—

Mr Skinner: 2021-22, sorry.

Mr PURDIE: The stats I have in front of me from the QPS webpage are that in 2015 there were 650 cars stolen—unlawful use of a motor vehicle offences in Townsville. In 2023 there were 1,945. Similarly across the state, there were 9,359 unlawful use of a motor vehicle offences in 2015, and in 2023 there were 20,211. Is there any hidden data in those numbers that we should be mindful of, or is that just a clear case showing that crime, particularly unlawful use—as we know, kids do commit the majority of those offences—has continued to go up?

Mr Skinner: I cannot provide an answer to that without seeing the information on the QPS source and making a comparison. I am happy to take that on notice.

CHAIR: Yes, that is right. Thank you.

Mrs McMAHON: I want to go back to some questioning we had earlier about victims and victim counts, specifically offences against the person versus offences against property. In indicating and recording offences against property, noting that that includes unlawful use and a number of wilful damage and those type offences, to not specifically classify them as victims in the data, that is not to say or not to attribute that in the original police data there are victims ascribed to each of those particular offences?

Mr Skinner: I could not answer that question generally. It depends on what is actually in the police record. Again, we can have a conversation with police.

Mrs McMAHON: But in simply calling them offences against property, it is not any inference that those crimes do not have a victim attached to them?

Mr Skinner: Absolutely not, no.

Mrs GERBER: I want to go back to victims and better understand the answer that I was given. I know that QPS report on the website the number of victims of property offences, so we know that that count is in police data. I want to understand why the statistician's office does not count them in its report.

Mr Skinner: You have made a general statement there about the numbers that the police report. That might be the number of offences that have been reported that have a victim identified. I cannot comment on what the coverage of that would be across that offence group. Again, I would need to have a conversation with police about that in terms of—

Mrs GERBER: What would the Government Statistician's Office need in order to start counting those victims? Is it simply a directive? I am trying to get to the bottom of it.

Mr Skinner: First of all, we would need to explore the current state of the administrative data to see what needs to be improved from a reporting perspective.

Mrs McMAHON: It has been a while since I used my SPSS and statistics, but most people do not use statistics on a day-to-day basis; therefore, when presented with simple charts and bar graphs, assumptions are often made without interrogating the data. Your job as government statisticians is to present data with all the caveats and underscored notes. When you see public reporting of statistics, do you think it is adequately capturing the data that is being provided in your reports, or is it being simplified for public consumption so therefore nuances are being missed?

Mr Skinner: I think a general comment I could make is that, for all of the explanations I have given today and responses to questions, crime statistics and justice statistics is a complex space. In terms of reporting those, it is very easy to mix measures and concepts within a narrative and draw conclusions that might not necessarily hold.

Mr McDONALD: I am very interested to see us get to the bottom of why some of these victim crimes are not recorded, and I would be really interested to work with you to understand that. I know that it is data being retrieved from the Queensland Police Service. Can you explain to us the term 'administrative data'? You have used it three or four times now. Is there a difference between administrative data and the whole data of offences as well?

Mrs GERBER: Like what is on QPS.

Mr Skinner: Administrative data is a general term used where information from systems designed for administrative purposes are extracted, and standards and techniques are used to compile aggregate statistics. In this case—and it is noted in the explanatory notes in our report—the administrative data source for the crime report, for example, is QPRIME.

Mr McDONALD: So an example of that would be a count within QPRIME that is then extrapolated to a unique offender—policing—with a proven offence—justice—because that is the rate per 100,000 that is being recorded. That has been provided to you. I am not asking a question about that. That is an opinion. I am just saying that as an example of this administrative data going from the QPS numbers to unique offender, again with the overlay of a proven offence.

Mr Skinner: I can give a broad answer to that. We are not deriving the data that we publish in our reports from aggregate administrative counts and applying assumptions et cetera. We are building it from the record-level information and applying counting rules.

Mr McDONALD: I understand, but this is vitally important and why there is such confusion over the statistics.

CHAIR: We have run out of time. I want to thank you so much. I want to apologise if there was any discomfort during this hearing. There are no excuses. I apologise on behalf of those who did that.

Mr PURDIE: I just want to confirm—

CHAIR: Hold your horses, please, member. A number of questions have been taken on notice. Responses to those are due by Wednesday, 6 March. Member for Ninderry, do you want to clarify your question?

Mr PURDIE: Going back to the first question from the member for Thuringowa, can you provide the committee with any statistic that shows that crime—I am not talking about unique offenders and overlays of offenders—as in victims or property offences, because behind each one is a complainant, has gone down over the last 10 years? I assume that in relation to assaults you can quarantine DV offences, because that would be linked on QPRIME as a linked DV offence, but if you cannot you can add a note about those reporting changes. We accept that DV offences and associated recording of assaults relating to DV have gone up; we are not looking at that. However, in relation to those offences you spoke about—unlawful use, unlawful entry, robbery and other offences that we know young people are committing—can you show us anywhere where that has gone down over the last 10 years?

CHAIR: Overall, what you are seeing and what has been interesting during these inquiries is that what we are basically told is that offenders—as in unique offenders—have gone down and certain offences have gone up from a particular cohort of recidivists that are cycling through the detentions.

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I know that it is probably frustrating for everybody to see an argument going on between two sides over whether something has gone up or down, but ultimately our role is to reduce—regardless of what the percentages are—instead of putting time into areas that seem to be just used as part of politicking, so I apologise again. That is that question on notice. Does anyone else need to clarify their question on notice?

Mr McDONALD: Yes. Just towards the end I asked that question regarding why more of the victim figures for property are not coming over from police and how we could have a conversation about that and seeing it happen. Also, right at the start we talked about—

CHAIR: I am sorry, but is this in relation to the question on notice? All we are doing at the moment is clarifying.

Mr McDONALD: Yes.

CHAIR: All right, so we have one.

Mr McDONALD: Right at the start you talked about a national standard of statistics.

Mr Skinner: I think my words were along the lines that the ABS produce a nationally consistent set of data.

Mr McDONALD: Or working towards that. Maybe we could get a brief about that.

Mr Skinner: That sounds like an additional question. Sorry, Chair.

CHAIR: Yes, it does—just maybe a link to where we can get some more information on that.

Mrs GERBER: I had a question on notice, too. You have that one, don't you?

Mr Skinner: What was that?

Mrs GERBER: My question that you took on notice. You have that one?

Mr Skinner: Yes.

CHAIR: All right. I want to thank you both so much. I know that your time is precious. We really appreciate it. Again, the date for the response to questions on notice is 6 March.

Ms Marshall: Thanks very much for your time today.

BREWER, Superintendent Peter, Domestic, Family Violence and Vulnerable Persons Command, Queensland Police Service

FLEISCHER, Acting Superintendent Rob, Community Engagement and Internal Support, Communications, Culture and Engagement Division, Queensland Police Service

HINCHLIFFE, Mr James, Director, Research Analytics, Policy and Performance Division, Queensland Police Service

MASSINGHAM, Acting Assistant Commissioner Andrew, Youth Crime, Queensland Police Service

STREAM, Assistant Commissioner Chris, Road Policing and Regional Support Command, Queensland Police Service

CHAIR: Good afternoon. I now welcome officers from the Queensland Police Service. Thank you so much for joining us. I invite you to make an opening statement. Then there will be some questions from the committee.

Assistant Commissioner Massingham: Good afternoon, Chair. We thank you for the opportunity to attend the committee today in relation to the ongoing work being undertaken by the Queensland Police Service to address and respond to crime. I am the new acting assistant commissioner in relation to the Youth Crime Taskforce, replacing George Marchesini on 2 January this year.

For the Queensland Police Service, community safety is at the centre of our approach. We want people to be safe in their homes and in public places and we will action this with a youth crime strategy using the following four pillars: breaking the cycle of offending using programs such as youth co-responder, Project Booyah and our PCYCs; engaging in early intervention and prevention programs with our key partners; an important one—providing support and assistance for victims and also keeping them updated; and stopping our repeat youth offenders. These priorities currently drive action plans in each of our seven police regions and we will continue with vigour our partnerships that see young offenders diverted from a life of offending. Success in 2024 will be characterised by more programs for young people, more engagement opportunities with our co-responder teams and the PCYC, and more time spent with victims.

The QPS does seek to have serious young repeat offenders held to account, particularly those that use violence and who are armed, and, where appropriate, their bail objected to in the strongest terms. This is one area where I have a deep and focused interest and was an undertaking I publicly gave to the people of Queensland back on 2 January this year. In 2024 we want our response to serious repeat offenders to be better coordinated and integrated using specialist resources where required. Much of this work has already commenced, with pleasing results already reported through the South-East Queensland integer network. This network comprises senior investigators and intelligence specialists from the Gold Coast, Logan, south and north Brisbane, Ipswich and Moreton that map serious repeat offending and deconflict our investigative response, freeing up resources and making the system more efficient. Our teams remain committed to protecting the community by responding quickly, investigating thoroughly and taking swift enforcement action with serious repeat offenders.

The recent activity of Taskforce Guardian in Townsville, as one example, has resulted in a 70 per cent decrease in robbery offences, a 47 per cent decrease in unlawful use of motor vehicle offences and a 42 per cent decrease in unlawful entry to buildings and businesses. There are many examples across Queensland this year, in 2024, where Taskforce Guardian is making significant pathways in decreasing youth offending with our local officers. Our commitment is also demonstrated through the most recent eye in the sky Polair initiative launched in Townsville on 16 January to assist police in tracking stolen vehicles, locating offenders and missing persons and enhancing community safety.

Having said that, prevention and early intervention strategies remain critical. Timely and effective interventions are critical for young people involved in or at risk of involvement in the youth justice system. The QPS will continue to work with our partners and the community through our early action groups, crime prevention initiatives and diversion programs. We also continue to undertake rigorous bail compliance checks to prevent crime. We are also gaining momentum through our digital

intelligence and community engagement team, interacting with over 500 Facebook community groups and reaching over 2.5 million people to help break the cycle of offending. Their work has also led to the identification of over 150 people for social media boasting.

Police are often the first contact for victims of crime and as first responders we have a crucial role in ensuring victims of crime receive appropriate support and assistance. I still to this day provide ongoing support to the many families touched by homicide as a result of my 10 years of service in the homicide squad. Many police, like me, do this day in and day out. However, to provide support for all victims in 2024 and beyond, we will enhance our capacity and capability to provide a victim-centric and trauma informed response and embed a QPS victim response framework across all districts in Queensland. I also hold a position on the Victims' Commissioner's committee that will further inform this approach. In addition, we want our police this year to be better communicators, informing the community of the steps we are taking to reduce juvenile offending through informative media and clear messaging.

In closing, the QPS will continue to keep the community safe and make them feel safe and we will continue to deliver a balanced approach to youth crime. We want the community to have confidence that we are indeed turning the tide on juvenile offending through protection and enforcement, high-visibility policing and intervention and prevention. Thank you.

Mrs GERBER: Thank you for being here today. I want to put on the record my deep appreciation for the work of our police officers and all of you in the force. Thank you very much for everything you do. In 2015-16 when the government changed the law and made detention a last resort, what advice did QPS provide the government about that change?

Mr PURDIE: You can take it on notice if you have to.

Mrs GERBER: If you have to take it notice, yes, that is fine.

Assistant Commissioner Massingham: I would have to look into that in terms of something that occurred some eight years ago. At this stage I cannot assist with that any further.

Mrs McMAHON: You have outlined a number of programs that the police are already involved in such as Booyah and PCYCs that members would be familiar with. I am interested to hear particularly about how the QPS engages with the under-14s and particularly the under-10s. For example, I know that Booyah has an age limit; they have to be over a certain age. Given that we are hearing about young and younger offenders, what is the police response or protocol when dealing with a child who is below the criminal age of responsibility or whose criminal responsibility cannot be used to go through a criminal process?

Assistant Commissioner Massingham: Our first response in terms of our frontline police in those instances would be to use our co-responders, where we have a representative from Youth Justice and also police to look into what is occurring if we are talking about someone under the age of 10 years. That is where we have the opportunity to try and divert that child, whether it be through one of our many programs or the PCYC, or engage with our partners in and around what is occurring with health and education in the home environment of that child. If that was an issue that our first response police came across, my recommendation—and I am sure the recommendation of all district officers—would be to use that co-responder model as a non-confrontational way of trying to resolve that in the first instance.

Mrs McMAHON: Do all districts have a youth co-responder model in place?

Assistant Commissioner Massingham: Yes. There are only two that do not—Sunshine Coast and South West District. The remaining 13 do.

Mrs McMAHON: Are they meant to be coming online or are they proposed to come online anytime soon?

Assistant Commissioner Massingham: There are some recommendations from Youth Justice on the Sunshine Coast to have that happen. There are discussions there and there are also discussions in South West.

Mrs McMAHON: There has been a lot of commentary around PCYCs and the more corporate aspects of PCYCs—moving away from the youth engagement model and more towards the gyms and gymnastics or whatever it is that they tend to offer. How many police do we have dedicated at PCYCs to deal with at-risk youths and running programs at no cost to engage those young people?

Assistant Commissioner Massingham: I will ask Mr Fleischer to add some comments, but in the first seven weeks of this job I have had the opportunity to visit I think six or seven. I have noticed that there is a high police presence at each of those during the day and at night. Programs are

co-ordinated and administered in a lot of instances by police. There are, indeed, after-dark programs where they call for assistance, particularly in relation to boxing programs and the like, but certainly there are healthy numbers in and around what I am seeing at the moment in terms of my seven weeks in the job.

Supt Fleischer: I would appreciate the opportunity to present to you on some of our early intervention capabilities but also crime prevention if I get the chance to do that later in this session. I have the pleasure of sitting across the PCYC capabilities for the Queensland Police Service. I am pleased to advise you that we have 54 clubs right across the organisation. Of that, we have about 74 staff that sit and work in partnership with PCYC. The partnership between PCYC and police has been going very strong, and we are in our 75th year right now.

In relation to what we do in the model, earlier this year we transitioned all our clubs to what we call a back-to-basics approach. As you would be aware, since we started our inaugural club 75 years ago at the hallowed ground of Lang Park things have changed and they evolve over time. What we have found over time is that our police were more and more involved in the administration process and we thought there were better opportunities for the community and our young people to drag those police away from those administrative burdens and ensure they are solely focused on providing youth early intervention to young people.

Sitting at the core of our back-to-basics model is looking at some of our after-dark programs. That is about our police solely dedicated to engaging with young people and engaging them after dark in activities that not only build their resilience and self-esteem but also can push them into referral services. We work hand in hand with the youth co-responder model. I invite anyone on the committee to come and see. You are welcome to come down and look at the work we do, particularly some of the flagship areas that we have, at Logan and Caboolture, and see how the model works with the youth co-responder model working hand in hand with the PCYC and then from the PCYC we can divert those young people on a needs basis into care.

Mrs McMAHON: Are you able to provide any numbers, either by district or even statewide, of how many at-risk youth come into contact with PCYC services on an annual or monthly basis?

Supt Fleischer: Yes. Across all the clubs for the general public there are about 425,000 people that pass through our clubs every year. Of those, there are 50,000 youth through youth programs that pass through our clubs. Of those 50,000, we estimate that about 10,000 we would deem at-risk youth. Particularly when you go to some of those lower socio-economic areas, but also when we look at some of the great work that our PCYCs do in partnership with some of the discrete communities up in the cape, it is really quite amazing some of the work that our PCYC sergeants and second officers do. I would also like to commend them on the work they do each and every day working in some of these communities.

Mrs McMAHON: Absolutely. Thank you.

Mr PURDIE: Thank you, Assistant Commissioner, for coming in. Thank you for the work you are doing. I apologise to your colleagues who were only here a couple of months ago who are back, but this is your first time, and I thank your predecessor who presented to us last time. I missed the Channel 7 report the other night where you did a ride-along with the TV cameras, but I heard it was good. I heard that a comment you made towards the end was that success for you is about the number of victims and how you can drive that number down. What can you tell the committee about the number of victims over the last couple of years? How has that been trending? Coupled with that, not only the stats—we have just heard from the statistician's office—but also the level of criminality is concerning to the committee. We see on the news that young offenders are now chasing police, particularly in places like Townsville. Can you tell me about the number of victims and the level of criminality of these young offenders?

Assistant Commissioner Massingham: I know that, on coming into this job on 2 January, we had record high crime at the end of last year in relation to a number of key areas—an overall increase of around five per cent across the state with offending. What we also saw was an increase in serious repeat offenders—their level of violence, the fact that they were going armed and in company, often armed to steal car keys and the like—as a trend that was continuing significantly and continues into 2024. That comment was around the placement of a strategy that I outlined to you some weeks ago and some early indications around where that is trending in terms of a very hardline approach in relation to serious repeat offenders—and I have said this often—not just for what they were caught for last night but also the week before and then the week before that. Then if they get bail and we do not have a legal avenue at that point to object and if they continue to offend, we will continue to put them before the courts and when we get an adverse outcome relating to bail we will take action in the Supreme Court. We have already done that on one occasion in Rockhampton.

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My message in relation to a reduction of victims relates to the figures I am seeing in 12 of 15 districts across Queensland year-to-date figures in the last seven weeks compared to the previous year. Those figures are very encouraging to me. It is only a seven-week period so we need to be cautious in making any conclusions, but, from what I am seeing, the combination of particularly Taskforce Guardian but also the Whisky Unison funding, where we have now seen 4,808 juveniles charged with 10,051 offences since March last year, in combination with a very hardline approach on the SROs—serious repeat offenders—in my view is starting to see real dividends. When I talk about a decrease in victims, I talk about that in the context of what I am seeing in terms of driving those numbers down.

Mr PURDIE: I realise that you would not have this on you and I do not want to put you on the spot, but in those numbers you gave us—I do not think the committee has seen them and I am hoping you might be able to get them to us—how many of those offenders are cautioned? We can quite easily see how many offenders are going before the Childrens Court, but how many offences and how many offenders are being dealt with under the Youth Justice Act that do not even record on the Childrens Court report? Are you able to give us a breakdown of how many went to court, how many were charged, how many were cautioned, how many were youth justice conferenced? Is that data that you have available?

Assistant Commissioner Massingham: Yes. We are doing about 15,000 cautions per year and case conferencing is just over the 2,000 mark for the 12-month period, but cautioning continues to remain our main diversion tactic in relation to those children. As you know, you can only caution so many times before you need to take stronger measures.

Mr PURDIE: No doubt. I do know it is successful, as 80 per cent or more never reoffend.

Mr HARPER: Thank you, Assistant Commissioner Massingham. In your opening statement you highlighted Townsville particularly with the outstanding work there: 70 per cent decrease in offences; 47 per cent reduction in unlawful use; and 42 per cent reduction in unlawful entry. I want to commend you and the hardline approach you are taking because it has given my community significant reprieve.

Assistant Commissioner Massingham: We appreciate the feedback.

Mr HARPER: Are you seeing similar trends in other regions with that approach you have adopted in Townsville?

Assistant Commissioner Massingham: Yes, we are. In 12 of the 15 districts we have year-to-date figures where the offending rate combination is down significantly. We have the unique offender numbers down significantly in those 12 as well. In one district we have no change in terms of the amount of offending by youths and then in two districts we have actually seen an increase in this six- or seven-week period of 2024 compared to the same period last year.

Mr HARPER: Very quickly, can you provide—this might be on notice—the amount of bail applications that police have objected to? What is the success rate there?

Assistant Commissioner Massingham: Normally speaking, we object to between a third and half of those people who appear before the court. As you know, there are a number of steps we need to go through before we present those affidavits, and we tend to find that the court agrees with us on about one-third of those occasions.

CHAIR: Earlier you mentioned the legal avenues to object. Is that an area that needs amending? We have heard that within the process police can object to an offender being released before going to court. From what I am hearing, two-thirds of the time your objections are not being taken into account. Am I correct in saying that?

Assistant Commissioner Massingham: Not in recent months. My observation in recent months is that more serious repeat offenders are being kept in custody now than have previously been kept in custody and the figure around the one-third would be more of the 12- to 18-month figure.

CHAIR: Are there any amendments that are needed within legislation or elsewhere?

Assistant Commissioner Massingham: Ultimately, it is a matter for the court to decide based on the evidence provided by us and the matters determined by the defence as being significant as to whether bail will be granted. We took 16 objections to the Supreme Court last year and we got a successful outcome in 12 of those. I think that aspect, in terms of if we are not agreeing with the decision of the magistrate and we need to ventilate at the Supreme Court level, is working effectively enough.

Mr McDONALD: Thank you, Assistant Commissioner and team, for being here. Congratulations on the appointment. Thank you for your operational understanding and the approach you have brought to the job and the focus clearly on community safety. I put that on record right from the start. The diversionary processes that you do in the police see about 91 per cent of cautioned offenders never offend again.

Assistant Commissioner Massingham: That is correct, yes.

Mr McDONALD: That is a great achievement. This committee, however, is charged with dealing with some of the worst of the worst, the serious repeat offenders. We just had a session with the Government Statistician's Office. I am not sure if you heard that presentation. I was quite concerned at the number of things that are being recorded within the police database which I trust are true figures. Are they true figures in the police statistical database that is available online?

Mr Hinchliffe: Yes, they are.

Mr McDONALD: I am happy for you to take this on notice. My concern is that we heard that the number is addressed in an administrative approach and then unique offenders are counted and then unique offenders with a proven offence are also counted, which is reducing the actual numbers of crimes. I note you are nodding. This is one of the real frustrations. A key reason this committee was formed was escalating crime, escalating victims, and the seriousness of crime which you outlined. Can you help us understand how we can better approach statistics to have a consistent measure so that we show the real picture that is affecting Queenslanders?

Mr Hinchliffe: I was here for the Government Statistician's Office appearance an hour ago. As Antony Skinner said, there are so many ways in which you can report statistics. On the whole, QPS reports in terms of reported offences. We also report in terms of unique offenders. It is really trying to come up with something which is consistent. Unfortunately, there are multiple datasets out there, not just numbers. We do have numbers; we also have rates per 100,000. They often get mixed up. It is problematic, but it is certainly something that we could do in terms of coming up with a uniform—like, this is the measurement in terms of what we want to do in regard to measuring, in this case, juvenile crime. Yes, there are so many different ways in which we can report it.

CHAIR: When you said 'we', is that the QPS?

Mr Hinchliffe: The QPS.

CHAIR: So it will be driven by the QPS?

Mr Hinchliffe: Yes. We can only obviously report on the QPS data, which is reported offences.

Assistant Commissioner Massingham: One of the advantages for me, being in charge of the youth crime taskforce, is that that data is live as of now. In terms of youth offending and what they are convicted of, you may not get that data for six, 12 or 18 months, until that actually occurs. So cleared and reported crime and then youth offending overall, over a period, are really important for me looking at where we are going to put resources and move forward and plan forward.

Ms PUGH: I place on record my gratitude for my own excellent local team of Peter, Ben and all the team at Mount Ommaney. My question expands a little on the chair's question. First, could you expand on the role that your organisation plays when a serious repeat offender might be given bail and you have the opportunity to object? I note that you had 16 objections and 12 of those were successful. I am going to ask the chair's question in a slightly different way. Did you consider lodging more objections, and if the legislation were different would that have further encouraged you to lodge more? Do you understand what I am getting at?

Assistant Commissioner Massingham: Yes, that is a possibility. I did meet with the Childrens Court prosecutors throughout the state only three or four weeks ago and posed a similar question. At the moment, it is based on the framework that does exist in terms of that. As I said before, there is a mechanism there for us to go to the Supreme Court, which ultimately would make an impartial decision around that. Whether an amendment in legislation would be beneficial in that instance I think would be a matter of interpretation.

CHAIR: What we have heard from around the state is that the interventions are coming far too late. I am not talking about QPS; I am talking about Youth Justice in terms of a lot of the health assessments, psychological assessments, identifying things like fetal alcohol syndrome, education outcomes et cetera. That all seems to occur once they are detained. We have constantly heard that all of that needs to be moved right up. It seems to be very clear that they say the police are best placed to determine whether somebody actually needs something more than what is available as options at the moment in that space. What I am trying to understand is: do we need a review to

consider providing the QPS with the ability to place restrictive behavioural conditions on youth at the time of referring to a restorative justice conference? How could that occur way back here in a mandatory sense, instead of consent needed?

Assistant Commissioner Massingham: I will frame the answer by saying that I think there is good evidence that early intervention should start from birth to five or birth to eight.

Mrs GERBER: We all agree with that.

Assistant Commissioner Massingham: If we are coming into contact with a child in that age group then there are certainly some significant concerns there. In terms of youth who continue through that system without any touch from Health and without any touch from Education and who come before us in whatever capacity, we look at doing the best we can. If cautioning or other factors of the work that the PCYC does are not effective and unfortunately they must attend a court, one option there is a court ordered assessment around that offending behaviour—how it has occurred and how each of the agencies as a whole-of-government response should respond to that.

CHAIR: Does that mean they have to go to court first? Is there a time earlier when that could be implemented?

Assistant Commissioner Massingham: I think there is, definitely. On each and every occasion we try all options that we can with our partners to do that. Unfortunately, if the offending does continue to escalate and we know somewhere down the track they are going to become a serious repeat offender, when they go before the courts for their first-time offence which is a serious offence—let's say it is an armed robbery. They have not been before the court previously but it is a serious offence and it is an escalating offence. Rather than the provision of bail, an important part of that would be a court ordered assessment that would involve all agencies to see what is going on in that child's life and provide a measured response using those agencies, depending on the individual circumstances of the difficulties that that child is suffering.

CHAIR: Communities feel that there is an unacceptable cycle where there are a number of offences that need to go to court. It is not as serious as in the example you gave but there have been a number of repeat offences. What can be improved there? That is what we are here for. We are trying to work out what we can do to stop that repeat offending and get the assistance needed much earlier. Is there anything you can say that QPS need at their disposal to ensure that?

Assistant Commissioner Massingham: We need the ability to have all of the relevant players at the table—all of the people who have the requisite power to make decisions and who have the chequebooks, not the proxies—who turn up to make decisions in consultation and collaboration with us around what is best for that child. As I say, it depends on the individual circumstances. It may be education; it may be a housing issue; it may be a parenting issue that specialists, in a therapeutic way, can deal with. We are part of that process because, invariably, we may be at a touchpoint with that child at some point so we have a part to play. In terms of response, it needs to be whole-of-government, it needs to be across agencies, it needs information sharing from day one and it needs everyone on the same page.

CHAIR: What does that look like? Instead of Youth Justice taking that role at the point that a child enters a court scenario, does it mean that Youth Justice comes here somewhere as a lead agency so all those services and everything that is available, including the chequebook, is right back here with you guys?

Assistant Commissioner Massingham: Absolutely. If you look at our multiagency collaborative panels that happen currently with serious repeat offenders, just wind that back 10 years and have a model where you are able to break that cycle early. That is what we are looking at. When I talk about early intervention with our key partners, that is the difficult part here. A lot of intervention programs may last only six or 12 months or the like. If we are going to get serious about breaking the cycle then it needs to be birth to five, birth to eight, first touch with police, multiagency panel, whole-of-government with people who can make the key decisions at the right times.

Mrs GERBER: I want to get to the bottom of some of the data that we heard from the Government Statistician. Before I do that, can I get some clarity? You mentioned that police give around 15,000 cautions annually; is that right? Is that 15,000 unique offenders?

Assistant Commissioner Massingham: I would have to check that number. I just read it as 15,000.

Mrs GERBER: Can you take that on notice? If it is not unique offenders, if it is just 15,000 cautions, can I get the unique offender number as well?

Assistant Commissioner Massingham: Yes.

Mrs GERBER: I want to get to the bottom of some of the statistics that we heard from the Government Statistician. I wrote down that he said in 2021-22 there were 49 unlawful use of a motor vehicle offences in Townsville. I just went onto the QPS data website and it says that in 2022 there were 1,614 unlawful use of a motor vehicle offences. Can you try to explain the data that is on the QPS website and how that may be interpreted differently by the Government Statistician? Can you get to the bottom of that for me?

Mr Hinchliffe: On the UUMV statistics, how the Government Statistician has got to 49 I am not sure so I cannot really comment on that. The numbers that you just quoted seem to be more in line with what we would report.

Mrs GERBER: I guess that is it. I will have to go back to them.

Mr Hinchliffe: I really cannot comment on how they came up with that figure.

Mrs McMAHON: In your opening statement you referred to police taking a more trauma informed approach to victims of crime. There have been a number of inquiries and reports into policing and some of the shortfalls in dealing with victims. I understand that this committee has heard of a number of instances involving the Client Service Charter—I do not know whether that still exists—about police following up and providing victims with the outcomes and responses and keeping them up to date with the investigation. What does a trauma informed policing response look like and how do you train a workforce of that size to become trauma informed?

Assistant Commissioner Massingham: The trauma informed training came about as a result of sexual offences and DV offending that was occurring. I know that all of our plain-clothes officers who deal with sexual offences every day went through that training. Our frontline police went through that training as well. It is at the front of what we are doing with domestic violence as well. The workforce, as you know, has been through a number of recommendations from that inquiry and there have been training packages delivered. Some are four or five days in length. It centres very much on that trauma informed response to victims. We can apply that across different categories of offences, generally speaking.

That victim framework that I talked about, which is being rolled out, will also assist in that process of identifying and triaging those people who need the most close attention from us as opposed to those people who may prefer a phone call or the like. That is designed to identify the level of trauma and to respond accordingly. Certainly in those top-end offences that we see where people are threatened in their own homes or injured or homicides or attempted homicides, we have a very good relationship with those victims and we do so for a long period. That is our history.

In terms of what I want to see in this 12-month period, I want that applied and a framework applied, which Rob has lead of across the state, to ensure that we close the loop with the victims and that, in fact, they are better informed. I think at the moment we need to do better in that area.

Mrs McMAHON: As a follow-up question in terms of surveys and data that the QPS may hold—not necessarily the Government Statistician's Office—about client satisfaction or victim satisfaction, is that conducted regularly? How is it conducted and what are the trends that are being seen in those surveys?

Supt Fleischer: There are a couple of things to unpack and speak to you about in relation to that. I would like to speak to you about the victim response framework. I think Mr Brewer needs to talk to you a little about the referral system that we have in place as well.

First of all, I will touch on the last part of your question in relation to surveying the community. We have conducted the Community Experience Survey twice now from a police point of view. We conduct it every two years. So far we have surveyed 18,000 members of the Queensland community, really to get their feedback and track how we are going in our community service journey as they go through the system. To give you some clarity, so as to not retraumatise our victim we did not survey people who have gone through high-trauma crimes; it was just volume crime, just to ensure it is a trauma informed practice that we are doing. To answer your question, from those results we found that the level of professionalism for police was adequate and it really resonated with the community.

Mrs McMAHON: Could you clarify what 'adequate' means?

Supt Fleischer: We grade it out of 10. From our point of view, anything that is below five obviously is a focus area for us and we really need to look at it. With all of our survey results we aim for 10 out of 10. All of those results are coming into the sixes and sevens in relation to the professionalism from police, respect and fairness and politeness.

Where we found that we had opportunities to improve is in relation to keeping our victims up to date. We found that the police respond to an incident, but they may not come back and circle back to the victims and give them an update on the investigation. As a result of that, the Queensland Police Service commenced the Close the Loop initiative, which is working on putting processes in place not only from a cultural change point of view and education to our frontline police—we have also done a lot of frontline conferences with our police; both Mr Massingham and the commissioner have gone around and spoken about the importance of closing the loop for OICs and frontline police—but also in relation to looking at an automated process where we can continue to prompt police to come back. The police will, just through the nature of their duties, be going from job to job and sometimes, unfortunately, they are not getting back to victims as well we could. There are some processes in place to ensure we have Close the Loop initiatives so we can support victims better and keep people up to date. That is what the community wants and that is our expectation in relation to our police.

The second part of that response is talking about the victim response framework. We look at our volume crime. As Mr Massingham spoke about, for serious crime there are processes in place in relation to the way we respond to those victims. Some of the areas that we think we can improve and that we are really working hard to improve are in relation to the volume-crime victims—they are the people who may report unlawful use of motor vehicle or their house getting broken into—and how we can support them better. As a result, we have developed the victim response framework. The victim response framework is getting rolled out across the state now. It looks at how we get that data and reports of crime. We look at how we can stop revictimisation and put things in place to support victims after the crime is reported. We have a process where we develop a triage system where we can look at the crime against a crime class, the nature of it and the victim. We then can prioritise that on calls for service and how we follow up and go back. There is a range of things we can do in relation to coming back and the referral service, which Mr Brewer will talk about.

Mrs McMAHON: Is there anything you do differently when it is a juvenile offender as opposed to an adult offender in this framework?

Supt Fleischer: As in the crime?

Mrs McMAHON: In terms of getting back into contact with a victim, offering support and keeping them up to date, is there anything that has to be done differently in that framework if the offender is a juvenile?

Supt Fleischer: It is based on the crime and the nature of the offending, not the age or the type of offending. It is across all types of crime—juvenile crime and adult crime as well. The victim response framework is a trauma informed response. That will be pushed out through our district crime prevention teams. District crime prevention teams are undergoing training at the moment to make sure they have the level of training to support it.

The key point to that is that when we triage we look at the level of need of the victim—whether it is to go out and make sure they have the right referral and support around them or even issues such as security audits on their homes or referral to different support agencies to prevent revictimisation. It is all the work we do in that post area as well with all the crime prevention we do. Really, we are in the business of preventing crime. We do not want to get to the point where we are dealing with victims. That is really the utopia we are looking for.

Supt Brewer: Part of the domestic, family violence and vulnerable persons area is the area of police referral. When police attend an incident in the first instance to take a crime report or another call for service, they can offer the constituents at that point in time a referral to a number of different categories. We have upwards of 530 service providers across Queensland providing support in a broad range of categories. Particularly for young people, in that first touchpoint where there might be the first signs of problems, they can be referred for bullying, alcohol and drug misuse, mental health—even for recreational activities, which feeds into the PCYC—for that early intervention. It is about supporting obviously people in marginalised communities as well. In the 2023 calendar year there were 170,000-odd police referrals. As part of that process, for anyone who is a victim of a serious type crime there is a provision for some automatic referral through to Victim Assist Queensland for certain offence categories. We try and capture that fairly early on in the piece, when there is first contact with police.

CHAIR: You mentioned prevention. We have heard in terms of school-based police officers that one of the difficulties is that they are placed at one school and other schools miss out. The suggestion was that an officer should be precinct-based to focus on those identified as having behavioural issues, rather than just being placed at one and doing the current role. Do you think a review of both school-based police officers and SSOs would be able to give some broader coverage in that area of prevention?

Supt Fleischer: You are 100 per cent on the money. Last year, from a prevention capability point of view for QPS, we pulled together all of our early intervention capability to form the youth programs unit. We have a youth programs unit that sits out in the Inala PCYC now. That brings together the Booyah state office, the PCYCs, school-based police officers, school support officers and our blue light capability. We also formed a new capability in the QPS: the youth programs coordination team. That looks at providing consistent approaches for youth program delivery and evaluation across all the programs that we do. That sits under one roof now at Inala PCYC. A subset of that which sits in that group is the Policing in Schools group. We also brought in school-based police officers and a new capability called school support officers.

To provide the panel with some background on school support officers, that is a new capability that Queensland police will be running out that is civilian staffed at AO5 level. The kinds of people we are aiming for are those with youth worker education or some kind of social work background. There will be 60 of those workers targeting and working in schools right across the state. In that model, they are going to start and finish from police establishments and service a number of different schools for the SSOs. They will be targeted at the younger cohort. It has been touched on in this panel that we need to go to the younger cohort. That has been identified, and we are responding to that. They will be from primary school aged young people.

In relation to some of the broader benefits of the SSO capability we have seen since they have been rolled out, when you talk about early intervention and the challenges we face in this capability and what we are trying to do, it is not only those young people that they see not going to school—we understand that the risk factors for entering the criminal justice system increase—but also the siblings of those young people. We do home visits on young people who are not at school and we also identify that there are a number of people in that residence who have not ever been enrolled in school. That is where the school support officers come in, to ensure they have the care that they need.

In relation to school-based police officers, the model that we think is the best model that we are working towards—a number of different areas have adopted that such as Cairns and also Logan—is to pull the school-based police officers back into a precinct. You have your crime prevention team, the school support officers and the school-based officers working out of one police precinct and servicing a number of different schools. Each of the SSOs will target and service about three schools each and then the school-based police officers will do so as well. That was a good question.

Mr McDONALD: The Auditor-General's report released recently outlined that about 96,000 calls to Policelink went unanswered. I know that frontline police and civilians were quite aghast at that number. Has there been any work to determine what those calls were? Were they criminal in nature or reporting crimes? What additional resources or powers do you need? The government said that it wants to hear from police about what additional powers and resources you need. Can you let this committee know?

Assistant Commissioner Stream: Policelink is constantly conducting reviews of those calls that go unanswered—and also to the triple 0 situation. Obviously Policelink answers non-urgent calls, although as a group they also receive urgent calls that are then transferred through to PCC to the triple 0 network. Both of those groups are constantly conducting reviews and looking at their resourcing. Policelink is quite advanced in that it has automated roster systems that look closely at demand. They even have workforce managers who sit on the floors with the staff and manage that resourcing. We have actually seen a decline in the number of calls that Policelink is receiving, but the digital work has increased. A lot more people are engaging with the QPS through digital engagement and online engagement. That age range is quite broad. It is not just younger people who are engaging through digital connection. Yes, we are constantly reviewing that work that they receive and looking at changing the resourcing application within Policelink itself.

Mr McDONALD: Do you need more resources and/or more powers?

Assistant Commissioner Stream: We have been provided additional resourcing. We are just going through the process now of employing an additional 50 Policelink operators, supervisors, quality assurance staff and trainers within Townsville.

Assistant Commissioner Massingham: From a youth crime perspective, in terms of funding we have asked for additional funding for: PCYC early intervention programs; making our youth co-responder staff full-time and permanent—they are only temporary roles at this stage so we need funding for that; and additional resources in Cairns similar to what they see in Townsville. We have also asked for some legislation change around electronic monitoring devices and wandering, which will be the subject of debate in the weeks ahead.

Mr McDONALD: Those requests have all been made this year?

Assistant Commissioner Massingham: Yes, that is correct. They have been.

Mr HARPER: Thank you, Assistant Commissioner Stream, for that. I look forward to seeing those Policelink staff in Townsville. The Strengthening Community Safety Bill was passed last year. It had two particular elements: breach of bail as an offence and declaration of serious repeat offenders. Do you have any data on how many have been charged with breach of bail in that year and how many have been declared serious repeat offenders?

Assistant Commissioner Massingham: We have 49 serious repeat offenders at this stage. In terms of breach of bail, I would have to get back to you with specific numbers on that. I can assist, Chair, with the previous question on notice in terms of cautions.

CHAIR: Absolutely.

Assistant Commissioner Massingham: I was not far off: 15,412 cautions in the period 1 July 2022 to 31 June 2023; 2,052 restorative justice conferences; and 1,134 drug diversion or graffiti diversion programs. They are raw figures, not unique offenders.

Mrs GERBER: Can it be broken down into unique offenders? Can we get that as well?

Assistant Commissioner Massingham: It would take some work, but yes.

Mr McDONALD: On the member for Thuringowa's question around breach of bail, could we also get figures about the number of juveniles who are being cautioned for that? I understand that police use the power, which is great to get the youth off the street, but many are being cautioned—rightfully—and handed off to someone else. We do not want people to think the power is not useful.

Assistant Commissioner Massingham: Certainly, thank you.

CHAIR: From what we have seen and what we have read so far, of all youth who come before you it is literally 0.01 per cent who are creating this current situation—

Mrs GERBER: I would disagree with that.

CHAIR: I am happy to be corrected and I am asking the question—thank you, member for Currumbin. With that volume and the volume of crime that has escalated and been committed, at the moment understandably communities are concerned. We see that detention is not deterring, so they are cycling through. Some of what has been put forward is that exiting detention is the key area and that it is not just a short program. For some it will take years. Those pathways—whether they are in educational facilities that are residential or remote relocation sentencing for work purposes—obviously will take time to set up. Is there anything we can do right now with those who are cycling through, doing detention and coming back out? I think it is 94 per cent or 96 per cent who are reoffending. Is there anything you have seen or come across that could be done right now in relation to those offenders?

Assistant Commissioner Massingham: In terms of that cohort that we still believe we can help, the 72-hour plans are problematic. Often they are released on a Friday afternoon. Sometimes the instructing solicitor acting on behalf of the client will ask for them to be released on the Monday, because it is simply not practical: there is no accommodation and no support networks around that child so within the 72 hours they reoffend. There needs to be a safe place for those children to go where they have the support that they need, they understand the conditions of the 72-hour plan and then they are transitioned back into community—not straight from the watch house onto the street. That is a significant part of what we need to fix, without a doubt.

In terms of the most serious violent offenders, of which there are many—at the moment there are some 38 in Townsville, 36 of whom are still in custody—from what I see, those young children have very difficult circumstances and it will be very difficult to engage with them on a level where those programs are going to make a difference. That is the unfortunate nature of what we are seeing. Every child is worth saving—I accept that—but for that really violent, extreme group, unfortunately they will continue to cycle through the system until they age out and hit the adult system. That is the unfortunate nature of what I am seeing.

CHAIR: We have heard that effecting any rehabilitative change takes much longer than three or six months. Do we need longer detention for those until they age out?

Assistant Commissioner Massingham: A really important component to understand is that you have to get the child to engage. With this category of child, their ability or want to engage is very low. Physical assaults are common. Spitting is very common. They are a very angry group for a number of complex reasons. That is a very difficult piece of work that I think ultimately needs to be undertaken, but there needs to be the realisation with those children that they come from an extreme set of circumstances and, unfortunately, will continue to reoffend.

Public Briefing—Inquiry to examine ongoing reforms to the youth justice system and support for victims of crime

CHAIR: I want to thank you so much for the time you have given us today—again, invaluable. I want to thank you for the work that you do across Queensland in some of the most difficult of times. We all are deeply appreciative. Thank you so much. We need a clarification of one of the questions on notice. Go ahead, member.

Mr PURDIE: Thank you, Assistant Commissioner. I appreciate that you have frantically got the most current figures for us. Maybe Mr Hinchliffe might be best taking this on notice. Could you provide the committee with those trends, maybe over the last five years, in terms of all options for diversion as the assistant commissioner just ran through—type of offences, number of offenders and how that has trended over the past five years?

Mr Hinchliffe: Sure.

CHAIR: I think there are three questions on notice. Responses to those will be due on Wednesday, 6 March. I now declare this public briefing closed.

The committee adjourned at 1. 02 pm.