

Tuesday 3 July 2018

The Speaker, **Ms Hickey**, took the Chair at 10 a.m. and read Prayers.

QUESTIONS

GST - Method of Distribution

Ms WHITE question to PREMIER, Mr HODGMAN

[10.02 a.m.]

In October 2014 you informed the House that -

We will continue to vigorously oppose any changes to horizontal fiscal equalisation. It is a vital attribute and characteristic of our federal financial relations. It provides fairness and ensures that all Australians no matter where they live can access reasonable standards of essential public services.

We are now staring down the barrel of the most serious threat to Tasmania's finances in decades. By your own words, anything but the full preservation of the current GST distribution model will be a failure and yet it appears you have already resigned yourself to change.

Are you prepared for your short and sparse legacy of leading this state to be remembered for an attack from Canberra about which you did nothing leading to the crippling of equitable health care, education and emergency services for Tasmania.

Premier, why should Tasmania settle for average and not the best?

ANSWER

So many free kicks, so little time. Madam Speaker, I do not know where to start with that because on each and every front Tasmanians know that they will always do better under a state Liberal government and they will also do better under a Liberal government, a coalition government nationally.

I will make a couple of very important points. I stand by all my comments with respect to horizontal fiscal equation - HFE. It is essential for the fabric of our federation and the central part of what allows Tasmanians to enjoy a similar quality of service that others, in other, larger states, might be able to enjoy. And rightly so. Tasmanians deserve the same quality of services delivered not only through GST distributions but also through a state government that is investing more into the schools, hospitals and essential services you talk about. They are now better supported than ever before under a majority Liberal government here in Tasmania, which has a strong economy behind it and a budget we fixed that we had inherited from a Labor-Greens coalition, which was a mess.

We are in a much better position to not only continue to argue for our fair share of the GST, even an improved share of the GST - something that we will continue to argue for as well. I would like to always be very conscious of the fact that we have secured from the Commonwealth

government additional investments not only into our hospitals, and into essential services but also into the infrastructure that our growing state needs.

The recent federal budget demonstrates a significant investment of \$1 billion into infrastructure by the Commonwealth, which is supporting the effort we are making with the \$2.6 billion investment into infrastructure in our budget that has just been released.

We will continue to fight very strongly. I have been, if not in daily contact, in almost constant contact with the Prime Minister and the federal Treasurer, as has my colleague, Mr Gutwein, our Treasurer, to continue to fight hard for Tasmania's fair share. In the past, those opposite have dared us, challenged us, demanded we go to Canberra and fight for our fair share of the GST. On every occasion we have protected it and secured additional support from the Commonwealth for our state. We are confident that will continue.

GST - Method of Distribution - Premier's Position

Ms WHITE question to PREMIER, Mr HODGMAN

[10.06 a.m.]

Yesterday Saul Eslake made it clear that Tasmania would be the loser in any change to the GST. He said, 'I would think that the Premier ought to be protesting loudly on Tasmania's behalf.'

Premier, Tasmanians heard nothing from you yesterday. Did you even make a call to Canberra yesterday to make it clear you will not accept any change to the GST?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I can confirm, as I said in my earlier answer, I have been in, if not daily contact, very constant contact with the Commonwealth and that included yesterday. And that includes every single day I am able to prosecute a strong case on behalf of Tasmania, given the extraordinary performance of our economy, the incredible effort needed to turn around the budget mess we inherited of \$1 billion in deficits and net debt approaching \$400 million. We are in a much stronger position now to advocate for our fair share and to expect increasing receipts from the GST. We are continuing to advocate very strongly on behalf of our state and we have every confidence.

As the Prime Minister has said and the Finance minister has said, Tasmania will not be disadvantaged. If we can get more support from the Commonwealth to invest into our schools, our hospitals and our essential services, we would support such a change. That would be what Tasmanians would expect us to do.

I will answer another of the Leader's questions. She asked me in her first question about the biggest threat to Tasmania's share of the GST. It is obvious what the biggest threat is. It sitting opposite and it is reflected in the Opposition in Canberra that cannot provide the guarantee to Tasmania that Malcolm Turnbull could. I ask again, have members opposite been on the phone to Bill? Have you picked up the phone and said to Bill, 'What you are proposing to do will disadvantage Tasmania'? It will help Western Australia. Have you been on the phone to any of your federal colleagues?

Members interjecting.

Madam SPEAKER - Order. My dear parliamentary colleagues, we have been into this for about nine minutes and we are already out of order, lots of times. Please remember that you are wonderful parliamentarians and you are going to be acting in a dignified fashion.

Mr HODGMAN - Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The Labor Party demonstrates the very real and legitimate threat that is posed to Tasmania's fair share of the GST. Not only does Bill Shorten threaten to change it in a way that will disadvantage Tasmania but, as we have just seen from the Labor Opposition front bench here, not one of them has picked up the phone to talk to Bill about it.

Access to Reproductive Health Services for Women

Ms O'CONNOR question to PREMIER, Mr HODGMAN

[10.09 a.m.]

Today is the day the Health minister is due to report back to parliament on the availability of termination services for Tasmanian women. Is it not true that there is a deep, ideologically driven divide within your party room on this issue that is ultimately causing Tasmanian women to suffer? Premier, how long do Tasmanian women have to pay for your lack of leadership? When will women be able to access safe, affordable termination services in Tasmania? Will it only be when your Health minister resigns?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, in answering this question I refute the suggestions made by the member for Denison about the progress we are endeavouring to make as a government to provide greater access to services. That is done on the basis of what is possible at an operational and clinical level, what is suitable for Tasmania's health system and what could provide the efficient and affordable access to service that we all want to see happen - all under a policy setting that was exactly the same as that which existed under Labor and the Greens. If they had wanted to, they had 16 years to change it, but they did not.

Ms White interjecting.

Madam SPEAKER - Order. You have asked a very important question and I suggest we hear what the Premier has to say.

Mr HODGMAN - We are dealing with circumstances that are similar with respect to access and worsened by virtue of the fact that a private provider left the state. We are dealing with the same policy settings that existed under the former government of which the member who asks the question was a Cabinet minister. We are endeavouring, as we said we would in response to the resolution of the parliament, to provide the House with an update and that will happen in due course. That is designed entirely to achieve the sorts of outcomes the member speaks to in relation to restoring access to surgical terminations, which are available, as we have said on numerous occasions, in the private sector. The closure of the local provider has resulted in that gap for low-cost surgical terminations in the private sector and that is a matter we have been endeavouring to address as quickly, efficiently and effectively as possible, with a private provider.

Given that this matter will be the subject of a response from the minister in due course, as was required under that resolution, I can say that the department of Health has now reached an in-principle five-year agreement for a new private provider to deliver services in Tasmania. The service will commence later this year and is contingent of course on the finalisation of the terms of the agreement, licensing and accreditation requirements, which are the matters I referred to that have required ongoing discussion with such a provider.

I can add also that patient transport and travel assistance will be available, not only for interstate but for intrastate travel to the service, which is expected to be based in Hobart. Our public hospitals will continue to provide terminations in cases of high need, such as to save the life of a mother or where there is severe foetal illness or damage -

This, as I say, has been the longstanding policy position of successive governments. I am able to confirm that at some stage today there will be a further statement from the secretary of the department of Health in relation to the new service, which we hope to be available for more Tasmanian women at the earliest opportunity.

GST - Method of Distribution

Ms WHITE question to PREMIER, Mr HODGMAN

[10.14 a.m.]

Just last year your Government strongly opposed top-up payments in its original submission to the Commonwealth Grants Commission, stating -

Supplementary Australian Government funding would leave those states exposed to the funding priorities of the government of the day. It will also increase their reliance on tied grants which, as noted earlier, reduces budget flexibility.

Have you abandoned this view? Are you prepared to accept a short-term sugar hit in return for sacrificing the state's ability to deliver affordable housing, enough police on the streets, child safety officers to protect children in need and good quality health care and education?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, this Government will accept nothing less than the support and the receipt of GST that this state is entitled to. This Government will accept nothing less than a good deal for our state and we will not accept anything that disadvantages Tasmania. That includes the proposal that the federal Leader of the Opposition, Bill Shorten, is proposing.

When it comes to what Tasmanians want to see happen by way of an investment into essential services that the Leader of the Opposition refers to, I remind members opposite that it was under them that nurse numbers were cut, it was under them that police numbers were cut, and it was under them that our education system was underperforming. Under us, there are more police in our communities, more teachers in our schools, more nurses and health professionals.

Ms WHITE - Point of order, Madam Speaker, going to relevance. The question to the Premier was about whether he had abandoned his view on whether top-up payments were acceptable. I ask you to draw his attention to the question.

Madam SPEAKER - As you would be well aware, I do not have the ability to dictate to any minister how they answer the question, as much I might like to, but I do ask the Premier to return his answer.

Mr HODGMAN - Thank you, Madam Speaker. I have answered the question and said very clearly that I do not abandon anything I have said with respect to GST. I will point to the matter raised in the question from the Leader of the Opposition about government investment into essential services like police, schools and health, because there is more of that happening under this Government than there was under the Labor-Greens government, when they cut those services. We will not accept anything that disadvantages Tasmania. We are very clearly making that point to the Commonwealth. We are very positive of a desirable outcome for our state and Tasmanians can trust Liberal governments to deliver more for Tasmania than Labor ever will because our record shows that.

Tax Reforms - Implementation

Mr BROOKS question to TREASURER, Mr GUTWEIN

[10.16 a.m.]

Can the Treasurer please update the House on the package of tax reforms that the Hodgman majority Liberal Government recently implemented and whether he is aware of any alternatives?

ANSWER

Opposition members interjecting.

If those opposite have a question on GST, ask me. Do not sit there and -

Madam SPEAKER - Order.

Mr GUTWEIN - Madam Speaker, as I have said, whingeing is not a policy, complaining is not a platform, and what we are hearing is more of it.

I thank the member for his interest in this very important matter. When we were elected in 2014, Tasmania had endured years of financial mismanagement by those opposite. In addition to wrecking the budget, the Labor-Greens government policies destroyed business confidence. Two out of three businesses felt that their policies worked against them and when business confidence is low, businesses do not invest, they do not employ and the results of the -

Ms O'Byrne - Do you have to read this?

Mr GUTWEIN - Actually, I can repeat this ad nauseam. Two out of three businesses felt that you worked against them. What do you have to say about that? Confidence had plummeted, confidence was gone, investment was gone, and Tasmanians were leaving the state.

The contrast between then and now could not be clearer. Under Labor and the Greens there were 10 000 jobs lost and people were leaving the state. Under this Government, more than 13 000 jobs have been created, our economy to the March quarter was the fastest growing in the country, our population is growing at the fastest rate in seven years and net interstate migration is up by 53 per cent in the last year.

The outcomes we are delivering for Tasmania have been achieved by responsible, sensible financial management and hard work. Tasmania is now one of the hottest places on the planet, but we unashamedly are always looking at ways to make Tasmania even more attractive as a place to invest in and to do business. We have one of the fastest growing economies in the country, employment is at record levels, record infrastructure investment is being rolled out and Tasmania is the most confident jurisdiction in the country under our policies. Tasmania is on the cusp of a golden age. Under them, Tasmania was heading back to the Stone Age.

Our legislation has been passed. We have extended the successful payroll tax rebate scheme, providing even more incentive for businesses to take on an apprentice or trainee. We provided businesses with a payroll tax cut, reducing the rate of tax from 6.1 per cent to 4 per cent on payrolls. This represents a 34 per cent tax reduction. If only 25 per cent of these businesses employ one more Tasmanian, that would be more than 650 new Tasmanian jobs. We will have the most competitive payroll tax system of all the states for payrolls up to \$4 million. We are also providing a three-year payroll tax exemption to anyone who puts a new property up for long-term lease and have extended the successful \$23 000 First Home Owner Grant, with both these policies expected to promote further growth and employment in our building and construction sector.

These reforms are only one of the points of difference between that side and this side of the House. This side of the House - golden age. That side of the House - Stone Age. With no economic vision for the future and a new leader-in-waiting, it is no wonder they could not be bothered putting up an alternative budget. If you are not prepared to put up an alternative budget, if you are not prepared to explain what your policies are and how you would pay for them, you stand for nothing. What is going to be really interesting is their-

Ms O'CONNOR - Point of order. Standing order 48, answers terminated after sufficient time. The Treasurer has been on his feet answering a Dorothy Dixier question for five minutes and I call your attention to the fact we are all paid by the taxpayers.

Madam SPEAKER - Thank you. I do not think that is a point of order but I ask the Treasurer if he would wind up, please.

Mr GUTWEIN - Madam Speaker, the final point I make and with the carry-on on that side, their state conference is going to be something worth watching later this year, with the to-ing and fro-ing and the infighting. It will be better than watching the Boomers and the Philippines basketball teams. We can hardly wait.

Apprentices and Trainees - Support

Mr SHELTON question to **MINISTER for EDUCATION and TRAINING, Mr ROCKLIFF**

[10.23 a.m.]

Given the unprecedented economic growth Tasmania has experienced under a majority Hodgman Liberal Government, which is creating the need for more skilled labour, can the minister update the House on the progress to support apprentices and traineeships?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I thank the member for Lyons for his considerable interest in this matter. Tasmania's economy is booming and this will be further helped by our commitment to invest an additional \$2.6 billion in job-creating infrastructure over the coming years. This type of growth brings with it some challenges and ensuring we have a growing supply of suitable, skilled employees to fill the jobs of our growing economy is paramount. That is why we have a target to increase the number of apprentices and trainees by 40 per cent by 2025. We have a plan to achieve that.

Our initiatives are creating the right environment to achieve our goal and Tasmania is punching well above its weight in apprentice and trainee numbers. Those opposite choose to ignore it, but Tasmania is outperforming most other Australian states on economic indicators and in relation to apprentices and trainees. In Tasmania, trade apprenticeship commencements have increased by 9.2 per cent over the 12 months to December 2017. Nationally, trade commencements increased by only 0.4 per cent over the same period. That is a significant difference of 8.8 per cent. Tasmania continues to have the highest completion rates in the nation with 61.3 per cent of Tasmanian apprentices and trainees completing their training contract compared to only 55.2 per cent nationally.

Most recently, at the WorldSkills competition in Sydney, we saw some fantastic Tasmanian success with Tasmanians winning six gold medals, one silver and bronze, and the Evatt Shield for the best performing region in the country.

There is more to do to maintain this success. We are supporting Tasmanian small businesses with grant funding to put on more apprentices and trainees. We are offering employers payroll tax incentives to put on more apprentices. These initiatives are warmly welcomed by industry and they are making a big difference. Our small business grants program to support apprentices and trainees was fully subscribed. We have extended it with an extra \$2.5 million per year, providing a further 500 places in priority industry areas. We will continue to directly support trainees and apprentices who need assistance with off-the-job training. Last year we invested \$1.75 million in travel and accommodation support to ensure their success in training.

The Supporting Small Business with Apprenticeships and Traineeships Program saw us work with more than 500 small businesses to make it easier for them to take on an apprentice or a trainee. The good news does not stop there. I am pleased to confirm Tasmania has signed up to the new partnership on skills, delivering over \$32 million into training in Tasmania. Be assured, unlike the previous Labor-driven national partnership, none of this funding will go to a dodgy Labor VET FEE-HELP system, which is now fixed, or to stabilising TAFEs through further contestability in the vocational training market. That is your legacy and it a poor one, Ms O'Byrne. This funding will go to funding real outcomes for all local apprentices and trainees.

GST - Method of Distribution

Ms WHITE question to PREMIER, Mr HODGMAN

[10.27 a.m.]

In the revised Estimates report released a few months ago, Treasury estimated that equalising the distribution of GST to the average fiscal capacity of all states would cost \$168 million in a single

year or \$639 million over the forward Estimates. Do you agree with Treasury's assessment that adopting this model, '... could result in a significant reduction in Tasmania's share of the GST.'? Do you concede that significant reduction would result in massive cuts to public services and a loss of such magnitude equates to 1200 paramedics, more than 1400 firefighters, 1400 nurses, more than 1600 police constables and almost 1600 teachers? Given that, can you outline what changes you would support, as referenced in your earlier answer?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I thank the Leader for the question. I have no reason to doubt the advice we receive from the Department of Treasury and Finance. I can assure members I will not, nor will this Government, accept any reduction in Tasmania's receipts of the GST. We will not accept one cent in reduction. We have been guaranteed by the Prime Minister and the federal Finance minister that will not occur. I will not accept anything that disadvantages our state or reduces our share of the GST. I will accept nothing other than a rock-solid guarantee from the Prime Minister of Australia and the Finance minister for that not to occur.

Members opposite have shown today, by not one of them being able to confirm they have been on the phone to their federal colleagues, that Labor will not commit to such a thing; no guarantee whatsoever. With a federal election due within the next 12 months it shows the real risk to Tasmania's share of the GST: the Labor Party. They do not bother to do what they demand of us and they are happy to sit back and let Bill Shorten propose a model that will shaft our state. We will not accept that either. We will not accept what Labor is proposing because that will damage our state.

I remind members opposite that when Tasmanians wonder about the quality of services available to them now, just remember that it was under the Labor-Greens coalition that police numbers were cut, that nurses and medical practitioners were cut and teacher numbers declined. It is under this Government with a strong economy and a budget back in balance that we have more police in our communities, more people working in our health system and more teachers giving our kids the best shot in life.

Salmon Industry - Issues

**Dr WOODRUFF question to MINISTER for PRIMARY INDUSTRIES and WATER,
Ms COURTNEY**

[10.30 a.m.]

Last summer in Macquarie Harbour 1.35 million fish died from a combination of pilchard orthomyxovirus disease, low oxygen and warm waters. In May's huge storm this year, hundreds of thousands of salmon escaped from pens in Storm Bay supposedly designed to withstand the forces of wave and wind in that bay. This is clearly an industry that is working at an industrial scale without anything like sufficient regulations around its massive and rapid expansion, and chaos is the end result. We have received reports of a recent devastating outbreak of the pilchard orthomyxovirus in Tassal's pens at Tasman and Dover, the same virus that has dogged the operations in Macquarie Harbour. Allegedly, the Tasman operation is losing around 1200 fish a day and so far, allegedly, have lost 300 000 salmon to the disease. There are serious questions being asked about the amount of chemicals being used to try to control the outbreak, with impacts on workers' safety, fish health and marine ecosystems being posed.

Can you confirm if this allegation of a new outbreak from Tasman or Dover is true, and what steps are you taking to safeguard the marine environment and to check that all standard safety procedures are indeed being followed?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, it is very interesting that the member for Franklin asks a question on salmon. It was only a couple of weeks ago when she was pretending to be the best friend of the salmon industry, so I am not quite sure where she sits on this. As we know from the Greens, they flip-flop on these issues, try to use things to their best advantage, but when they turn around we know they are really about absolutely decimating industries around Tasmania.

As the member for Franklin would know, questions regarding the environment management of Macquarie Harbour are best directed to the Minister for Environment. With regard to Macquarie Harbour, it is worth pointing out that we have seen a number of measures undertaken there, including reduction of biomass limit and the JV between Petuna and Tassal, from which we expect to see improved fish health outcomes, biosecurity and environmental outcomes. We are getting on with the job of delivering our plan for salmon within Tasmania -

Dr WOODRUFF - Point of order, Madam Speaker, under standing order 45 going to relevance. There has been an alleged outbreak, and my very serious question was simply whether she was aware of it and what research and investigation is she doing?

Madam SPEAKER - As the member would be aware, I am not allowed to put words into the minister's mouth, so I hope she will continue and reveal that.

Ms COURTNEY - Madam Speaker, I can quite clearly tell the member what I am doing, which is getting on with the job of delivering our sustainable industry growth plan for salmon, which is what the Tasmanian people wanted at the last election. My predecessor, Jeremy Rockliff, released this plan in December 2017 and we are getting on with this plan delivering to industry and making sure we can -

Ms O'CONNOR - Madam Speaker, point of order, again under standing order 45, relevance. There is a question here that needs to be answered. This is a report of a very serious outbreak of a disease at two specific locations and she has not gone anywhere near the question.

Madam SPEAKER - I appreciate it is a very important question, but as you know, I am limited by this House on what I can make the minister answer. It is beyond my control. It is a practice that this House has allowed to happen. Please, Ms Courtney, continue.

Ms COURTNEY - Thank you, Madam Speaker. As you would well be aware, the Greens have form coming into this place for just making allegations around things and trying to create rumour and innuendo. As I have articulated, there are mechanisms for reporting things around environmental incidents through our independent environmental EPA. We are continuing to deliver for the salmon industry. As I mentioned, we are increasing independence and regulation through responsibility for the EPA.

Ms O'CONNOR - Point of order, Madam Speaker, on the disrespect shown to the House and the question under standing order 45. We need the minister to confirm whether or not there has been an outbreak of the pilchard virus at Dover and Tasman.

Mr FERGUSON - On the point of order, Madam Speaker, what we are witnessing here is disorderly behaviour. You have already ruled on that point of order raised. I also draw your attention to the extraordinary length of the question that was raised; it was more like a speech. The minister is entitled to latitude to answer the question. On the point of order, my point to you is on the disorderly attempts to disrupt the minister answering the question.

Ms O'Connor - Nice, but when a minister doesn't answer a question this is what happens. Apologies, Madam Speaker.

Madam SPEAKER - Ms O'Connor, whilst I respect your passion, I have to ask the minister to resume the answer and to wind up.

Ms COURTNEY - Thank you, Madam Speaker. Dr Woodruff discussed Macquarie Harbour and I have outlined the things we are doing in Macquarie Harbour, including working with industry -

Dr WOODRUFF - Madam Speaker, point of order under standing order 151, continued irrelevance and tedious repetition. The minister needs to let us know has she -

Members interjecting.

Dr WOODRUFF - It is not. Get your standing orders right. I am speaking to Madam Speaker not to you.

Madam SPEAKER - Dr Woodruff, that is not a point of order and it is drawing out question time, so we do need to limit these irrelevant points of order.

Ms COURTNEY - Thank you, Madam Speaker. As I was saying, we have increased penalties for breaches and are reintroducing demerit points in Marine Farming Planning Amendment Act 2016. This is the side of the House that is backing jobs in regional areas. This is the side of the House that is backing a sustainable salmon industry working proactively. We have strengthened the EPA, we are ensuring that we are supporting the salmon industry going forward and all we get from the Greens is innuendo and smear.

GST - Method of Distribution

Ms WHITE question to PREMIER, Mr HODGMAN

[10.37 a.m.]

Can you rule out supporting any change to the current method of GST distribution?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I thank the member for the question and, again, rule out supporting anything that disadvantages our state and any less return to our state by way of GST receipts. I will certainly rule out anything that the Labor Party proposes because what their federal leader has suggested should happen under a Labor government nationally would massively disadvantage our state. We will stand up for Tasmania and stand up to any government anywhere to protect our fair share of the GST, as we have done in the past. There is a lot of wild speculation that is taking all the time

of the Opposition; we accept that. We have received assurances from the Commonwealth as to Tasmania's position with respect to the GST. It is a lot more than members opposite have got and perhaps they should spend less time on speculating, imagining and hoping for worst-case scenarios, because that certainly will not happen under a Liberal government.

Visitor Economy

Mr SHELTON question to MINISTER for TOURISM, HOSPITALITY and EVENTS, Mr HODGMAN

[10.39 a.m.]

Can you please explain why a strong visitor economy is important for all Tasmanians and outline what support the Hodgman majority Liberal Government is providing to this very important sector?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I welcome the opportunity to talk positively about Tasmania's great visitor economy, our tourism sector, and our wonderful events and hospitality industry that employs around 25 000 Tasmanians and has no stronger supporter than this majority Liberal Government. I also want to talk about the strong growth in Tasmania's visitor economy which has been strong and sustainable in recent years. It has been very well supported by investment from this Government into more marketing, more infrastructure, more attractions and into events.

The latest Tasmanian Visitor Survey reports the fact that 1.28 million visitors came to our state. This represents a solid rate of growth. It is a sustainable rate of growth and it is being matched by government investments to cater for this demand. We have more air access, more passengers coming via the Bass Strait ferries, which are now operating under a model under this Government which has taken them to the next level.

Members interjecting.

Mr HODGMAN - Thank heavens the member who interjected did not have his wicked way with the two *Spirit of Tasmania* ferries or they would not be carrying all these additional tourists into our state as they are now doing. More *Spirits*, more passengers on them, and we have two *Spirits* coming, ahead of schedule, which will allow for an even greater capacity.

We have more investment into our road networks, not just to reduce traffic congestion but to invest in those roads that are often used by our visitors. A \$72 million infrastructure investment into upgrades and maintenance over the next five years to seal roads, build passing lanes, add courtesy stopping lanes in areas where there are thousands more extra visitors coming to our state, and to cater for the additional caravans and motorhomes which are coming here as well. It will relieve pressure at important destination points like the Three Capes Track, Bruny Island, the Tarkine and the Great Eastern Drive.

We are investing more into our parks, into the infrastructure needed to support increased visitors and to put more rangers into our parks to support that work as well. Our vision is for our visitors to stay here longer, to see more of our state's regions. Whilst there is growth across all regions, we want to ensure that they are seeing more of our state and spending more while they are

here. That is why I have tasked the Visitor Economy Advisory Council with developing a yield and dispersal plan so that our visitors are seeing more of the state and spending more whilst they are here.

I recognise that there are concerns within the community about the growth in our tourism sector. It is important to reflect on a recent survey from the Tourism Industry Council Tasmania which surveyed community attitudes in relation to our tourism sector. It showed that tourism was overwhelmingly identified by Tasmanians as the greatest contributor to the state's economy compared to other industries. Fifty-six per cent of Tasmanians believe the tourism industry has the greatest potential to make the biggest contribution to our economy over the next five years. Importantly, when asked about the negative impacts caused by an increase in visitor numbers to Tasmania, the most common response was that tourism has no negative impacts.

These results also show that the vast majority of Tasmanians believe that the level of tourism activity in the state is either about right or too low. These results are a strong endorsement of our plan to invest in this industry sector that employs so many thousands of Tasmanians and many businesses right across their state. We will continue to support very strongly, better than any government ever before, our tourism industry for that reason. Of course, the Greens have shown very clearly in their alternative budget that they would like to put up a wall and stop people visiting our state.

There is nothing at all to be learned from the Opposition in their budget reply. There was no alternative budget and in the budget reply speech, the new shadow minister for tourism gave it one line and said they would need an advisory committee to tell them what to do. There has never been a stronger supporter of the tourism industry in Tasmania than this majority Liberal Government, and that will continue.

Crown Land Services - Actions of Member for Montgomery

Dr BROAD question to PREMIER, Mr HODGMAN

[10.44 a.m.]

I am going to ask you a very simple question: did your Leader of Government Business in the upper House make direct representations to Crown Land Services in a crown land dispute? Yes or no?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, this matter was well canvassed during Estimates last week when Dr Broad demonstrated he had very little to offer during this process, other than to ask the same questions over and over again of different ministers, and including all sorts of extraordinary things like we 'intervene' or 'interfere' with the work of the Integrity Commission, which has investigated this matter. We have confidence in its ability to do so. We would not do, as the member opposite -

Mr BACON - Point of order, Madam Speaker, and it goes to relevance. This is a yes or no question. It was a very direct question that the Premier should answer yes or no.

Madam SPEAKER - I hear your point of order, but unfortunately I cannot direct the Premier to answer it directly.

Mr HODGMAN - Madam Speaker, I am confident that the Integrity Commission has investigated this matter appropriately.

Crown Land Services - Actions of Member for Montgomery

Dr BROAD question to **PREMIER, Mr HODGMAN**

[10.45 a.m.]

Do you believe it was appropriate for the Leader of Government Business in the upper House to send this email to Crown Land Services, including the text -

I urge your department to please make a decision granting us unfettered access to our most productive acreage.

Can you explain why the Integrity Commission and budget Estimates were told that the member for Montgomery had been at pains to remain 'at arm's length' from the matter? Will you investigate the systematic cover-up of serious allegations?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I thank the member for his question and his increasingly dramatic language that he is weaving into a matter which we certainly take very seriously. We also recognise and acknowledge the important role that the Integrity Commission has to act unencumbered by any interference from members of this parliament, which would in itself be not only entirely inappropriate, but illegal. We will certainly not do that.

I want to make it very clear because the member who asked the question clearly was not listening to the numerous answers that he was given last week during the lengthy budget Estimates deliberations.

The minister was advised there was a complaint made to the Integrity Commission last year. The Integrity Commission considered the allegation and dismissed the complaint. All parties were notified, including the complainant. If members opposite or anyone else has a question or an allegation in relation to the conduct of the investigation, then they should refer that to the Integrity Commission. If you believe that the investigation was flawed, then you should also raise that with the Integrity Commission. I understand that when you had an opportunity to question the Integrity Commission about it you did not bother -

Dr Broad - The minister blocked me. Outrageous.

Members interjecting.

Madam SPEAKER - Order.

National Redress Scheme - Institutional Child Sexual Abuse

Mr BROOKS question to **ATTORNEY-GENERAL, Ms ARCHER**

[10.47 a.m.]

They are out of control over there, Madam Speaker, as always.

Madam SPEAKER - Order, I cannot hear the question.

Mr BROOKS - My question is, can the Attorney- General please update the House on the key milestones regarding the National Redress Scheme?

Ms O'Connor - Talking as long as possible to try to prevent another member asking a question.

Madam SPEAKER - Ms O'Connor, thank you.

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I thank the member for his question and his continuing interest in this vitally important area.

As members will recall on 22 May this year I made the historic announcement in this place that Tasmania will be opting in to the National Redress Scheme. In the weeks that followed all remaining states, as well as a number of Australia's largest non-government institutions indicated that they, too, would join together in taking responsibility for the past and assist in providing redress and support for survivors moving forward.

I am pleased to advise members that the scheme commenced as planned on 1 July and is now accepting applications.

The significance of this cannot be understated. The royal commission provided survivors with the opportunity to bring their experiences to light; however, that was only the first step. As I previously said in this place, while we can never undo the suffering done to so many the National Redress Scheme is an acknowledgment of the wrongs that occurred and provides a significant step in providing a measure of justice to survivors.

As is the case in a number of jurisdictions, Tasmania is in the process of preparing legislation that will adopt the National Redress Scheme for Institutional Child Sexual Abuse Bill that was passed by the Commonwealth parliament on 19 June 2018. I hope to be able to table such a bill in the spring session of the Tasmanian Parliament. However, the scheme is structured in such a way that all eligible Tasmanians can now commence the application process as well as submit applications. Importantly, Tasmanians will also be able to access the support services offered by the scheme.

In designing the scheme, those involved were cognisant of the emotional toll that completing such an application could take, which is why significant resources have been committed by the Commonwealth to ensure that emotional, legal and financial support services will be available for the duration of the entire scheme. The focus will be on making access to redress as simple as possible, being faster, simpler and less distressing for survivors than other legal avenues. That said, for any person who may be watching today who is considering making an application, I would urge them to ensure they have the proper supports in place before commencing the application process because there is no doubt it will be a very difficult one for many.

With the commencement of the National Redress Scheme, so too has the Limitation Amendment Act commenced in Tasmania. As I have said, the National Redress Scheme is designed to provide survivors with a simpler means of accessing a sense of justice. However, it is not the only option. It was always intended that these options should be available together to provide a

choice that is fully informed. Hence the recent proclamation occurred on the commencement of the National Redress Scheme on 1 July.

Ms O'Connor - They weren't connected in the recommendations.

Ms ARCHER - Some members are just never happy - astonishing.

Ms O'Connor - You had to be pushed into it.

Ms ARCHER - I was not pushed into it at all. The amendments to the Limitation Act mean that those who experienced both sexual and physical abuse as a child can now take legal action against those who perpetrated that abuse against them without having to deal with the time limits that previously acted as a barrier. There can be no doubt that this Government remains committed to doing whatever it can to provide assistance and support to Tasmanian victims.

Salmon Industry - Issues

Dr WOODRUFF question MINISTER for ENVIRONMENT, Ms ARCHER

[10.53 a.m.]

Your colleague has refused to confirm or deny allegations of hundreds of thousands of dead diseased salmon at Tassal's operations at Tasman and Dover and whether an investigation is being undertaken into the alleged deaths and the possible misuse of chemicals for control. She said it was your responsibility. Can you give the House a straight answer on this matter, please?

ANSWER

What Ms Courtney did was answer your question. She is the minister in relation to-

Members interjecting.

Madam SPEAKER - Order.

Ms ARCHER - Madam Speaker, I would like an opportunity to answer the question because I need to explain the responsibilities here. Ms Courtney quite rightly pointed out to members in this House, who are not but should be aware, that I have the regulatory oversight through the independent Environment Protection Authority. That entity is independent and is responsible for regulations.

Dr Woodruff - Thanks for the lecture.

Ms ARCHER - I do not think it is a lecture. Coming into this House and explaining our responsibilities is perfectly reasonable. Ms Courtney deals with the salmon industry under her Primary Industries portfolio, as she quite rightly pointed out, and is very capable of answering that question.

Members interjecting.

Madam SPEAKER - Order. We have six minutes to go and I expect a little more decorum and respect for each other. Thank you.

Ms ARCHER - Madam Speaker, Ms Courtney deals with biosecurity issues and addressed those issues in answer to the question. The member is showing a complete lack of understanding for the fact that the Minister for Environment in this space has responsibility for the implementation of regulations. This Government made that process independent through the independent Environment Protection Authority, who is the appropriate person to be dealing with matters of biosecurity. The very lengthy question that was asked of Ms Courtney mentioned Macquarie Harbour. That is the responsibility of the independent EPA and the member knows this. She is constantly coming in here and politically grandstanding on an issue, when Ms Courtney answered her question.

Ms O'CONNOR - Point of order, Madam Speaker. Under standing order 46 I request a supplementary question because Ms Courtney was asked a question and referred it to Ms Archer, who then said it is Ms Courtney's responsibility. We have not had confirmation that there has been outbreak of this virus. Do they not know what is going on?

Madam SPEAKER - I have a ruling, which is that since we have had a number of questions allocated, we no longer have supplementary questions.

Ms O'Connor - You people are disgraceful, 300 000 fish, and what did she say?

Madam SPEAKER - Ms O'Connor, I have an impeccable record of not throwing anyone out and I would like to maintain that, thank you.

GST - Method of Distribution

Ms WHITE question to PREMIER, Mr HODGMAN

[10.56 a.m.]

I will give you a second chance to stand up for Tasmania and ask a simple question again. Can you rule out supporting any change to the current method of GST distribution, yes or no?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I thank the member for the opportunity to again state very clearly our commitment to stand up every day of the week to any government anywhere that would in any way seek to disadvantage Tasmania's position with respect to the GST. That includes, heaven forbid, a prospective Labor federal government whose position would damage Tasmania's share of the GST. It is the same question and I am happy to say it every single day of the week to anyone who will ask it. Of course we will not countenance any single change that will disadvantage Tasmania. We never have, we never will and we have a guarantee from the Prime Minister and the Finance minister that will not happen and that is what we expect.

Salmon Industry - Issues

Ms O'CONNOR question to MINISTER for PRIMARY INDUSTRIES and WATER, Ms COURTNEY

[10.58 a.m.]

Can the minister confirm there has been an outbreak of POMVE at the Tasman and Dover operations of Tassal, and will the minister not deflect the question to the Minister for Environment because the Minister for Environment has deflected it back to her?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I thank the member for her question. The member knows the Government mandates a range of biosecurity conditions on fish farming around Tasmania. That includes mandatory reporting, as the member would know, for events that exceed levels of 0.25 per cent mortality for three or more days, and the reporting of the level of the use of antimicrobial medication is a matter for the CVO. The members know this. What they are trying to do is again smear an industry that is providing jobs and support to regional areas.

Biosecurity Tasmania, through the Centre for Aquatic Animal Health and Vaccines, is developing a vaccine and is currently working with the manufacturer on commercialisation of production and regulatory approvals for it.

Members interjecting.

Madam SPEAKER - Order.

Ms COURTNEY - As we are seeing from Labor and the Greens now working together, they have run out of questions. We are sitting here in this week after the Budget. We just saw from Ms White her inability to come up with another question except on GST again.

Ms O'CONNOR - Point of order, Madam Speaker. We cannot let ministers get away with this. The point of order goes to relevance. There have now been questions asked of the Primary Industries minister and the Environment minister and back again. The question is, can she confirm the outbreak of the virus? That is all.

Madam SPEAKER - I hear your frustration, Ms O'Connor, but I am not able to speak for the minister. Please continue.

Ms COURTNEY - It is wonderful to see Labor and the Greens working together to try to shut down an industry in Tasmania. We have seen it before and we will see it again. This Government is strengthening biosecurity for the salmon industry. This Government is strengthening environmental protection for the salmon industry and we are doing that because we want to see a sustainable salmon industry. All we hear from the other side are allegations, rather than them doing things to support jobs in regional areas. I am happy to outline the things we are doing to increase and strengthen the environmental management of Macquarie Harbour and other areas around Tasmania. We are seeing -

Members interjecting.

Mr BROOKS - Point of order, Madam Speaker. I am interested to hear what the minister is saying but I cannot because of the rabble on that side. I ask that they stop interrupting.

Madam SPEAKER - Thank you for that point of order and I request the House quieten down. It is now 11.01 a.m. Thank you, minister, I am going to draw question time to a close.

Time expired.

LAND TITLES AMENDMENT BILL 2018 (No. 22)

First Reading

Bill presented by **Ms Courtney** and read the first time.

ANZAC DAY OBSERVANCE AMENDMENT BILL 2018 (No. 23)

First Reading

Bill presented by **Mr Barnett** and read the first time

SITTING TIMES

[11.05 a.m.]

Mr FERGUSON (Bass - Leader of Government Business) (by leave) - Madam Speaker, I move -

That for each day's sitting this week the House shall not stand adjourned at 6 o'clock and instead the House continue to sit past 6 o'clock.

This is to facilitate the Consolidated Fund committee stages. A maximum time of 18 hours is provided. I will be speaking with Mr O'Byrne and Ms O'Connor about how we progress. It is my anticipation we would adjourn somewhere around about 8 o'clock today. As I always do, I will endeavour to stay in touch in relation to the other days as well.

[11.06 a.m.]

Mr O'BYRNE (Franklin) - Madam Speaker, we have had discussions and we support the motion to extend sitting hours.

Motion agreed to.

MATTER OF PUBLIC IMPORTANCE

GST

[11.07 a.m.]

Ms WHITE (Lyons - Leader of the Opposition - Motion) - Madam Speaker, I move -

That the House take note of the following matter: GST.

It should come as no surprise to the parliament we are speaking about GST as it is the subject on everyone's minds. The federal Cabinet is meeting today to discuss the Productivity Commission's final report and we await the handing down of the Government's decision with trepidation, given the reporting in yesterday's media that demonstrated they are thinking about equalising to the average. What does that mean? That means Tasmania loses. Why should Tasmania accept the average and not the best?

This is the point of the question we asked the Premier today. He could not rule out supporting a change to the method of GST distribution. That is alarming. Time and again we have had a unity ticket on this across the parliament and we have been able to say we support no change to the GST distribution methodology. We respect that HFE is the best method of distribution for fair delivery of revenue across the states to ensure we can provide those essential services all Tasmanians and all Australians rely upon. The Premier was asked twice today if he could rule out supporting any change to the method of GST distribution and he could not. This stands in stark contrast to what he said previously, even as recently as 30 April last year. Will Hodgman tweeted, 'As we have done before, we will fight any proposal to change the GST tooth and nail.'. Now, it sounds as if the Premier is lukewarm and he is backing down.

How have we come to this? Even as recently as last year, we had the Senate team sending out a joint press release on 1 May, saying that the Tasmanian Liberal Senate Team again reiterated its strong view that there should be no change to the method of GST distribution that disadvantages Tasmania. We have no Tasmanians in the Cabinet. Do you know how many Western Australians there are in the federal Cabinet? Four; and two of them are in marginal seats and looking dicey. I have no doubt their voices are loud in the federal Cabinet room, and Tasmania has no voice.

Yesterday, when it was reported to the media they were thinking about equalising to the average, the Premier said nothing. I went past the Executive Building yesterday; crickets, nobody was out and about. The Treasurer was flushed out for a 60-second press conference; the quickest press conference he has even given, even faster than answers he gives in parliament today. Where was the Premier? The Premier was nowhere to be seen.

The real leader of the Liberal Party, Mr Gutwein, the Treasurer, was out there standing up for the state, but the actual Premier, where was he? Not even a tweet about GST from the Premier. Apparently he picked up the phone, but maybe, like the time he called Christopher Pyne, he just left a voicemail. That is all he did, when he advocated for the Australian Maritime College. On GST? Nothing, Mr Deputy Speaker.

Why has the Premier given up on his commitment to 'no change to the GST'? What has he been promised? If it is a top-up payment, does he realise what impact that has for Tasmania's future and our future finances? In the RER released earlier this year, even Treasury warned against top-up payments. It is a sugar hit. I am sure they will make it look like it is pretty nice and 'We are getting extra money to do XYZ' - maybe build a bridge or build an underground bus mall, I am not sure.

My concern, a concern that has been shared by economist Saul Eslake, is that means there is no certainty about the revenue coming to the state every year. It means that Tasmania would have to take the begging bowl to Canberra every year. We would be a claimant state, every year going to Canberra saying, 'Please can we have some more because you have slashed our GST 2018, and

the premier at the time, Will Hodgman, did nothing'. He has done nothing; he did nothing yesterday, when these claims were aired through the media.

He failed to stand up for our state; failed to rule out supporting any change to the GST. He is failing not just this generation of Tasmanians but future generations of Tasmanians. We know that from Treasury's own modelling, if you equalise the average, it is a cut across the forward Estimates, if it were applied today, of a significant amount of money, over \$600 million. That is 1600 police constables; it is 1200 nurses. These are services the Tasmanian community rely upon. They are not things that this Government should be neglecting by failing to stand up to Canberra.

Yesterday we sought an urgent briefing through the Treasurer's office on the proposed changes to the GST distribution methodology. No response. We rang, no answer. They would not get back to us. I wrote to the Premier yesterday offering to work with him in a partnership with the Government to make sure we could present a united front on behalf of Tasmania standing up for our fair share of GST. No response. I wrote to him last year when the Productivity Commission was undertaking its submissions process. I did not get a response to that letter either; talk about arrogant.

No wonder they are not responding: they are crab walking away from their previous commitment to support no change in the GST. They are about to be caught out as soon as tomorrow. By all accounts, federal Treasurer Scott Morrison could be making an announcement on what Cabinet decides today - and if it is not tomorrow, by the end of this week. It will all become pretty clear very soon what kind of effort this Premier and this Treasurer have made standing up for Tasmania.

Any change to the GST will be a failure because in every single scenario that the Productivity Commission modelled in its draft report Tasmania lost, every single scenario. It was just a matter of how much we lost by. If there is any change to the GST methodology, this Premier has failed, this Treasurer has failed and Tasmania is the loser. Top-up payment will not cut it. We do not want to be going with a begging bowl every year to Canberra; we want surety of revenue as a state of Australia, as part of the Federation, that is what we deserve.

Time expired.

[11.14 a.m.]

Mr GUTWEIN (Bass - Treasurer) - Mr Deputy Speaker, that was no better than her budget response. In fact, she started to run out of puff half way through it. She probably tired herself out with the very alarmist, panicked way she approached yesterday.

Members interjecting.

Mr GUTWEIN - 'Doomsday scenario' was what she said yesterday. That is what she was claiming yesterday - 'disastrous for Tasmania'. Her rhetoric is designed to do nothing more than damage confidence.

A panicked, out-of-control Opposition is what we saw yesterday, with some alarmist language that stretched the boundaries of what was reasonable. I noted that after they had been caught out in respect of their claims of a doomsday scenario after the federal Treasurer had very clearly said, and I will quote -

Claims that the Government has endorsed a new method for sharing GST revenues which will cost the state dearly is completely false.

Ms White - No, they are doing that today.

Mr GUTWEIN - What we hear again is the inane interjections from the Leader of the Opposition who has not listened to anything that has been said in this debate. Our commitment is not one dollar less and that is exactly what we will ensure is delivered.

We have been having constructive conversations with the federal government and we are confident of a very good outcome for Tasmania. The real threat to GST is from Labor. If you have read the Productivity Commission report, you would understand that what Bill Shorten has suggested - a 70 cent floor for Western Australia - costs this state \$60 million. Yet you have not sought a guarantee from Mr Shorten regarding the ongoing impact to Tasmania of what he is proposing for Western Australia. I am just looking at the Western Australia news here -

Labor Leader Bill Shorten set to up GST pledge by an additional \$400m to woo WA ... Mr Shorten pledged it would lift WA's GST share to a floor of 70 cents in the dollar ...

If he were to put in place a floor, as it appears that he is proposing, that would mean that Tasmania would be \$60 million worse off. Our commitment is very clear. We will not be one dollar worse off. Our GST is safe and we will continue to ensure that we work constructively with the federal government to improve our position.

As the Premier said this morning, in terms of the way that we have been able to deliver significant investments, increases in funding to health, education and improvements to infrastructure, we have demonstrated that a collaborative, strong working relationship with the federal government has delivered for Tasmania.

I noted that in the Leader of the Opposition's rant earlier she raised issues in respect of our having lost GST. You have a shadow treasurer who has been arguing that we are rolling in revenue; that we are doing better out of our GST circumstance than where we were a couple of years ago. If the member has a look at her contribution, she will find that she said that we were going to lose GST a couple of years ago and that we did nothing to fight for that. If she is now trying to deconstruct her own contribution -

Ms White interjecting.

Mr GUTWEIN - In terms of the RER report, again, what was suggested in the press yesterday which you jumped on so gleefully with no concern whatsoever for the state -

Ms White interjecting.

Mr GUTWEIN - You used inflammatory language - a 'doomsday scenario'.

Will you resign if Tasmania is even better off? That is the position you put yourself into, Leader of the Opposition. You have now put all of your stocks into your desire to see Tasmania worse off because it might help your political position. What are you going to do if that does not materialise? The clock is ticking. You are swinging in the breeze. Ms White has not been able to

get Bill Shorten to guarantee Tasmania's GST. I suggest that Bill Shorten is the greatest risk that we have to our GST.

Mr BACON - Point of order, Mr Deputy Speaker. If the Treasurer wants Mr Shorten's guarantee he should read out the rest of that article. Why don't you read out the rest of the article?

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER - Mr Bacon, what is your point of order, other than you do not have one, obviously? I understand that there is sometimes a bit of ongoing debate during the matter of public importance and I have let that go, but silly points of order, Mr Bacon, do not help. The Treasurer has the call.

Mr GUTWEIN - Mr Deputy Speaker, I know those opposite are hoping for the worst but I am afraid they will be disappointed. We have a guarantee from the Prime Minister of not one dollar and not one cent less. We have a guarantee from the Finance minister. We are working very constructively with the federal government at the moment. As the Premier has said today, I am very confident that we will get a good outcome for Tasmania.

What went on yesterday was a disgrace. The language that was used was inflammatory and designed to cause concern for Tasmanians. Claiming that there was a doomsday scenario in front of us was just out of bounds of what was reasonable or decent.

Time expired.

[11.22 a.m.]

Ms O'CONNOR (Denison - Leader of the Greens) - Mr Deputy Speaker, we just had some illumination into the Treasurer's motivations and character in that contribution. He revealed to the House what inspired his conduct over the four years between 2010 to 2014 when every time he got to his feet in this place he ran down confidence in the economy and the efforts of the government. It was his greatest hope that there be economic pain because he thought that would be to his own and the Liberals' political advantage. We saw that. You can get up here and give us insights into your soul, but you know that is true. I sat here for four years on that side of the House and I watched you, Mr Gutwein, get up every single day and run this place down gleefully and your greatest hope was that there would be economic pain because you thought it would work for you. We see that.

Last week, in an ultimately extremely frustrating Estimates process, we had some very interesting repetitive non-answers from the Treasurer on this question of the GST. It came down to what the Treasurer's belief set is. At the Estimates table, where it is questions seeking answers and therefore it is either a fact or it is not a fact, and we establish what the truth is, or we seek to, the Treasurer had formed the view after discussions with the Prime Minister and the federal Treasurer that we would not be a cent worse off. After repeated questions from the Leader of the Opposition we got the same answer out of the Treasurer - that he had formed a view and it was his belief that after conversations with his federal colleagues we would be no worse off. We are expected to believe that a conversation with two serial misleaders - the Prime Minister, who said climate change was the biggest challenge the world faces and now backs the coal industry, and Scott Morrison, who has tripled the debt - two serial misleaders at a federal level give our serially misleading Treasurer an assurance that enables him to form the view and therefore assure all Tasmanians that we will be no worse off. Why should we believe any one of the three of them on their form?

I point out that I spent the weekend going through the Estimates uncorrecteds and there was a very small handful of ministers who sought to give something close to honest answers to questions, but the stand-out for deception, obfuscation and serial misleading was the Treasurer. On every question that was asked of him across the Estimates table he played the smart aleck, 'I don't have to answer this question', 'I formed the view', 'I believe this', 'I have answered that question', he said, after not answering the question half a dozen times.

Mr Gutwein - I answered that question half a dozen times.

Ms O'CONNOR - Mr Gutwein, if you really want to understand the depths of your contempt for democratic processes, go back and have a look at the uncorrecteds. You should be ashamed, Treasurer. It was a breathtakingly arrogant display at the table. Across all the outputs on which you were asked questions we did not get straight answers, not on the GST, not on the sweet deal to the Tasmanian Hospitality Association, not on the expressions of interest process that is being driven through the Office of the Coordinator-General, not on right to information requests, which you are still delegating so they cannot be internally reviewed. On every issue that came before the Treasurer in Estimates, he serially misled or did not answer. That is this Treasurer's form, so why should we believe a single word he says about Tasmania's future GST receipts?

I do not believe we should, because this Treasurer has form and this Government has form. We saw it here in question time this morning in that extraordinary display of incompetence and innate dishonesty from the Minister for Primary Industries and Water, Ms Courtney, who is potentially going to win the prize for worst minister in the Hodgman Liberal Government. There is still some time to go yet but her performance last week at the Estimates table is widely acknowledged as being woeful and not across her portfolio. She was asked a straight question this morning within her portfolio and because she is so not across it she deflected it to the Minister for Environment, who politely lectured the House, but we really think she was lecturing Ms Courtney to remind her of her responsibilities. Then on another opportunity to give a straight answer to a question that people who work in the marine aquaculture industries and around those coastal communities are asking - has there been a massive outbreak of pilchard orthomyxovirus? - we still cannot get a straight answer. Have around 300 000 fish died? We cannot get a straight answer. Either the minister is dishonest, she is not across her brief or she is coming into question time with no preparation for the significant issues of the day.

They are dishonest at their core and that includes the Treasurer.

[11.28 a.m.]

Mr BACON (Denison) - Mr Deputy Speaker, there could be no matter more important to the state of the Tasmanian budget than what the Liberals are doing in Canberra today. The Treasurer was at pains to read out an article from a Western Australian newspaper with the headline 'WA GST share - Labor promise extra \$400 million to make up shortfall'. I want to kick in where the Treasurer stopped in his quote, because it goes on to say, 'Labor says the proposal does not change the current GST formula.' There are no plans by the Labor Party to change the GST formula and the way it is distributed.

We know in Canberra today there is a meeting of the federal Cabinet to discuss the Productivity Commission's recommendations around changes to the distribution of the GST. It might be a different article, written by Karen Sweeney of AAP for *PerthNow*, but there is a lot of similar language to what the Treasurer was using. Look that one up if he is looking for that guarantee.

We know there is a meeting of the federal Cabinet in Canberra today. We know the Tasmanian people have been misled when it comes to the state budget in Tasmania. The point has been made time and again by the Labor Opposition and others. There is a danger in this review into the methodology of the distribution of the GST and that our Estimates are never going to eventuate. We are talking about 40 per cent of the revenue for the state. This meeting is being held in Canberra today. There is not a Tasmanian at the table and there are four Western Australians in there. In all likelihood, changes to GST distribution methodology are coming under this Liberal Government. Treasury has said that Tasmania would lose over \$639 million in GST revenue over the Estimates using this proposed new method, which averages at around \$160 million.

This is a Treasurer who has concocted fake budget surpluses in his attempt to tell Tasmanian people he has fixed the Tasmanian budget and he has it back on track. It is not true. If you take out \$160 million even the fake surpluses disappear. This is a real risk to Tasmania. The Treasurer went out yesterday, had his 60 or 90 seconds in front of the press. He claims it was longer than 60 seconds. We will say it was 90 seconds and give him the benefit of the doubt. He fled from the media because he does not want to answer questions about this alleged guarantee he has from the Prime Minister.

As the member for Denison, Ms O'Connor, said, he repeated time and again to any question about GST in Estimates last week that we will not be one dollar worse off. What dollar figure has the Prime Minister guaranteed? We know that in the 2018-19 Budget, we are said to receive around \$2.49 billion worth of GST. Is that the figure we are guaranteed, Treasurer, or is it a different figure? The next year it is about \$2.56 billion, then \$2.65 billion and \$2.76 billion the year after that. Which one of those figures is guaranteed, Treasurer? He will not answer that question but the clock is ticking. The federal Cabinet leaks like a sieve. We will probably know what decision they have made today.

In question time, the Premier completely changed his language on GST and what that side of the House will accept. Up until now, you only had to search the Premier's tweets to see he was at pains to say this Government, here in Tasmania, would not accept any change to the distribution method of GST. Now it seems they are going to support a change, with these top-up payments for a transition period. How long will this transition be? It looks as if the Premier and the Treasurer are willing to sell out Tasmania's long-term future for a few dollars, a few shekels. How long will it be guaranteed? There was no word from the Treasurer about exactly how much of that would be guaranteed.

Mr Hidding is about to speak. He has an opportunity to tell us exactly what the guaranteed dollar figure is and how long this transition period will be. The Premier has failed to stand up for Tasmania. We know the Treasurer has failed. Mr Hidding has an opportunity to put some facts on the record. The Treasurer will not answer any of those questions. He will not tell us what the dollar figure of this guarantee is. Is it based on this year's GST projections? There were only two years of GST projections in the federal budget because they knew this change was coming. Are the next two years guaranteed? Is the 2020-21 figure guaranteed, and the year after that?

Which figures are guaranteed by the Prime Minister? When he sets out his guarantee, we know we are not going to be one dollar worse off, but not one dollar worse off than what? We still do not have an answer. The Premier has said in the past he would not stand for any changes to distribution. He changed his language today. It is incumbent on the Government to set the record straight. What is going on in Canberra? What discussions have the Treasurer and the Premier had with their federal colleagues? What transition will be put in place? How long will it last? Are they selling out

Tasmania's long-term interest for short-term political gain? It is the hallmark of this Government to do that but they should at least be honest with the Tasmanian people about what they are doing.

There has been a significant change in language today. Mr Hidding has an opportunity now to clear this up. He has some notes there from the Treasurer. He should tell us exactly what -

Mr Hidding - No.

Mr BACON - It is not there? It is not in there? Read that out, that will be good. We know Mr Hidding has a chance. The only thing we want to hear from Mr Hidding is the dollar figure that is guaranteed. The future of Health and Education in this state depends on this guarantee. What is the dollar figure?

Time expired.

[11.35 a.m.]

Mr HIDDING (Lyons) - Mr Deputy Speaker, I thank the House for the opportunity to make a contribution to this important matter. I am not surprised it happens to be the matter of public importance today. We discuss this in the context of a strong and powerful federal government, a coalition government with strong commitments to the federal system in Australia. We have a government in Tasmania with the record for the best financial management in the history of Tasmania, without question. How else could you describe a government that came in a little more than four years ago, with red ink as far as the eye could see? In little over four years we have the budget to where it is. We have an economy that has fantastic confidence levels and we are the hottest ticket on the planet with regard to financial management in government.

In that context, the discussion between the sovereign state of Tasmania and the Australian Government is robust, regular and Tasmania's position is completely understood by the Australian Government. Just as it was in 1895 and all the way through to 1901, when Tasmania had one of the first delegations put together. They came together with parliamentarians from other sovereign states of Australia to form the Federation of Australia. They held out for a great case for Tasmania. We received 12 senators, for a small state.

Ms O'Connor - How many are at the Cabinet table? All blokes. Yours are all blokes, your federal Senators from Tasmania.

Mr HIDDING - Twelve senators, the same as New South Wales, the same numbers. They were great decisions made on important matters of federation and that set up one of the most successful federations of sovereign states of the world into the government of Australia. GST was proposed in the 1993 election. John Hewson was the Liberal Leader -

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER - Order. It is the MPI. I have been guilty of debating during an MPI, but I ask Ms O'Connor and Mr Gutwein to have their conversation outside.

Ms O'Connor - One, 25 years ago?

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER - Order. Go outside if you want to talk.

Mr HIDDING - In 1993, John Hewson led a Liberal coalition to election and right up until just before the election day when he collapsed on national television, on the question of a birthday

cake, we probably would have had the GST in 1993. It did not happen until later, but this is when the people of Australia realised it was the right concept. But it was not a mature concept in 1993. It was later presented to the parliament and we began the GST system. We negotiated a terrific deal for Tasmania, but no special deal. It reflected the same arrangement as that with which the federation was set up.

We are a small state and we are one of the founding states of the Commonwealth of Australia. The Constitution of the Commonwealth of Australia was written by a Tasmanian bloke, Andrew Inglis Clark. Most of the Constitution was his work. We were and still are a key player in the Commonwealth. Discussions between the sovereign state of Tasmania and the Australian Government are strong, robust and real. They are of a much higher standard than those of the Labor Leader, Bill Shorten, who tweeted, Trump-like, he would provide \$400 million to Western Australian from the same bucket we draw our funds from, which meant by extension Tasmania was going to have its throat cut by Bill Shorten.

Mr Bacon - Wrong.

Mr HIDDING - It is for that reason that he is barely seen in Braddon. He certainly does not want the Labor Leader in Tasmania on his shoulder in Braddon. He is putting up a feeble effort indeed. He understands that if he shoots his mouth off in Western Australia, he is in big trouble in Tasmania, which is the reason that we do not see much of him.

Without question when this is determined - and I understand it is going to be soon - the outcome will be a very strong outcome for Tasmania. It will reflect the very hard work that the Premier and the Treasurer have put in on this matter. They have not blinked once. They have taken every single opportunity to be at the front of the internal and external debates on this matter of the GST structure. The reason we have worked so hard to fix the budget is so that we can absorb unexpected events, like changes that occur in GST revenue under the current structure, while also continuing to fund vital frontline services.

Mr Shorten talks about a fair share for Western Australia funds. That is of great concern to this Government. We have sought to figure out what it means: what Bill Shorten is up to. He has been impervious. He is not telling the truth, giving it any clarity, as to how he will look after Western Australia with their continued jumping up and down.

What started this recent discussion was the Productivity Commission's draft report, which we believe does not make an adequate case for change. The Productivity Commission has got form with Tasmania. I am very aware of its view of the Tasmanian Freight Equalisation Scheme. The Productivity Commission says, 'Wipe it, just take it out all together. Tasmania will be right; they will be fine'. That is the job of the Productivity Commission. They do not look at the equities and balances between sovereign states of Australia. They just talk productivity. On the face of it, getting rid of the Tasmanian Freight Equalisation Scheme would be a good thing in their view, and a terrible thing from ours.

Time expired.

Matter noted.

TABLED PAPERS

Estimates Committees - Reports

Mr Hidding presented the reports of the Estimates Committee A on the Estimates of the Premier, Minister for Tourism, Hospitality and Events, Minister for Trade, Minister for Parks and Minister for Heritage; also for the Treasurer, Minister for Local Government and Minister for State Growth; also for the Minister for Human Services, Minister for Housing and Minister for Planning; also for the Minister for Education and Training, Minister for Advanced Manufacturing and Defence Industries and Minister for Infrastructure; together with the minutes of proceedings, transcripts of evidence and additional information presented to the committee.

Mr Brooks presented the reports of the Estimates Committee B on the Estimates of the Minister for Police, Fire and Emergency Management, Minister for Health and Minister for Science and Technology; Minister for Energy, Minister for Resources, Minister for Building and Construction, Minister for Veterans' Affairs; Minister for Primary Industries and Water and Minister for Racing; Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, Minister for Women, Minister for Sport and Recreation and Minister for Disability Services and Community Development; Attorney-General, Minister for Justice, Minister for Corrections, Minister for the Arts and Minister for Environment; together with the minutes of the proceedings, the transcripts of evidence and additional information presented to the committee.

CONSOLIDATED FUND APPROPRIATION BILL (No.1) 2018 (No.16)

CONSOLIDATED FUND APPROPRIATION BILL (No.2) 2018 (No.17)

Reports of Estimates Committee

In Committee

DIVISIONS 1, 6, 8, 9, 10 and 11 -

(Premier, Minister for Tourism, Hospitality and Events, Minister for Trade, Minister for Parks, Minister for Heritage)

[11.46 a.m.]

Ms WHITE - Last Monday we had the distinct pleasure of sitting opposite the Premier for a good four hours to examine the output under the Premier's responsibility and then go into Tourism, Trade and Heritage.

There were a number of issues raised throughout the exchange that are still questions on notice, so I will be seeking guidance today as to when we can expect responses. There are 16 questions on notice for you in the Department of Premier and Cabinet, 11 on notice for the Department of State Growth, and seven on notice for the Department of Primary Industries, Parks, Water and Environment. They were questions seeking information about matters that I had hoped you would be able to answer on the day but, understandably, some of those things would be provided at a later date. It would be good to have those things sooner rather than later.

Interestingly there were some questions asked of the Premier that were later asked of other ministers. I am sure we will come to that when we examine those committees. I would like to mention one in particular: the Crown Solicitor's audit of Mr Brooks' email account. The Premier

essentially said that he had given up on ever getting a resolution to the issue of being able to obtain access to the member's email account. The question on notice was whether the Crown Solicitor does now have access to Mr Brooks' Management System Solutions, MSS, email account. When I was in the output group for the Attorney-General and Minister for Justice, the same question was asked. Given that the Crown Solicitor was available to come to the table to take questions, it was disappointing that the minister refused to even acknowledge that it was a question relevant to her. She refused to allow the officer to come to the table and pushed back, saying that it was a matter for the Premier.

Given the way that the Minister for Justice and Attorney-General has handled herself - not just today but after Estimates too - I am just pushing that back to you, Premier, for a response in answer to that question on notice. It seems that the Minister for Justice and Attorney-General does not know much or is not taking responsibility for much across a whole range of portfolio areas. I put on notice to you, as the Premier, that it was the most extraordinary day sitting across from the minister. It was the first time that we had sat across from the Attorney-General, as she had previously not been in that position. That is one for you to watch, Premier.

We talked about a number of issues, starting with cyberbullying, which is a serious issue and has been taken seriously by your Government in that you are introducing legislation into this parliament. Concerningly, it was not confirmed either by yourself, or again by the Attorney-General, whether that legislation would have limitations.

Very serious allegations have been brought against former members of your staff, so serious that you did not re-hire them as a direct result of cyberbullying. There are aggrieved members of our community who would like to seek recourse as a result of that cyberbullying. The fact that legislation might be introduced to this parliament that does not allow retrospectivity to bring cases forward that took place prior to the legislation being tabled is a concern. There should not be protection provided to former members of the Premier's own office if there is going to be cyberbullying legislation introduced. The cyberbullying was conducted in that instance against an individual who raised concerns about government policy to do with access to terminations in Tasmania.

Noting the minister's tabling of information from the department of Health today, it is concerning to note that even if it is able to begin, that service will not start until October. I want to make you aware, Premier, that there is currently a three-week wait for surgical terminations in Tasmania in the private clinic providing them, and it needs to be brought to your attention that if you are a woman who cannot access a medical termination up to nine weeks where you are able to, if you then find that your only option is surgical termination, another three-week wait when you are not wanting to be pregnant, for whatever reason, is incredibly distressing, let alone the costs associated with accessing that service. It is difficult for women to fly out of Tasmania to access a service like that, given there are women who have come forward to the Labor Party whose circumstances would make it really difficult. They are working mothers, they have caring responsibilities and they cannot just up and leave the state without it causing enormous difficulty in their own lives.

Providing access to surgical terminations in the public health system is within your ability, Premier, and you say the policy settings have not changed. But I reminded you then and will remind you again now that we decriminalised terminations of pregnancy in 2013. You won office in 2014, so what has changed since then is there has been a change of government and three private providers have left the state. Even if the policy has not changed, the circumstances have changed. I am asking

you to provide some leadership here, given there has been none shown to date and it has been six months now that women in Tasmania have been forced to fly interstate for access to a legal medical procedure they should be able to get in Tasmania.

There were a number of other matters we examined, including the 200 new policies that were not revealed to the people of Tasmania before they voted, about which the Premier promised again, as a question on notice, to provide more details but they have not yet been forthcoming.

We also discussed changes to firearms legislation, asking simple questions of the Premier about what advice he had received from his former police minister and how he had received that advice, whether it was written or verbal advice. It was a bit of a strange exchange. It seemed at one stage it was written, but then the only confirmation provided was that it was verbal advice provided by the former police minister to the Premier giving him an assurance there would be no change that would breach the National Firearms Agreement, which we now know not to be true, given the advice provided by the Police department since March 2018.

Ms O'Connor - He had four different answers on that question alone.

Ms WHITE - The member for Denison rightly interjects because there were a number of answers provided by the Premier.

Ms O'Connor - 'Not necessarily', 'may not', 'would not.'

Mr CHAIRMAN - Order.

Ms WHITE - It is a very serious area of law reform and I hope the Premier would be better educated about the advice he has received and more knowledgeable, given it was a number of months ago now that he received the advice. It has not been wanting for public attention; it has been something that has run nearly weekly in the media. The fact the Premier was still uncertain about the type of advice he received is concerning, but more concerning is the advice that has now been provided by the current Police minister's department that shows it does breach the National Firearms Agreement.

We talked about the value of the Tasmanian brand - I beg your pardon?

Mr Ferguson - I am talking to the Premier, telling him you are verballing the department.

Ms WHITE - Am I?

Mr Ferguson - Yes, I am telling the Premier that.

Ms WHITE - We have all seen the advice; it was provided as a right to information disclosure because it was sought and because it is in the public interest to understand what advice the Premier received. Anyone who is interested in understanding that advice can go to the Department of Police, Fire and Emergency Management website and look up the RTI disclosure log and find it there, which shows clearly there are concerns about breaches to the National Firearms Agreement.

The Tasmanian brand is a very significant factor and something I am very passionate about, making sure we continue to protect everything that we value as a community and as a state and enhance our reputation rather than diminish it. We spoke about this in the context of tourism. It is

certainly not a volume proposition; it has to be a quality proposition. It has to be building on those things that we are renowned for, but it also has to protect the way of life for Tasmanians, given that we are a state that right now has people living in tents. There has to be acknowledgment that what makes Tasmania special is first and foremost its community and the people within that community, and the attributes that make Tasmania attractive are historically things like affordable housing, small class sizes, access to services and no traffic congestion.

All of these things are changing. How do we protect the things that make Tasmania unique and special but also build on those qualities that ensure people are attracted to come here to experience everything we have? While conditions are as good as they are with the Australian dollar being low, as a destination that makes us more attractive. The Tasmanian brand needs to be upheld by each and every member here but most importantly by the Government. We spoke about this not just in the context of tourism but also the attributes that make it nice to live here.

In that context we talked about Airbnb. It is especially concerning given that there are a number of Government ministers who have investment properties, some that are listed on sharing platforms such as Airbnb. The question is on notice for you, Premier, because you could not answer in Estimates as to whether those members of your Cabinet absented themselves from decisions regarding regulation of Airbnb. Did they absent themselves from Cabinet when you were making decisions about how as a Government you regulate Airbnb and the sharing economy, or did they fail to disclose a conflict of interest and therefore stay in the room for those discussions?

That is concerning, because there is another program you have also supported, which is the landlord incentive scheme. Given there are a number of ministers with residential properties that are on the rental market, did those members exempt themselves from Cabinet decisions and are there guidelines that exempt them from taking advantage of the landlord incentive scheme? When the Minister for Housing was asked these questions in this parliament he gave no such guarantee.

These are questions that are on notice to you and essentially they go to the kind of leadership that has been demonstrated by the Premier in terms of the transparency of decision-making that is taken by his Government and the leadership of the Premier with respect to the standards he expects from his ministers. That is why these matters are so important. It is also why we say so regularly that the standard that you walk by is the standard you accept. The standard that you walk by as Premier is the standard you accept. That is concerning, given the number of issues we canvassed during Estimates, because they go to the type of place where we live and the sort of leadership that we expect.

Political donations are a key part of that, because the standard you walk by is the standard you accept again. When you do not encourage appropriate disclosure of political donations or advocate for state-based disclosure laws, it calls into question the integrity of our democracy and that concerns each and every one of us. The Labor Party has been firmly on the record supporting state-based disclosures of donations, lowering the threshold for those disclosures, moving to a faster disclosure period of 14 days, and making sure that it is not the size of your wallet that gets you elected to parliament but in fact your capacity to represent your community.

The legislation that is out for discussion at the moment around changes to the electoral laws, including looking at donations disclosure, are pretty flip-floppy and flimsy, I have to say. There is a lot of wriggle room you have provided for yourself there, Premier. Most of it is to do with advertising or canvassing for votes on the day of the election as opposed to providing a more robust framework for donations made to political parties or to individual candidates. We will be making

a submission to that calling on the Government to adopt a much more robust framework for donation disclosure legislation and implementing state-based disclosure laws in Tasmania. We have none at the moment.

Premier, the other issues that we spoke about of course were some public sector employment contracts, given that you are ultimately responsible. One of the significant ones, given that we are now into July, was the termination payout to Dr Alcorn, the former CEO of the Tasmanian Health Service. We understand that as of 1 July, with the health system governance framework given effect, that the CEO and governing council have been disbanded. The Premier could not indicate at Estimates committee how much Dr Alcorn would be paid out. He asked us to put it on notice, which we have done. I am expecting to receive a response. It is a matter of public interest: this was the person who was put on by the Minister for Health to head a new governance framework, designed by the Minister for Health, which cost an awful lot of money, and the whole thing has been abandoned.

We have a completely new governance framework that came into effect on 1 July, a completely different management structure and a CEO who was no longer needed. Assuming he was paid out his contract for the remainder of the period he was supposed to be contracted for, it is quite a hefty sum. It could be around the order of \$1 million that was paid to Dr Alcorn because Michael Ferguson, the Minister for Health, failed to make it work. Dr Alcorn was appointed by the Minister for Health. Could you imagine the number of procedures that could be provided in the health system for \$1 million? Could you imagine the number of people who, I understand, are waiting right now in the emergency departments - 12 mental health patients ramped? A number of patients have been waiting in the Emergency Department at the Royal Hobart Hospital overnight - as many as, I believe, 25 recorded yesterday who were waiting for a bed; 57 waiting in the Emergency Department. Imagine the support that could be provided to staff working at the hospital, rather than paying out the contract, \$1 million or thereabouts, to Dr Alcorn, if that \$1 million had been put into delivering services to patients and supporting our staff. That is why it matters that this Government is honest about the payouts that it makes to public servants, including former chiefs of staff and former heads of the media units, especially those who have been sacked because they were cyberbullying others.

Those questions are on notice. We would like to know how much taxpayer money has been used to pay people either to cease contracts with the Government or because they have left office.

A number of other questions are on notice to be answered by the Premier.

We talked in the Estimates committee about THA funding and the memorandum of understanding being negotiated at the moment with this organisation, and the fact that this organisation receives so much money from the government. The Premier could not articulate the process by which a decision was made in granting that allocation to the THA and what evidence he relied upon in making that assessment, particularly given that the THA has now been funded to deliver support to sports clubs right across Tasmania - netball clubs, badminton clubs, soccer clubs. The THA, the hospitality association, will now be going into those sports clubs to provide them with assistance to become more sustainable as a club. I understand why we would want to provide more support to sports clubs so they can become more sustainable. I support providing money to ensure that they can be supported to do that. I support an organisation going into clubs and helping volunteer boards make clubs more sustainable.

My question is: is the THA the best organisation to do that? They are not a sports club, they are not a sports club administrator, they are not even a club administrator. They are a peak body that lobbies on behalf of hospitality. The question to the Premier is: what advice did he receive about the THA being the best placed organisation to go into netball clubs, badminton clubs, soccer clubs, you name it, to support them to become more sustainable? It is a fair question but the Premier could not answer that in Estimates.

Time expired.

[12.05 p.m.]

Ms O'CONNOR - Mr Chairman, I have before me the transcript of the Estimates hearing with the Premier. I spent quite a bit of time going through it over the weekend. It has been illuminating to read again what was heard at the Estimates table in committee. The lack of clarity around questions and the shifting of answers was really quite striking.

The first place you see this is on the question of the policy the Liberals did not release before the election to change our gun laws. The first time, I asked the Premier:

Were you aware of the proposed changes to the gun laws before they were published in *The Australian* on 28 February after being made public by the Greens?

The Premier said:

Yes, a proposal to change the laws, in no way weakening them.

Then, a few minutes later, the question was:

So you received advice from the police minister in writing that the promise to the Sporting Shooters Association did not breach the National Firearms Agreement?

The Premier:

Yes, the advice I received, and that was why I said publicly in March that what we were proposing to do would not necessarily breach the NFA.

So we have gone from a statement that 'it would not breach the NFA' to 'not necessarily breaching the NFA'. I remind the Premier that he did not say in March that 'it would not necessarily breach the NFA'. Then, when I asked again:

We are trying to establish whether the Premier received the advice in writing.

The Premier said,

The advice I received from my office, from the minister, from the minister's office, was that what we were proposing may not breach the National Firearms Agreement.

Then, there is a blanket statement at this point, under pressure that:

I received the advice. I was advised that what we were proposing would not be a breach of the National Firearms Agreement.

We had from the Premier of the day four different answers to the one question: an absolute statement that it would not weaken the National Firearms Agreement; a statement that it may not breach the National Firearms Agreement; then a statement that it does not necessarily breach the National Firearms Agreement; and then finally that it would not breach the National Firearms Agreement.

That goes to dishonesty. The proposed changes would: extend the five-year licence under National Firearms Agreement to 10 years; introduce infringement notices for minor storage violations, when we all know there is no such thing as a minor storage violation when you are dealing with lethal weapons; extend the category C ownership to include non-clay target shooters, in breach again of the National Firearms Agreement; create a new category of firearms category E; introduce silencers for category C guns in rural areas; and on it goes. Clearly, the policy that was not taken to the people at the election but released secretly to the Sporting Shooters Association is in breach of the National Firearms Agreement.

Chair, given the brief amount of time that we had to respond to the whole of the Premier's Estimates, I am going to particularly focus the remainder of my contribution on the Government's expressions of interest process for development inside the Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area, national parks and crown lands. This is a particularly important issue in the community for a whole range of constituencies. It is not just Greens or environmentalists who feel strongly about the protection of wilderness, about ensuring there is no commercial development inside national parks and that crown lands are not given away or leased to private developers. There is a whole suite of constituencies here who are deeply concerned. They include, for example, the Anglers Alliance Tasmania. The reason the concern is so deep was brought home through Estimates because it became really clear the Premier had not taken the time to understand how weak the statutory process is for development inside Tasmania's protected areas. The Premier had not taken the time to understand how significantly and irreparably the projects put forward in the expressions of interest process will degrade wilderness values. The proposal to put seven huts along the wild South Coast Track would irreparably damage wilderness values along that track, according to the metric used by the Parks and Wildlife Service itself.

The Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area Management Plan was changed, specifically to enable commercial developments inside the Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area. The plan handed down in 2016 is deeply flawed and damaging to the Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area because of the enormous range of commercial activities it now permits inside the park; the crab walk away from wilderness values to using wilderness as the driver for management of the Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area. This is the only World Heritage Area on the list of over 1000 properties with word 'wilderness' in its name.

The statutory process is so weak you have anglers all over the state, livid, because the first they heard about the proposal to build huts and fly up to 120 flights into the Walls of Jerusalem National Park each year was about two months ago. This proposal has been floating around since the former minister, Matthew Groom, launched the EOI process in 2014. It went from a small-scale proposal with about half-a-dozen lines of detail on the Office of the Co-ordinator General's website to this significant, impacting development proposal that has now really upset constituents who know it will impact on their enjoyment of the wilderness.

Here is the statutory process in a nutshell -

- the Tasmanian Government changes the Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area Management Plan in order to enable developments.
- the Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area Management Plan is the guiding document for all activities that can go on inside the World Heritage Area.
- an expressions of interest process run through the Office of the Co-ordinator General. It is not being run through Parks. It is being run through an organ of government, which has opened this place up to an unprecedented level of commercial exploitation.
- we have Reserve Activity Assessments that apply to the expressions of interest process. That is an opaque process. The Office of the Co-ordinator General gives nothing. When we asked about what development proposals were proposed for crown land we were told that was confidential. We cannot obtain any information about this process. Reserve Activity Assessments are not made public. The only reason we know about what is happening to Lake Malbena is because of a leaked Reserve Activity Assessment. A level 3 Reserve Activity Assessment goes to the Commonwealth but there is absolutely no compulsion for public consultation. The only way you can guarantee the people have some say is for a level 4 Reserve Activity Assessment. On that basis, the only questions the Commonwealth can look at are matters of national environmental significance. They will not look at the impact on wilderness and cultural values in Tasmania, necessarily. It can be sent to the Commonwealth and have an RAA attached to it. If the Reserve Activity Assessment comes back and the Commonwealth says it can go ahead with these conditions, it goes to council and it is a permitted use, which means there is no public consultation.

We have come this far in a process to put three permanent huts, a helicopter landing pad on Halls Island, at Lake Malbena in the Walls of Jerusalem National Park, and the people who have loved and used that place for decades have no say at all. This is a grotesque corruption of process. The Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area belongs to us all. It belongs to the world. It is a treasure we must protect for current and future generations and for its intrinsic value. Yet, we have a rolling expressions of interest process, without end, in which you have proponents such as the Tasmanian Walking Company putting in proposals, land banking for places such as Federation Peak. There was a proposal that popped up three years ago for Frenchmans Cap that went nowhere and is still sitting in the system. We have the Commonwealth Government giving almost \$3 million to a proponent for an expression of interest process that has not been made public, not subject to a development application, and would irreparably degrade wilderness values on the South Coast Track. It is a disgraceful abrogation of the Minister for Parks' duty and he is conflicted because he is also the Minister for Tourism.

Time expired.

[12.15 p.m.]

Mr HODGMAN - Mr Chairman, I welcome the opportunity to speak further to the process that is our Estimates committee hearings. A lot of time was appropriately dedicated to scrutiny of a number of issues of public interest. Little, in my experience, was spent on actually scrutinising the revenues, expenditures and anticipated outputs of the Budget with respect to my portfolios.

Ms O'Byrne - I asked you a direct question and it took ages to find an answer, as to where the \$400 000 was.

Mr CHAIRMAN - Order.

Mr HODGMAN - It is a matter for opposition parties as to how much time they spend on such matters and how often they go over the same things over and again, asking the same question in a variety of ways.

Ms O'Connor - You do not give straight answers.

Mr HODGMAN - They receive answers. On the occasions we, quite appropriately, say we will obtain further detail and take questions on notice, it should be a preferred course for members of this parliament to obtain the facts, and the advice they are seeking if they are sincerely after that advice. We will return that information as soon as is possible. A lot of questions are asked. We endeavour to provide accurate answers on all occasions. We seek further advice in some reasonable time to obtain that information. I can assure the Leader of the Opposition it will be provided at the earliest opportunity.

With respect to the Department of Premier and Cabinet, a lot of the budget outputs contained within that agency point to the importance of this department in assisting in the delivery of our policy agenda and all those election commitments we took to the election and will be delivered under this Budget; to ensure our budget remains in sound shape, to ensure we are living within our means, to do what we can to further stimulate economic growth, to continue Tasmania's business community being the most confident in the nation, to invest the dividends of a stronger budget and stronger economy into essential services, infrastructure and measures that continue our strong fiscal growth. We have committed to live within our means under our fiscal strategy and under the allocated expenditures across the forward Estimates. It is anticipated we will remain well below the historical long-term average growth in revenues and we will remain net debt-free over the budget and forward Estimates.

In relation to a number of the matters flagged, I want to touch on as many as I can within a short time. The first is RTI compliance. To reiterate that whilst we have made some improvements to our RTI laws and processes, they are essentially the same as were in existence under the previous government.

Ms O'Connor - No. You have the Minister for State Growth delegating to the secretary so there is no internal review.

Mr CHAIRMAN - Order.

Mr HODGMAN - Yes, we are more transparent. We are publishing more information and making it available to interested parties. It is important to reiterate that these processes need to remain at arm's length from Government members. The officers responsible -

Ms O'Connor - Do you acknowledge they are still being delegated?

Mr CHAIRMAN - Order, Ms O'Connor.

Mr HODGMAN - for RTI processing are independent for a reason, are required to comply with the legislative provisions and to do so independent of government. Some time was spent on this matter. I can repeat that delegations with respect to RTI applications are a process separate to my office, and I reject any inference that the RTI process is in any way interfered with by my office.

Ms O'CONNOR - Point of order, Chair; I need to make sure the *Hansard* record is correct. The ministers are delegating.

Mr CHAIRMAN - Ms O'Connor, it is not appropriate to stand and make a point of order and/or a point. That was not a point of order and therefore is highly disorderly. If you continue to interrupt the Premier I will have to warn you and possibly eject you from the Chamber.

Mr HODGMAN - Thank you, Mr Chairman. The next item on the list of matters of interest is the Treasury building and the announcement we made about future use of the Treasury building. It is a wonderful site that has remarkable heritage and history attached to it but it is not well suited to modern and efficient office accommodation and we would rather it be more available for members of the public to access and enjoy. We anticipate that is exactly what will happen as a result.

One thing I wanted to put before the committee was the view of the Heritage Council because there had been some suggestions that members of our heritage community might not be as supportive of what is being proposed as others. I want to place on the record the position of the Heritage Council so there can be no misinterpretation or, worse still, misrepresenting what the council, which is an important advisory body to government, says about this matter.

Ms O'Connor - Are you going to table some advice?

Mr CHAIRMAN - Ms O'Connor, I warn you.

Mr HODGMAN - I will read from a statement that was released and made available to me recently about this matter, following our announcement -

The Treasury Buildings on Murray Street and Public Buildings facing Franklin Square are collectively an early and iconic set of heritage buildings protected by their entries on the Tasmanian Heritage Register that are of significance to the whole of Tasmania.

One of the Tasmanian Heritage Council's guiding principles is a desire to facilitate the continued use of heritage places. This recognises the importance of ensuring our heritage places retain their relevance and usefulness as unique features of our wonderful State.

In order to ensure that we hold current information about the diverse range of heritage values encapsulated in the Treasury complex, Heritage Tasmania has been asked to review and update the entries for this complex on the Heritage Register. This will provide the Heritage Council with a comprehensive new entry for this complex and will assist it to make sound statutory decisions that protect the heritage features and values that make this collection of buildings so special.

As the Treasury buildings are listed on the Tasmanian Heritage Register, any future development or works proposed for this complex will require the consent of the Heritage Council under the provisions contained in the Heritage Act. This means its heritage features will continue to be recognised and protected for this and future generations.

The Heritage Council has published Works Guidelines that outline its expectations and provide guidance for works on heritage places. The Heritage Council is also keen to promote the proactive work done by the professional staff of Heritage Tasmania with heritage property owners and site managers to assist them to plan and undertake works that facilitate good owner and heritage outcomes. In this instance, the Heritage Council expects to work closely with the Treasurer to ensure appropriate arrangements are in place that define and protect the Treasury complex's heritage values and ensure its adaptation complements and respects its heritage values.

That is consistent with our policy position and will be a further layer of protection and, I would hope, assurance for those within our community who are interested in the future use of the Treasury buildings precinct. We will call for expressions of interest later this year and ensure the heritage and historic values are protected and also allow for the input and consideration of community views.

Another matter I want to address is in relation to the conflicts of interest claimed by members opposite and repeat what I said in Estimates, and that is the very clear expectation with enhanced provisions to ensure there are no conflicts and that any matters appropriately raised by members of Government are done so. I am entirely unaware of any circumstance where there has been a conflict of that occurring.

In relation to our ongoing efforts to support our tourism and hospitality sector, I want to repeat the fact that we are endeavouring to increase not only visitation in a sustainable way, but to ensure that our visitors travel further across our state, stay longer and spend more. This Budget includes additional funding for tourism marketing that goes specifically to dispersal and yield, targeting high-yield visitors but also dispersing them across the state so that other regions that have not experienced as rapid growth as Hobart are able to capitalise on the increased visitation to our state and the opportunity to involve themselves in better and unique experiences that capture our state's strengths and differentiate our regions to provide particular points of interest that highlight emerging and established experiences that are quite particular to our state.

It might be cycling or fishing, walking, history, World Heritage experiences, or golf and drive tourism, which have become increasingly important to international visitors, as well as the many people who have come across the strait on our *Spirits* with their own vehicles to enjoy travelling our state. They will be able to do so not only through the Great Eastern Drive, which has proven to be a great success, but also additional drive journeys, three new proposed journeys and a commitment in this Budget to deliver those. Again, it highlights the particular points of interest in each region and spreads the benefits of a strong visitor economy more evenly across our state.

Our airline strategy was referred to in the points of interest before us and we remain ever vigilant in our efforts to secure international flights to our state. We have already seen within the last term of government - and expect it to continue - an increase in airline carriage to our state, more seats on our airlines and expanding capacity, which is a good thing. We are continuing to work

with the airport, with federal authorities and indeed international carriers to get international routes into our state as well. As the director, Mr Hans van Pelt, informed an Estimates committee last week, whilst it is important that we remain sensitive to the commercial nature of these matters - and we are in a very competitive space, certainly with respect to what other states are doing to secure more international flights - significant progress has been made and this Budget and our commitments are to ensure that should the opportunity arise, we are able to provide additional access to our state from international destinations.

It is a very strong tourism budget; there is no doubt about that by any measure. Without wanting to reflect on the alternatives that have been offered, this Budget very much captures a strong commitment to tourism and sustainable tourism growth, but also with some targeted budget allocations that will hit those sweet spots increasingly.

In relation to the expressions of interest process, which is a matter of some interest to the member who last spoke, and that is recognised and appreciated, a lot of deliberate effort has gone into ensuring that the process is robust enough to ensure the protection of intellectual property, which is something that is absolutely critical. It requires some sensitivity and would not, in my view, serve the interests of anyone other than the Greens and other individuals or groups that might be desperate to stop anything at all from happening in our state and take out any sound proposals that come our way and possibly stop the Blue Derby Pods Ride from ever getting up and running, or perhaps prevent Tasmanian Boat Charters from their business enterprise, which is now up and running, and perhaps stop the Maydena Bike Park or the Freycinet Eco Retreat walk.

These are just a few of a number of projects that have been progressed through this process that respects the need to protect intellectual property. If Tasmanian businesses and entrepreneurs are able to come forward with their projects it should be possible for them to be assessed confidentially, but to ensure they pass all the relevant Australian Government, state planning and approval processes that may be required. In some instances, including one the member who last spoke mentioned, they have been and will be subject to national EPBC process. It may not have been necessary for that to occur, but it will add an additional layer of scrutiny and assessment and provide assurance to all reasonable Tasmanians interested in seeing a sensible balance of ecotourism developments of a world-class standard being possible in our state, and to allow more people to access them.

Dr Brown was keen to fly a chopper across our wilderness areas.

Ms O'Connor - Over the Tarkine.

CHAIR - Order.

Mr HODGMAN - I would love more Tasmanians to have similar opportunities to access our wilderness areas.

In relation to the THA commitment, a lot was made of this, including by a Labor Party that no longer strongly supports the hospitality sector that is the third largest employer in the state, an essential element of a good experience and part of our visitor economy. We consulted extensively with the Tasmanian hospitality sector more broadly, and its peak organisation that we respect as the peak body representing the hospitality sector made official via an MOU we signed with them some years ago, to deliver greater benefits to this important sector that was previously not the subject of any notable support.

There is a lot more in this Budget than there has ever been before. It is providing support to a major employer that is a pivotal part of the visitor economy and many local communities who are supported by a strong hospitality sector, whether it be through employment of those who live in that community, the businesses sustained by it or the many other broader community benefits that come from having a strong hospitality sector. Our process was sound in developing that policy and, as we discussed during Estimates last week, our expectation is all we have committed to will be delivered in a way that benefits that sector, our broader visitor economy, and Tasmania's many communities in which the hospitality sector is prevalent.

In relation to the brand project, I take on board the observations of the Leader of the Opposition, but this is a move by my Government to properly invest in our brand. It is being done in order to: recognise its strengths; understand its current capacity to best support our exports, Tasmanian businesses and the broader community that rely on having a strong brand; progress toward establishing a statutory authority that allows the Brand Tasmania Council to be better resourced and better equipped; and turn up the volume on our brand, our products, our services, our people and our places. It is a strong commitment that we are continuing to work through with interested parties. I have outlined the process and whilst preliminary, targeted work has been undertaken, there will be much broader community consultation to make sure we can truly take our brand to the next level. That includes through our export community and off the back of a trade strategy, which will be a first for our state and something I am sure other members will like to speak about, including my parliamentary secretary. Work is well underway to develop that trade strategy and to continue the strong growth in Tasmania's export sector, which currently leads the nation.

I am proud to be a Parks minister through which our Government is investing so much more. We are investing in infrastructure to support increased visitation, upgrades and maintenance that will support existing infrastructure and 15 new rangers and frontline staff, which Opposition parties have been calling for and this Budget delivers. It is a significant increase that will commence imminently. There is work underway by way of advertisement and we imagine there will be a lot of people interested and keen to work in our Parks and Wildlife Service.

There are also a number of major projects which were not properly scrutinised or inquired into, in our parks: \$16 million over four years into our iconic national parks and reserves; major investments into Maria Island, the Overland Track, Tasman National Park and other parks across our state, Ben Lomond and other properties and great assets receiving additional support under this Government. It is a deliberate combination of our tourism, hospitality and events sectors with our other great assets of parks and heritage.

Time expired.

[12.35 p.m.]

Ms O'BYRNE - Mr Deputy Chairman, I appreciate the opportunity to address the Estimates process. We were to seek as much information as possible from a disinterested and disengaged Premier. He did not seem to stand for any of the things he said he believed in. That is one of the things about this Premier; he is considered to be a nice guy but not particularly strong. What was clear from your evidence in Estimates is you are not. Words are easy, Premier. Saying something does not make it true and you have squibbed on commitments you have given over time on issues important to Tasmanians.

Let us talk about the references in *Hansard* to the economic times you take so much credit for; an economic outcome in Tasmania this Premier has not utilised a single lever to achieve.

This Premier is wholly dependent on national and international fluctuations and things have gone well for you, as they have for previous governments. For this Premier to take any credit is laughable, particularly when we see he is not prepared to stand up for our GST revenue, which we know is a significant risk to Tasmania. This Premier says he will fight for Tasmania every single day of the week. This Premier cannot even remember if he is in a room when the ABC was voted to be sold by his party. This Premier says he is committed to our GST process, fighting for Tasmania and our fair share, yet all he has done is roll over to his federal colleagues. He has never stood up to them. He has never stood up to them on the GST. He claims he fought this fight before. The fight was delayed, not by him but by the process. It is a process he is now going to sign up to in which Tasmania is potentially going to be significantly worse off.

This Premier will not commit to the GST distribution model we currently use and has served us well. This Premier is prepared to commit to a different kind of model. He will accept change. He will take anything that he apparently does not see as worse, but you can guarantee it is not going to see us better off. It is not going to see us better off if we have to go to Canberra with our begging bowl every year as some mendicant state. That is exactly what this Premier is prepared to admit and allow to happen. He does not stand up to his federal colleagues and he does not stand up to the hard right in his party.

We have seen the tabling today of the report on terminations of pregnancy in response to the parliamentary motion. First, he did not stand up to them and say that we will provide services to Tasmanian women because we care. Why do we think this Premier cares? He has stood up time and time again and talked about his support for women; for women's rights, for women's protection, for women's agency, and every bit of quantifiable research we can use states that the moment you deny women agency, make women beg for services or shame women, you put them at significant risk of their wellbeing. If you want to stop women ending up being the victims of violence, then you start with every single decision this parliament makes. When this parliament was not gutsy enough a couple of weeks ago to say women should be able to access services in the public system because this Premier will not stand up to the hard right, he failed women.

He has done it again. The Premier will say, 'This is great, we are going to have access to a private service in Tasmania, and nothing has changed in the time since Labor was in government'. Things have changed. As members are looking at their lists they will notice it is a subject of conversation we are allowed to discuss today. We decriminalised terminations so we can take away the barriers to terminations being performed in the public service because doctors were frightened. We have not stopped doctors being frightened of this minister because they are frightened to provide services and to do that work. What we now have is a report that says there are more important issues for hospitals than providing women with access to terminations, and that is disgraceful.

We have an outcome from this report which says that perhaps, contingent on being able to do an agreement, we might have a service in October for which women can access the Patient Travel Assistance Scheme. That does not fix the issue of access because women still have to go cap in hand to the hospital and say, 'Please give me money so I can go to Hobart'. The reason we have not had that many applications to the funding to fly to Melbourne is that one, it is retrospective, two, it does not cover the cost, and three, it is about shaming women. That is what it is about. You talk about not wanting women to end up in situations of violence, but this sort of shaming behaviour is part of the culture that allows it.

What else are we going to get out of this new assistance? It is really interesting because they are saying, 'We're going to talk to people who are experts on providing terminations but let's make sure we include an organisation that doesn't support access to terminations and will not provide advice on access to terminations', so they are included in the consultation process. That consultation was all submitted prior to 22 June, so the minister and the Premier have known about it for a while - and what do we get? An increase in funding to Pregnancy Counselling and Support Tasmania. The resolution to the issue of accessing terminations in Tasmania is to fund the groups that do not agree with terminations in Tasmania. That is what this Premier oversees, increased money to the organisation that tells women that this is not a sustainable option, that this is not the right option, that they will live in shame and fear for the rest of their life if they have a termination.

Ms O'Connor - What is the name of that organisation?

Ms O'BYRNE - Pregnancy Counselling and Support Tasmania. You can find them on the Government's DHHS website, actually. They talk about all the things they advise but they are not a prescribed health organisation because they do not prescribe the full range of health services. They particularly do not support women in this pathway. That is the action that we get and this is the kind of government we have - 'I really support women but I'm not going to let them have choice; I'm going to put barriers in place'. You are still not going to be able to access services in the public hospital system unless you meet the criteria that say you are vulnerable. I encourage all members to make a phone call to find out how they assess that women are vulnerable. Find out what questions women have to answer in order to get that kind of access. Find that out for yourselves and be ashamed if you supported that process.

We have a premier who will not stand up to the hard right in order to allow women to access services, even though he knows this is part of the continuum of violence. Denying women agency is part of the continuation of violence, but we should not be surprised because we also know the standards he allowed to happen in his office. Do not for a moment let anyone convince you that this is one staff member who took the fall. He allowed members of his staff to troll. They had Facebook and social media accounts under different names and then used those to target individuals viciously and cruelly, and the worst bit is that they then screenshot it and sent it to someone's employer. Who are you? Andrew Nikolic? Seriously, this is the kind of behaviour that you support? A woman makes a comment about access to terminations and what does this Premier's office do? They copy it and send it to her employer, because that is the kind of bullying that is allowed.

This Premier stood next to Rosie Batty and made some significant and quite moving comments about women's rights, the right for them to be free of intimidation and harassment and the fact that they should not be subject to violence. Every bit of research shows that that violence starts with that kind of behaviour. In fact, even Commissioner Hine in an Estimates inquiry in the upper House said that this kind of emotional violence is as bad as broken bones. That is what you allow when you allow this Premier and his staff free rein.

The Premier can talk about the great economic times when we know that we have people sleeping in tents and city parks. There is a couple of kids living in a cave at the Gorge in Launceston. How is that for great economic times? How is that for the golden age? There is not a thing this Premier says that I have any confidence in anymore, because the standard that you walk by is the standard you accept. He is happy for people to sleep rough, he is happy to roll over and get his tummy tickled on the GST so long as his federal colleagues will let him, and he is happy for women to continue to be shamed, embarrassed and intimidated by the policies that his party puts in place

and the actions of his very own office. This is the type of premier we have. When we hear talk about 'Will's not that tough, not that strong but he's a really nice guy', we know he is not because the standard you walk by is the standard you accept.

The Premier can come in smiling - he is good at smiling and good news - but he squibbed it on the GST, he squibbed it when his staff were intimidating and bullying and harassing women, and he squibbed it when he continues to deny women access to affordable, accessible terminations in Tasmania. Frankly, you should be ashamed at the type of government you lead and the type of premier you are. When we talk about a premier's legacy, I tell you what, they are not going to remember you smiling at a tourism event. They are going to remember the things you did to undermine women, and that is what this Premier should be held to account for.

Time expired.

[12.45 p.m.]

Dr WOODRUFF (Franklin) - Mr Deputy Chairman, there are many things people might reasonably expect from the people they elect to hold the office of Premier and top of the list would be truthfulness, looking after the base security and the long-term future of the state with compassion for the people who live here and with a vision of how we want to live in the future so you can be putting things in place now to make sure that future comes to pass.

The Greens were deeply concerned when we heard, just days before the state election, that the Liberal Party had undertaken a secretive consultation process with firearms advocates and had prepared and given a set of policies to that group in a secret process where they released it to a small group of stakeholders on 9 February. They released a policy around firearms law in Tasmania that would, if enacted, weaken the National Firearms Agreement we have signed up to as a state and lead to a situation which would make Tasmania a less safe place for the people who live here.

The Greens provided that information to the media; it was never released by the Liberals before the election. It was never released to the Tasmanian people. It was made available to a small group of stakeholders. It was about something so important to the basis of the security of this state it rightfully provoked outrage amongst people when they heard it and was stomped on with real concern and gravity by survivors of Port Arthur, including the Alannah and Madeline Foundation, who stand to look after victims of gun violence. It was reacted to with outrage and concern by Tasmanians.

The Premier stood in front of the cameras days before the election and made a statement to assure voters that the advice he had received was that the firearms policy did not breach the National Firearms Agreement that had been introduced by all states and signed up to after Port Arthur and was updated in Tasmania in 2017. The Premier made that assurance to the state. Quite reasonably, Gun Control Australia, who have long been advocates for us holding onto the National Firearms Agreement, for making sure and for being the honest cop who moves around the country checking out what is happening with all the different premiers who come to hold that office around the state - because often as not, Liberal and sometimes Labor premiers will cave in to firearms advocates who are constantly trying to weaken Australia's statewide laws around gun security and gun control. Mr Roland Browne, Gun Control Australia, asked the Premier where the advice was. All he did was say, 'Can we please have a look at the advice that you went to the election with assuring Tasmanians that you had the advice? Premier, show us the advice please'. Not surprisingly to some of us who had a look at the situation, the Premier refused to provide that advice. He would not even provide advice under a right to information request.

Gun Control Australia had no choice except to commence proceedings in the Supreme Court of Tasmania against the Premier of Tasmania to review the decision where the Premier refused to release that information under the RTI act. They dispute it. There is a basis for that refusal. They still want to see that advice on behalf of the Tasmanian people that the Premier assured voters about so confidently before the election. This is two months ago and we are still waiting to hear what the result of that will be.

Meanwhile the ABC had a tiny bit more success under right to information. They did not ask the Premier for the advice; they asked the Police to provide the advice they had given to anyone in the Liberal Party, anyone in the Liberal Government, the Premier, the Police minister - it does not matter, anyone - please provide the advice that this does not breach the National Firearms Agreement. What we know from that request was that Tasmania Police could not provide that assurance. They could not say that categorically. They used a number of words that make it clear that there was never a proper consultation with the Tasmanian people about these proposals to weaken our gun laws. It clearly did not have a consultation with Tasmania Police or Firearms Services.

The right to information report with the Police raises concerns about wide-ranging commitments made under the Liberals' policy, which would mean substantial resource imposts for Tasmania Police and would either require more staff or the reduction of other services. None of those commitments appear to have been costed, they say, and no funding source had been nominated.

It is deeply concerning that what we have is an assurance from a premier that cannot be backed up with the paper that he received providing definitive advice that this proposal to weaken the laws would not indeed weaken the National Firearms Agreement. It is quite clear that there are a number of things that contravene the firearms agreement, including extending the active period for licensing of firearms to include options for up to 10 years for categories A and B licence holders and two years for a category C agent of a primary producer, which at the moment is currently every year in order to 'remove red tape'. In so doing, it also reduces security. It increases the risk of guns falling into the hands of criminals who would use them, as happened only a few weeks ago, to threaten people in the community by firing 20 rounds into a nightclub through the door. That sort of rapid-fire weapon is dangerous.

The National Firearms Agreement was set up to make sure those things do not happen. They have not happened in Tasmania, with life lost, since Port Arthur. We will be here and continue to be here to make sure that governments like yours do not erode the National Firearms Agreement.

The Leader of the Tasmanian Greens asked very reasonable questions of the Premier during Estimates about whether he had advice that the gun control policies did not contravene the National Firearms Agreement. The first time the Premier answered that the policies would not 'necessarily' breach the National Firearm Agreement. Later on for a second time, Ms O'Connor asked the same question. The Premier replied that they 'may not' breach the National Firearms Agreement. Finally, she asked again, and he said that they 'would not' breach the National Firearms Agreement.

Time expired.

[12.55 p.m.]

Mr HIDDING (Lyons) - Mr Deputy Chairman, I enjoyed the scrutiny of the Premier with his portfolios. He certainly has a serious spread of portfolios, particularly the trade portfolio. There is

a synergy between trade and tourism, particularly in national tourism. It was interesting to hear that explored.

The Premier is quite rightly proud of a new Tasmanian trade strategy, which will provide a seven-year blueprint. It will focus on supporting and growing Tasmania's international export activities, which will strengthen our economy. He has already met with more than 60 businesses around the state as part of the development of the strategy. That includes small and large exporters, advanced manufacturers and primary producers, forestry, education and ICT.

We are now starting on a second phase of developing the strategy. That is a series of one-on-one consultation with key stakeholders. There is much to do in that space. Tasmania is punching well above its weight on the world stage. China continues to be our largest and most valuable trading partner. That would come as no surprise to anyone. The foundation of this partnership is the enduring friendship that Tasmania has which was cemented by the visit of President Xi Jinping with his wife in 2014. China is now our state's very first \$1 billion export market. Never before has Tasmania reported a \$1 billion return on our exports from one single market. The latest ABS data confirms that our exports to China in the year until April topped the \$1 billion mark.

Also Malaysia - our second largest trading partner - increased by \$123 million in value in the past year. Some time ago I attended a presentation by the owner of a chain of beef restaurants in Kuala Lumpur and further out. His presentation was on the fact that grass-fed Australian beef was going to the top of the pops in his restaurants and would grow right throughout Malaysia for its very special flavour and its texture. That is Tasmanian meat in a nutshell - grass-fed, cool climate and a premium product, which is just one of the many products that go off to Malaysia.

Our third biggest market, Japan, grew by \$79 million. That is a lot of money for a small state. When you see the growth in our three top partners in our export activity, it is clear that the world wants our precious commodities - our metals, our seafood, meat and paper. The result of these enormous increases in demand is our growing economy and jobs right here on our shores.

The Premier alluded to Brand Tasmania. There is some exciting stuff happening with a new statutory authority to take our brand to the next level. I noted with interest at recent ministerial council meeting that there is substantial work being done by the federal government, involving all states, on a new brand for Australia. That is a significant task. It is not necessarily a tagline you want, but you want a brand - a set of words and a graphic - that sells and promotes each of the states and territories in Australia. It is a difficult process but they are committed to doing it within the next 12 months. I wish them all the very best. I made the point that our brand should not be a sub-brand; the Australian brand should support and highlight the separate brand of states like Tasmania for our very special features that our own brand could and should bring.

With our new strategy, our brand will be turbocharged with more resources, funding surety, permanent staff and independence from the government of the day.

Ms O'Connor - No commitment to protecting wilderness, which underpins the brand.

Mr HIDDING - Our wilderness and our heritage and those matters are very much part of our brand. I look forward to that being developed. I congratulate all those people, including Mr Michael Grainger, the chair.

Sitting suspended from 1 p.m. to 2.30 p.m.

CONSOLIDATED FUND APPROPRIATION BILL (No.1) 2018 (No.16)
CONSOLIDATED FUND APPROPRIATION BILL (No.2) 2018 (No.17)

Reports of Estimates Committee

In Committee

Resumed from above.

Mr HIDDING - I was speaking of Brand Tasmania and placing on the record our appreciation, and I am sure everybody in the parliament would reflect the same view, for all those people of the Brand Tasmania organisation. This is particularly so of Mr Heazlewood, Mike Grainger and others who have put so many years of activity into it on a voluntary basis. To have people of quality working with the Tasmanian brand and with various governments on this has been a terrific contribution to Tasmania. It has now changed to a statutory organisation, which is a reflection and recognition of their good work. It is something they started. It will now become a statutory body and authority and will be resourced to go to the next level.

Two trade missions were led by the Government in 2017-18. The full benefits will take time to come to fruition but the immediate benefits were obvious. In April, Deputy Premier Jeremy Rockliff led seven Tasmanian enterprises to the United States to attend the Sea-Air-Space 2018 exposition in Washington, which is the largest maritime and naval aviation expo in the US. This mission showcased Tasmanian capability within specialist and niche areas of the naval sector. It built knowledge and connections for Tasmanian business within the lucrative and competitive US market. The immediate feedback from participants has been extremely positive, particularly in the opportunities our new Defence Advocate, retired Rear Admiral Steve Gilmore, opened for the delegates.

This also demonstrates the across-the-board commitment this Government has to the Trade portfolio. We have the Deputy Premier, who holds the Advanced Manufacturing and Defence Industries portfolio. That it is a standalone sector in its own right reflects to a degree that the Deputy Premier is based on the north-west coast, where so much of the intellectual and manufacturing grunt in this state comes from and will put Tasmania in a position to gain its rightful share. To this date, this is not reflected in past decisions. We would be expectant of a better range of outcomes from our involvement in the defence area. We are beautifully placed with the kind of activities we have happening on the north-west coast. Alongside the facility that is building 100 buses for the state of Tasmania, the same company is building stainless steel trucks for the mining explosive sector, Orica. This is something to be amazed at, that we have that kind of capacity in this state. That is simply a marker of the kind of things we ought to be involved in and we deserve our share.

The Government also led a delegation of nine businesses to Food and Hotel Asia in Singapore in April. This is Asia's biggest and arguably most influential international food trade event and the feedback was an unqualified success, with six participants securing new orders and all participants securing new leads for orders and contracts.

[2.35 p.m.]

Mr BACON - Chair, I rise to speak on the Estimates Committee A examination of the Premier. I express my ongoing concern for the lack of transparency and accountability of this Government.

It has been the hallmark of their first term. It appears to have ratcheted up in the first few months of the second term. We hope not to subject the Tasmanian people to a third term of this rabble.

The key thing discussed over the first two days of Estimates, beginning with the Premier on the Monday and following on with the Treasurer in front of Committee A on the Tuesday, was a threat to the Budget in that 40 per cent of the income for our state budget comes from GST. The threat comes from the Premier's Liberal colleagues in Canberra, who are meeting today to make a decision on changes to the distribution of the GST. Everyone knows Tasmania can only be worse off under any change. The change suggested in the News Corp papers was a move to an average of all states rather than to the leading state as to how GST is distributed.

In the past the Liberal Senate team has talked about how important this distribution method is for GST and that it should not be changed. It will be interesting to see what they do when the Cabinet decides, noting it will be with no Tasmanians in the Cabinet. Once that decision is made, what will the Liberal Senate team and the Liberal Government in Tasmania do? Will they roll over and have their tummy tickled, as it appears the Premier has done in changing his language today toward not supporting any change to distribution of the GST? He is now changing his language to say that under certain circumstances he would be supportive of change. It is disappointing to wave a white flag so early on in this debate regarding the future of the Tasmanian budget.

There has been a guarantee, relied upon by the Premier, from the Prime Minister to say we will not be one dollar worse off. It has not been explained through the Estimate's process; not one dollar worse off than what? We do not have a dollar figure from the Premier to say we will not be one dollar worse off. One can only assume we will not be one dollar worse off than the 2018-19 year, where we are talking about \$2.49 billion, in round figures, of GST we expect to receive. We are not sure if that is the figure the Prime Minister is referring to or the Premier is relying on.

In the Budget, Tasmanian's take of the GST is expected to grow from that \$2.49 billion this year to \$2.76 billion. It has been pointed out by Saul Eslake and others that it will leave the Tasmanian budget in a more precarious position. It will make it much more difficult to provide services in areas such as health, education and child protection, which are not performing well in anyone's estimation. It appears this threat to our GST is going to make it even harder for the Tasmanian Government and future governments. Once the transition period for any changes finishes, once these top-up payments are no longer guaranteed, it is going to make it much more difficult for future Tasmanian governments to deliver the services we, as Australians, should all expect; being able to access the same level of services around the country. That is the principle of our horizontal fiscal equalisation system. We think it is a principle the Premier has abandoned all too quickly and we want to see some action from the Premier if his Liberal colleagues in Canberra make a bad decision in Cabinet today.

A range of other issues came up through the Estimates process with the Premier.

Cyberbullying was much talked about through the election campaign. There seemed to be an orchestrated trolling of political candidates which, some could argue, is probably not as serious as we saw when individual businesses dared to speak up on the issue of poker machines. They were attacked through fake accounts on Facebook and other social media platforms. It came out that at least one of these accounts was a senior member of the Premier's staff. Subsequently, her contract was not renewed.

The Premier refused to say what payout Ms Wood-Jones received in not having her contract renewed. We know that directly after the election all the computers in the Premier's office were changed over; very convenient for that to happen when no investigation was put forward to check other members of his own staff, some of whom had interacted with fake accounts on Facebook as far back as November of last year. It seemed to be known around the Premier's office in November of last year that this was a fake account. We have seen no real investigation into that from the Premier or anyone else to satisfy us that this has been properly looked into. Now all the computers have been changed over, which probably means that there is no evidence left, which is pretty convenient, to say the least.

We have had discussion around changes to the gun laws that were proposed by the Liberal Party in the lead up to the election. Whether or not they contravene the National Firearms Agreement has been hotly disputed. It does appear that at least one RTI was released on this issue from the Department of Police, Fire and Emergency Management, which set out that they could possibly be breaching the National Firearms Agreement.

It is very interesting that this advice could be released from the Police department. A first RTI had been knocked back, I think, on public interest grounds. You would think you would get the same result no matter which of the two departments you send a right to information request to when the issue is the same. It appears that it is good enough to release one set of advice but not the other. It is still not clear whether the advice that the Premier relied on was written or verbal advice from the police minister at the time, Mr Hidding. As the member for Franklin said in her contribution, this is now the subject of a court matter as to whether this RTI will be released.

There were also discussions around the sale of the Treasury building. If they sell the building for \$20 million and they bought the former RBF building for \$20 million, it is effectively a like-for-like swap. In terms of value to the Tasmanian public, you would have to argue that the Treasury building is far more valuable than the Kirksway Place building. I am not an architect or expert on these matters but, in my opinion, Kirksway Place is not much of a building.

Mr Gutwein - It is not a swap.

Mr BACON - It is not a swap, but it is valued at \$20 million. You put a figure of around \$20 million on the Treasury building. It does not seem like you are getting that good a deal.

Mr Gutwein - That is the book value, not necessarily the market value.

Mr BACON - The Treasurer refused to rule out taking less than the valuation, less than \$20 million. You could rule that out now, to give us some sense that it will not go for less than it is valued at. No? No taker.

Mr Gutwein - I think it is worth a lot more than \$20 million.

Mr BACON - Yes, I know, but you will not rule out selling it for less. Just rule it out.

Ms O'Connor - We do not know what it is worth.

Mr Gutwein - The market will tell us.

Ms O'Connor - The market doesn't know what it is worth.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN - Mr Bacon, your time has expired.

Time expired.

[2.45 p.m.]

Ms HADDAD (Denison) - Mr Deputy Chair, my colleagues on this side of the House have very eloquently and articulately expressed some very reasonable concerns about the overall discussions that were had in Committee A during Estimates last week. I thought during my contribution I would speak specifically about the discussions that happened for the couple of hours that I was at the table in Committee A. They are specifically about Parks and Heritage, an issue that many members of the House feel very passionately about and some very robust discussions were had during Estimates.

First, there was discussion about 15 new frontline staff who were announced during the election campaign. It is fantastic to see that they will be on the ground before the end of the year, but the concern we raised during discussion is that 15 is nowhere near enough extra staff to cope with existing demand for maintenance of infrastructure and maintenance of natural resources, let alone to deal with the expected increase in tourist numbers as a result of developments that will continue to happen in national parks in Tasmania.

A question is still on notice regarding what the FTE count of the Parks service was at the beginning of the former term of the Hodgman Government. It will be interesting to see whether the 15 staff who have been announced as coming on board this year are simply making up for former job cuts. We will find that out when we have a chance to have an answer to the question that is on notice.

There was a discussion about roads maintenance. I have had representations from a number of Parks Service workers who have talked to me about the fact that, in their understanding, there is no allocation for maintenance of roads within national parks. It is increasingly becoming a function that people need to perform off the sides of their desks, so to speak, or off the sides of their vehicles - roads in national parks, tracks to walking areas, tracks to camping areas and, adding to the pressure, is that the Parks service inherited responsibility for a number of Forestry Tasmania roads many years ago but, I understand, did not inherit a budget commensurate to what Forestry used to have to look after those roads. Whether it is a matter of reallocating budgets within the Parks service is an issue for those working on the ground.

I thought it worth mentioning that the maintenance budget for roads, tracks, bridges, toilets, access in our national parks is stretched as it is. While it is exciting to think of Tasmania being a highlight on people's tourist calendars and the place that people increasingly want to visit, I am concerned about the ongoing maintenance needs of roads and other infrastructure.

After we spoke about maintenance budgets, we spoke about the move of staff north. I agreed with the sentiments of the Government in promoting a decentralised public service. I have spoken on the record in this Chamber about the benefits of trying to attract more Australian public service jobs to Tasmania. There were concerns raised again by some of the stakeholders I have spoken to who work in the service about potential gaps this might leave within the establishment and difficulties there might be in filling that quota of jobs moving to the north and north-west, and ongoing concerns about whether the systems being put in place to recruit or move those staff are sufficiently taking into account the regionally specific nature of many of the roles in the Parks service. That was definitely acknowledged by some of the officers who were at the table during the

Estimates committee but it still warranted being raised at the Estimates process because it is a concern for many who work in the service.

We went on to speak about the proposals for building a new Three Capes-style walk, another iconic walk, somewhere in the Tasmanian wilderness. There were some concerns raised by Labor and the Greens about the fact that the tourism master plan is still an ongoing piece of work and potentially will be happening concurrently with any plans for an iconic walk. There seems to be a bit of a mismatch there and it is potentially the case there could be concerns raised in one that are overlooked in the other if they are two pieces of work that happen concurrently.

The Labor Party supports the tourism industry and is very pleased people want to come and visit Tasmania, but we need to question whether the \$20 million allocated for a new multi-day walk is the best use of spending. Whether a business case or a cost-benefit analysis or similar economic analysis was done on other potential uses of \$20 million within the Tourism and/or Parks portfolio, were some of the questions we asked but did not receive fulsome answers to.

Those are some of the things I wanted to put on the record in my contribution today, specifically in the Parks portfolio.

With regard to the next iconic walk, there were some questions about whether we are at the point where we will sufficiently attract enough people to do that walk, as opposed to perhaps taking people away from some of the other walks already available, such as the Three Capes Walk and the Overland Track and other similar tourism opportunities people already take advantage of in Tasmania. I also raised the point that ongoing maintenance of roads, bridges, track and other infrastructure in the Parks and Heritage portfolios will continue to be a concern as we start to develop a new iconic walk.

We also spoke about the sale of the Treasury building and my colleague, the member for Denison, Mr Bacon, has raised some concerns about that. I put on the record concerns raised around the heritage of the building and wanting to ensure that any private use of the building in the future not only maintains but promotes public access, specifically to some of those parts of the building that are an important part of Tasmania's early history, namely the former Cabinet room, the former Supreme Court room and some of the other parts of that building that represent an important part of Tasmania's early colonial history that arguably are not available to the broader public right now. It would be lovely to know that any private use of the building would encourage and promote public access to those rooms in the Treasury building that have significant cultural heritage values for Tasmania and it is worth investigating the opportunities to put conditions on the sale of that building to ensure that public access is promoted and maintained into the future.

[2.55 p.m.]

Ms BUTLER - I rise to speak to Estimates committee A, where I asked the Premier a question during the process of the Heritage section in relation to the sale of Anglican churches to meet the funding requirements of the redress scheme. The sale of 76 properties throughout Tasmania is the cause of quite a high degree of stress in many of our communities. I have met with a number of communities in relation to this decision who have voiced their dissatisfaction, not with the obligations of the redress scheme itself but the theme of the dissatisfaction seems to be the surplus of funds after the obligations of the redress scheme are met. That seems to be quite a matter of contention in a lot of the communities.

I acknowledge the support of the redress scheme but we also must acknowledge the significant historical importance of many of the Anglican churches in Tasmania, especially the Quamby parish churches. I tabled a motion in this House urging the Government to intervene to stop the sale of three historic northern Tasmanian churches - St Mary's at Hagley, St Andrew's at Westbury, and St Andrew's in Carrick. I have also received correspondence from many other congregations and parishes around Tasmania, including Pyengana, Swansea, in the central highlands, southern midlands, Nubeena - many dissatisfied communities.

I am not opposed to the sale of churches if the community or the congregation of the church deem it an appropriate measure or step. If the church is not utilised as a place of worship, or if it is in need of repair, such as the roof being in need of repair, then by all means it is an appropriate measure to sell that church. However, there are a number of cases where the sale of a church to a private owner is not appropriate, and this was what I asked the Premier about in our Estimates process. I asked whether he considered it appropriate or respectful to potentially sell the body of a former premier. I strongly believe that St Mary's Church in Hagley is one of those cases where the church should not be sold. In 1861, the foundation stone was laid by Sir Richard Dry, who was part of the 'Patriotic Six' who resigned from their seats as a matter of protest to begin the process of stopping convict transportation to Tasmania. Sir Richard, who grew up on the Quamby estate, was premier from 1866 until he died in 1869, aged 58. He did not live a very long life but he introduced a lot of significant changes to Tasmania and created the state we have now. To sell a church in which the body of a former premier is entombed to me seems not appropriate or right. I consider these churches to be of irreplaceable significance to Tasmanian heritage and they should be protected.

I had other questions, which because of the short time allotted to the Heritage portfolio I did not get to ask and which I will write to the Premier with in due course. They were more along the lines of the cemeteries and graveyards attached to those churches and the obligations of cemetery managers.

Ms Archer - I am dealing with that - you can write to me.

Ms BUTLER - I will write to you as well, thank you, Attorney-General. That would be lovely.

Mr Hodgman - Put it on a question on notice.

Ms BUTLER - Thank you. I also had a question about the obligations of cemetery managers and whether those cemetery managers understand the obligations and access to those cemeteries of families.

Up here we have a carved wooden coat of arms that was made by Nellie Payne, a fantastic Tasmanian wood carver. She had a lot to do with the St Andrew's Anglican Church in Westbury. Nora Payne's magnificent Seven Sisters memorial chancel screen is inside that church. The work is considered unique for its artistic skill and intricate design. It is absolutely beautiful. Nora Payne, or Nellie Payne, completed the honour roll at the Hobart Town Hall and was also commissioned to carve World War I honour rolls in communities across Tasmania to honour the sacrifice of many Tasmanians who lost their lives in the First World War. Nora Payne formed a close relationship with the St Andrew's Church. She was born in Westbury, she was married at that church and her ashes are scattered there as well. Her carvings are everywhere within that church. It raises the question, if that church is put on the market, what happens to the content? What is the value of those?

St Andrew's Church is also part of that trinity of churches that make up the Quamby parish. I cannot say enough how important they are in their historic and heritage value. I will continue to fight to call on the Government to intervene to protect the historic and heritage significance of churches and the content of those. This is a big issue in a lot of our communities, and I will reaffirm I have heard nothing other than complete support for the redress scheme in those communities. That is not the issue. The issue is the surplus after the sale of the churches, and the historic and spiritual value of those churches to a lot of people.

Estimates of the Premier, Minister for Tourism, Hospitality and Events, Minister for Trade, Minister for Parks and Minister for Heritage agreed to.

DIVISIONS 3, 5, 10 and 12 -

(Treasurer, Minister for Local Government, Minister for State Growth)

[3.02 p.m.]

Mr BACON - I rise to speak on Estimates Committee A examination of the Treasurer, Minister for State Growth and Local Government. I express my frustration in the way the Treasurer conducts himself at Estimates every year. He brings his script and, no matter what the question, repeats the script over and over. The most frustrating example this year was in reference to the GST. After one conversation with the federal Treasurer the night before the Budget, he managed to form the view that our revenues were - I have blocked that out of my mind as a self-defence mechanism against mental pain and suffering. I must have heard it 25 times on the day. I imagine it is possible for the Treasurer to answer the questions. He has never shown it, but you think it would be possible to give a straight answer given that it is 40 per cent of the revenue for the state budget; \$2.49 billion this financial year. Given what is going on in Canberra today, you would think the Treasurer could have given a straight answer to this rather than repeating the same lines over.

The Premier and the Treasurer have managed to convince themselves they have a guarantee from the Prime Minister on the distribution of the GST, that we will not be one dollar worse off. Not one cent, I think is the phrase the Treasurer used. He will not outline the exact dollar figure guaranteed, whether it is the \$2.49 billion in this year's Budget from GST or if it is one of the subsequent years. In the federal Budget there were only two years of GST projections. We have four years in the state Budget. Could the Treasurer outline whether all four years are guaranteed, in dollar figures actually in the Budget, if it is only one year, and exactly which year is guaranteed?

There is a debt and deficit problem in this Budget. Treasury's own figures average out to around \$160 million a year in potential changes mooted in the News Corp press yesterday. Even if you use the net operating surplus, we would be looking at deficits in almost every year based on that \$160 million writedown. Across the forward Estimates those fake surpluses would effectively be gone. The fiscal balance would show huge deficit after huge deficit. In net debt projected by the Treasurer's own budget papers, the buffer between negative net debt is down to \$14.8 million by the year 2020-21. We have a huge risk now in the threat to our GST, calculated by Treasury themselves at around \$160 million a year. It does not take long before you are well into net debt under this Treasurer.

This is the Treasurer who oversaw a downgrading of our credit rating in August 2016. He seems determined to drive us back into net debt, a position we have not been in since 2005. This is without any new initiatives. The unallocated infrastructure provision in the Budget, which has been in there for around eight years, has been taken out to pay for the election pork-barrelling of the

Treasurer and his colleagues. There is no money for new infrastructure spending and no money for timing around project change.

This is a Treasurer who talks about the biggest infrastructure investment in Tasmanian history, but what we need is some money in place in the unallocated infrastructure fund to deal with cost overruns and timing changes with infrastructure. The Government is going to be signing, along with their federal colleagues, a Hobart City Deal by the end of the year. The Launceston City Deal cost the state about \$90 million, and there is no capacity in this Budget to provide money for the Hobart City Deal. There are infrastructure projects around Macquarie Point, a Hobart to Granton light rail and other infrastructure projects on the list of things that may be included in a Hobart City Deal, but there is no funding to deliver on any of those projects. There is zero money in the unallocated infrastructure fund. The strangest thing I saw at Estimates was when the Minister for Infrastructure did not even know that fund is now absent in the Budget. He said he was going to take it on notice and come back to us with exactly how much was in there, which is bizarre in the extreme.

This Treasurer is determined to drive us back into net debt. In his own projections, what he calls the golden age for Tasmania, for the economy and for the state budget, by the year 2021 our buffer between negative net debt is \$14.8 million and that is without a single new spending initiative in the next four years. That is bringing down three budgets in a row with no new spending in it, which is not feasible in anyone's imagination. There is deficit after deficit. Look at the cash position, the fiscal position or the underlying net operating position before any changes to the GST. This Budget has a wages policy locked in at 2 per cent. Inflation is expected to be 2.25 per cent, which means we have a Treasurer and a Premier of this state who are happy to lead a government asking hardworking public servants, teachers, nurses and other public servants to take a real pay cut. This is at a time that the Treasurer wants to laud his economic credentials, talk about the fact he has fixed the budget, and he is asking people who work for him to take a pay cut. It is a disgrace. It is not a good enough way to treat your employees. The Premier has been reported in the media to have made noises that he thought it was time for the 2 per cent austerity wages policy to come to an end, but he has been pulled into line by the Treasurer, who is hell-bent on keeping that wage cut to his workforce in place. It is not good enough.

There was talk in the budget Estimates about the fiscal strategy. This Treasurer is dishonest at best with the state of the Budget. You only have to look at his fiscal strategy and at strategic action 1 to realise this is a Treasurer who talks the talk when keeping expenditure growth under control but he does not walk the walk. He has been in breach of his own strategic action 1 in the last two budget years and it will happen again. We have a long-term revenue growth rate of 3.7 per cent. Strategic action 1 says that the annual rate of expenditure growth will be kept below that 10-year average and the last two years have had expenditure growth of 5 per cent or more, well above the 3.7 per cent which is the measure the Treasurer set himself four years ago. He likes to brag about only having one fiscal strategy. That is fine, you can set yourself one set of rules but not if you do not then meet them. In the last two years he has been in breach of his own strategic action 1. If you cannot meet your first strategic action, I would say your fiscal strategy is not worth the paper it is written on. Expenditure growth across those two years has been well above 3.7 per cent.

The Treasurer has been saved by revenue growth, particularly around a range of state taxes and also federal funding, but he is not providing a buffer for the future. There is strong revenue growth at the moment but the Treasurer is just spending that money and we are not seeing any improvement in service delivery. You only have to look at our hospitals to see this Treasurer is spending more money and getting worse results. It is astounding when you look at not only our health system but

our child protection system that we are talking about spending more money but are not seeing any better services provided to the Tasmanian people.

This Treasurer has a history of ripping dividends out of GBEs. His whole election fiscal strategy was built on ripping a 90 per cent dividend out of the MAIB. This is despite the fact he had an agreement in place with the board of the MAIB to drop their dividend ratio payout down to 50 per cent. Through the election campaign that agreement was abandoned by the Treasurer and he was going to ratchet it up to 90 per cent. There is still no word on exactly what happened in discussions with the MAIB, but that never eventuated because it was another risky thing this Treasurer has tried to do with our GBEs.

We saw him plunge the state into an energy crisis by decommissioning and putting up for sale the combined cycle unit at the Tamar Valley Power Station. We saw the sleight of hand with funding the new *Spirits* of Tasmania, taking a nearly \$40 million dividend out, money that can only be spent on new ships. The one thing we hope with these new ships is that they do not go down the Bruny Island path. Let us not try to increase capacity by buying smaller boats. That seems like a foolish way to go forward for Bruny Island and we hope they do not get it wrong with the *Spirits*.

The other issue that was discussed at length by the Greens and the Labor Party was poker machines in Tasmania. This is an area where we can at least say to the Treasurer that we are very thankful he is going to go down the legislative path with this agreement. We think that is the way to go forward, that both Houses of parliament should get to have their say on this issue. We very much look forward to that legislation coming forward. It will be interesting with the timing in that the Treasurer explained to the committee that in terms of a letter to Federal Hotels about the existing deed there is some mythology that the letter had to be sent by 1 July this year. The Treasurer informed the committee that he had not sent the letter but also that it does not have to be sent until 30 June next year.

Mr Gutwein - That was in my ministerial statement last year.

Mr BACON - I know, but it did not seem to get through to a lot of people who talked a lot about the letter going out this year. In terms of the timing, the letter is going to go presumably to Mr Farrell before 30 June 2019. Is that before or after the legislation is going to be tabled? Is the legislation going to go out for public comment? To my mind, it seems like complex legislation that will take some time for the Government to arrange. It is certainly our expectation that there is a possibility the existing deed could be brought to an end by the Treasurer's letter before the legislation is in a draft form to go out for public consultation, if that is the way the Treasurer is going to go, or it is tabled in the parliament for debate. If the Treasurer could give some detail about the time frame that he sees in terms of that legislation that would be appreciated by Labor.

There was a range of discussions about the Treasurer's performance in the Local Government output. The Glenorchy board of inquiry has been a shemozzle the whole way through and the way the minister handled that situation seemed to be lacking any kind of interest to start with, handballing the people of Glenorchy a 12.5 per cent rate increase on the back of what last year was a 2.5 per cent increase. The situation seems to have deteriorated very rapidly from what was in place under the arrangements put in place by the minister, where a budget was passed and a rate increase of 2.5 per cent was fine, and less than 12 months later we are now talking about a 12.5 per cent burden put on the ratepayers of Glenorchy. That is directly attributable to this Minister for Local Government, who mishandled that process the whole way through.

I am not sure if embarrassed is the word for the way the minister reacted in the committee when this was discussed. He was having constant conversations with the administrator at the time but they were not about issues like the reappointment of the general manager or passing the budget and the 2.5 per cent rate increase. The situation deteriorated so quickly but now we see a 12.5 per cent increase that is going to be borne by the ratepayers of Glenorchy.

It will be interesting to see what happens now that the Treasurer has had his embarrassing backflip on his proposed takeover of TasWater. He has now come up with a situation where it does not seem any of the election promises on water and sewerage provision in the state are going to be met under the new agreement. That is even if local government are going to sign off, and it will be interesting to see if that happens.

The minister's relationship with local government is also an issue. We hope that in this term the Minister for Local Government can have a much more productive relationship with local government. It does not have to be harmonious; that would be a step too far for this minister to even attempt, but if it could be productive that would be a lot better. Time will tell when it comes to the relationship with local government. We think the first four years have been a disaster for the minister. I do not know if he is going to hit the member for Denison, Ms O'Connor's, worst minister target. You are probably not quite going to get there.

Ms O'Connor - Ms Courtney is definitely a contender. No, it's probably Mr Barnett.

Mr BACON - I think the member for Denison, Ms O'Connor, is going to give a character reference for each member of the Cabinet in her contribution which I, for one, certainly look forward to.

I know that when it comes to local government, this minister has been a disaster for the last four years. Local government, the Tasmanian community and we know that the people of Glenorchy are going to pay for that. That, to my mind, is a real shame. A lot of people in the municipality of Glenorchy cannot afford that extreme rate rise of 12.5 per cent.

The first thing the minister could do is apologise for his lack of action and then for his ham-fisted way of dealing with the situation which has led to that. There is no doubt that he should apologise, but I will not hold my breath.

Another issue that was canvassed through the Estimates process was the risk to Hydro Tasmania dividends. We had evidence from members of the Treasury department and the Treasurer himself showing that those dividends are actually factored into the Government's election commitments, particularly around capping prices, and the impact this is going to have on Hydro Tasmania.

We know that this Treasurer has a disgraceful record when it comes to the way he treats our GBEs.

Time expired.

[3.22 p.m.]

Ms O'CONNOR - Chair, there is no question that the Treasurer's Estimates took secrecy and lack of accountability in government to the next level. On every single output we had from the Treasurer a smug self-belief that at the Estimates table he does not have to give straight answers.

As you go through the transcript of the Estimates hearing that is evidenced on every matter on which he was questioned. There was evasion, deflection, and a refusal to answer.

We entered a special place at the Estimates committee table; a place where the Treasurer's beliefs are formed. We had the Treasurer's 'belief set' talked about a lot in Estimates. Unfortunately I have not made the time to count the number of times he said 'That is my belief; that is what I believe; I form that view, that is my belief'. As we know that is the way of not answering the question. It is an automatic out for you as a minister. If you believe something, no-one can pull you up on it because it was a belief that you formed, whereas Estimates is not about your belief set. It is not about your spirituality or your religion. It is about establishing facts and scrutinising a budget. That is what we sought to do in our Estimates with the Treasurer, Minister for Local Government and Minister for State Growth.

We had no meaningful response from the Treasurer about when his office became involved and what level of support he gave to the sweet deal for the Tasmanian Hospitality Association. Let's face it, THA members overtly, in cash and in kind, tipped millions of dollars into a Liberal Party win. We had no transparency around the THA deal, when it was decided and how it was decided. How was the number \$4.8 million extra on top of the THA's \$2 million arrived at? There was no clarity around what you think would be a quite straightforward question: do you believe poker machine addiction is an illness? This question was the subject of discussion at the table for a relatively extended period.

I really wanted to understand how, as Treasurer, Mr Gutwein could not only support but ardently push a policy which would embed social harm in our community until the year 2043. I thought it was important for the committee to understand whether the Treasurer had considered the enormous social cost of gambling addiction; whether he understood the evidence that points to people taking their lives, family violence, child neglect and abuse, poverty, homelessness because of gambling addiction.

It is very clear from any evidence that you read that addiction is an illness and gambling addiction is clearly an illness. People do not choose to pour their savings, their pay, their pension cheque into the poker machines. They are captured because of the nature of the industry and the machines which are, as we know, the most addictive in the world - right here in Tasmania. We could not get the Treasurer to bring himself to say that gambling addiction is an illness. To acknowledge that would be to acknowledge that he is responsible for harm which would be embedded in our community until the year 2043.

We could not get any straight answers out of the Treasurer on the expressions of interest process for developments inside the Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area, national parks and crown lands. Indeed, when this topic was raised by the Greens, we had a repeat of the farcical process where the Coordinator-General, who is in the business of leasing, trading, hawking public protected assets, is asked an express question about what expressions of interest process involved public crown lands, we had him telling us that the matter is confidential. It is not confidential when you are talking about public crown land and a process which has been demonstrated over the past week is secretive and opaque by design. It is designed not to enable public consultation.

It is really clear that there has been no public consultation on any one of the expressions of interest proposals that have come to government; not on the proposals, and where the consultation is on changes to management plans that enable the proposals, the proposals themselves are not subject to public consultation. That is a major flaw in them because you do not have a social licence;

you make people feel resentful and shut out. You make people rightly feel that their treasures, their public assets, are being traded by a government that does not have a mandate to do so.

The Treasury building is a fantastic example for all the wrong reasons. The sale of the Treasury building was floated in the past four years. In November last year the Treasurer put out a media statement along with the heritage report which makes it pretty clear that there was, in writing at least, no intention to sell the Treasury building. Now, in the first budget after the election, three-and-a-half years till election time, suddenly the sale of the Treasury building is on the table. No mandate, no justification and no explanation, for example, as to why you would not lease it so it stays in public hands. You could still allow that site to have a different use and reach a different potential and potentially allow more members of the public in there. Not that that is the goal here; the goal is a cash grab.

If you had a government that was interested in protecting public assets then they would be actively considering leasing the property rather than selling it outright. Of course if we sell it we will never get it back.

We lodged a right to information request in relation to the expressions of interest process for development along the South Coast Track. It is Mr Ian Johnstone's proposal. Ian Johnstone is the successful operator of the Maria Island Walk, but has allowed himself to be lulled into an awful and opaque expressions of interest process and he has two proposals before government for a total of seven huts along the South Coast Track. I would say to Ian Johnstone that he is making a very big mistake there because the work he has done in building up his brand as a genuine ecotourism operator will be trashed in one fell swoop if he is part of a process that allows seven huts along the South Coast Track, irreparably degrading that wilderness.

Anyway, we lodged an RTI request in relation to that secretive process and on the Friday before Estimates began on the Monday, we received an RTI response from the secretary of the Department of State Growth. Now under normal circumstances, when you have an RTI response from the secretary of a department, it would be open to internal review, but because this decision had been delegated by the minister to the secretary and therefore the secretary was the minister's delegate, the secretary confirmed at the table that that RTI request was not subject to internal review, so instantly the flow of information in the public interest is stopped dead in its tracks. We raised this matter going back to 2015 with the Premier, who said that there would be no further delegations. Well, there are. It is happening all the time and particularly in relation to the Office of the Coordinator-General and the Department of State Growth. I argue that they are the worst offenders and the culture begins at the top.

We need to have a commitment from the Treasurer, preferably when he gets to his feet, that they will no longer be delegating decision-making so that the proper processes of right to information can flow. What has happened here is that a deliberate attempt has been made to deny the public information about their public assets by a minister who is paid on the public purse.

Time expired.

[3.32 p.m.]

Mr GUTWEIN - Mr Chairman, I thank members for their contributions at this point. I am sure there will be other contributions made. I also thank members for their engagement and contributions at Estimates last week. Although I am sure the last speaker may not agree with me, I quite enjoy -

Ms O'Connor - It is not disapproving of you personally, it's your conduct.

Mr CHAIRMAN - Order.

Mr GUTWEIN - I was going to make the point that I quite enjoyed the discussion we had last week and, likewise with the shadow treasurer, a range of matters were raised. In fact, we also captured the attention of a particular *Examiner* journalist as well, if you were reading the papers on the weekend, who made some complimentary comments about the Estimates we were engaged in.

Ms O'Connor - Did he say you were terrific?

Mr GUTWEIN - No, in fact he might have said that you were quick-witted.

Ms O'Connor - How did I miss that?

Mr GUTWEIN - I will get you a copy of it. In the same breath he was including me as well, but it was complimentary and he thought rather entertaining.

My understanding is that in the course of the Estimates week around 1000 questions were asked at both committees and we provided answers to those questions and took some on notice as well, which I am certain we will respond to once we have sufficient detail. Some were particularly detailed questions, but we will work through those.

I make the point that Tasmania is now in very good shape. The Government believes there is much more we can achieve, however, and central to our plan is strong financial management. We have delivered that over the last four years and strong financial management will continue to be at the core of our decision-making for the next four years.

The 2018-19 Budget is the foundation of that commitment. The Budget forecasts a surplus of \$161.9 million in the current budget year and demonstrates that, true to our commitment during the election campaign, there will be surpluses in each and every year over the forward Estimates. We will continue to live within our means, as we have done over the last four years, and we will remain net debt-free, holding our net cash and investments while putting our strong balance sheet to work to deliver our plan of record levels of investments into job-creating infrastructure the state needs to futureproof itself.

We will not spend those forecast surpluses before we receive them. They are the Tasmanian people's insurance policy against adversity. Everybody in this place understands that in past years we have had to deal with wildfire and significant flooding in a number of locations which, unfortunately and tragically, took some lives. I am very pleased that over the weekend there was an announcement we would be working with the council in Latrobe to ensure flood levees can be installed in that location so there is mitigation against similar events in the future.

In the last term of government our plan for health resulted in the opening of around 120 extra hospital beds and more than 300 additional hospital and health staff employed to enable more Tasmanians to get the health care they need sooner. We are continuing to prioritise health and announced a record \$757 million boost over the next six years so we can take health care in Tasmania to a new level.

This Budget includes funding to deliver an extra 478 full-time equivalent health and hospital staff to meet increasing demand and an additional 76 funded and staffed hospital beds. We will recruit an additional 120 nursing graduates and 42 paramedics in regional areas. We have also committed to a record boost in support for mental health services in Tasmania with an additional \$95 million over six years to fund an extra 25 mental health beds.

This Budget continues the very strong investment into hospital and health infrastructure upgrades and improvements. Over the next four years we will be providing \$277.6 million to achieve practical completion of the Royal Hobart Hospital redevelopment and included in that, \$28.1 million for the redevelopment of wards at the RHH and the Repat, together with \$87.3 million over six years for a major redevelopment and expansion of the LGH, which has been met with very high levels of support in Launceston for that investment that is going to occur.

We are also proceeding to the next stage of the unsolicited bid process with Calvary regarding a new private hospital being built in the health precinct in Launceston. That would be a fantastic outcome for health services in the north of the state, whether people are public or private patients but, importantly, it will help ensure the health precinct provides a much more efficient operating structure in the way we deliver our public and private hospital services. We will be working with Calvary to discuss the location of that new hospital and ensuring we get the right clinical services mix with them over coming months, with a view that in around nine months we can be in a position where a decision can be made whether to proceed or not. That has met with extensive support across the community in the north of the state.

In terms of the Mersey hospital, we are providing \$35 million for capital upgrades and nearly \$20 million for new acute medical and antenatal services at the North West Regional Hospital, as well as a boost to emergency services with \$15 million for rural ambulance station upgrades around the state and \$12 million for new greenfield ambulance stations at Burnie and Glenorchy.

The Government has committed a record \$324 million over six years into Education. This Budget includes \$69.5 million over four years to employ an additional 277 new staff in our schools, including 192 teachers, to ensure every student can get the support they need. We have also committed nearly \$200 million for new school and TAFE infrastructure. This will be the largest ever state government commitment to school and training infrastructure. It includes new schools at Legana and Brighton, together with a rebuild at Sorell, Penguin School and Cosgrove High, college upgrades at Hellyer and Launceston, and we are revitalising school farms and creating training centres of excellence. Some of the Launceston College upgrades will be targeted at the science facilities and that is going to be a worthwhile investment in the City of Launceston.

The Budget includes over \$30 million, including \$6 million for infrastructure, to support the extension of all Tasmanian high schools to year 12. This will continue to be a topic for debate, but the opportunity for year 11 and 12 to be implemented at regional high schools has been warmly welcomed by students, teachers and especially parents in my electorate. This is the centrepiece of our plan to create a job-ready generation of young Tasmanians and it is working, with TCE retainment and retention on the rise.

We have also invested and committed \$125 million to implement stage 2 of the Government's Affordable Housing Strategy, which will provide an additional 1500 new affordable homes and assist around 2000 households. Available this year, the coming Budget year, is the \$20 million included in the Affordable Housing Strategy 1, and the first tranche of \$25 million, making for a total of \$45 million. This is in addition to the ongoing funding of around \$9.5 million to \$10 million

investment into affordable housing, making a total of around \$55 million available this financial year to assist in putting roofs over the heads of people who need them.

I am pleased with the commitment of \$70 million towards the National Redress Scheme, which is an important step in acknowledging the wrong done to Tasmanian survivors of child sexual abuse. This Budget also includes over \$20 million to meeting increasing demand toward the second stage of our Family Violence Action Plan and more support to Tasmanians with a disability, including \$21.2 million for more disability-specific housing as part of the housing strategy we have outlined.

The range of commitments we have made that will enhance our enjoyment of unique wilderness areas, recreational fishing, boating and motoring: \$31 million into our world-renowned national parks and reserves, including \$16 million for new and upgraded park infrastructure, \$8 million for infrastructure maintenance and \$7 million for new rangers and frontline staff. Around 15 new rangers will be employed. We will also be providing free entry for seniors to our national parks for a year from 1 July, and half price annual passes in future years to ensure our seniors have the opportunity, should they wish to enjoy the beauty of those parks and the scenery opportunity they provide. We are investing to provide new and improved fishing infrastructure, which has made a number of people in this place happy. We are also modernising the management of game and browsing animals through the new independent Tasmanian Game Council that is being established.

To ensure we keep Tasmanians safe, we have committed to boosting police numbers by a further 125 sworn officers and are embarking on a \$10 million build of new police stations at Longford and New Norfolk, which has been warmly welcomed by those communities. The Government is providing \$2 million for volunteers in the Tasmanian Fire Service and State Emergency Service units to enable them to apply for equipment and station upgrades. Those who volunteer truly form the fabric of our society and this will provide them with assistance to ensure they have the equipment and facilities they need.

The Government recognises the importance of flood mitigation and community fire safety. It is why we have committed an additional \$36 million to the fuel reduction program and \$1.5 million over three years has also been allocated to assist with the establishment of ongoing administration for the Flood Policy Unit with State Emergency Service. We are not immune from natural disasters that confront states from time to time, and we had to face up to significant property loss and loss of life in the last term. They were the worst floods we have had in Tasmania in nearly 100 years, and we also faced significant wildfires. The emergency services will also receive a new \$12 million hub, constructed at Sorell in recognition of the rapid growth in the south-east region, Sorell in particular.

This Budget also includes the first tranche of \$45 million in funding to commence stage 1 of the new northern prison and also includes \$70 million for our new southern remand facility to be built on-site at Risdon.

In taking action on the cost of living and in acknowledging this is a challenge for many people, we have already moved this forward in the first 100 days by legislating tax measures to improve the level of home ownership in Tasmania. We have extended the First Home Owner Grant, which has been a very successful policy and has been welcomed by thousands of first homebuyers. We are providing duty concessions for first homebuyers of a property up to \$400 000. They will receive a 50 per cent duty relief over the next 12 months. Pensioners looking to buy a home and downsize, into another property with a value of up to \$400 000, will also receive a 50 per cent duty holiday.

We have tabled legislation to cap electricity prices at CPI. We have also implemented the order this year to set the wholesale energy price. Recently, prices have been announced by the Economic Regulator in line with CPI. I congratulate the Minister for Energy for his work. Over the next four years we will be tabling legislation with regard to completely delinking our prices from the Victorian market. If this parliament had not acted last year we would have seen double-digit increases, as occurred in other states and territories up and down the eastern sea board. We were able to cap prices at 2 per cent. As to households, the Government has the opportunity to ensure costs outside of the normal costs associated with generating electricity in this state are not passed on. Nearly 38 000 regulated small businesses have also been affected. It ensures we keep those businesses competitive, provides them with security and ensures that they are not impacted, as businesses are in other parts of the country.

In South Australia I am sure they will again go through a period of uncertainty later this year as to whether the lights will stay on. Tasmanian businesses do not have to concern themselves with that. We have reliable electricity and we have mechanisms to ensure the price impacts of a national market and costs that are outside of Tasmania are not passed on to Tasmanian customers. Importantly, we have also ensured that in this Budget we have continued with the support for those customers in the contract energy space to ensure they are insulated as well from any price shocks as we move forward.

The Budget also committed \$20 million worth of equity transfers, the beginning of a 10-year program between the Government and TasWater. We are now working with TasWater to ensure we can deliver on the commitments that were included in the MOU and my understanding is that TasWater and its owners will meet in August to consider the changes, with a vote in September. At this point in time I am hopeful we will see a positive result there and that will enable us not only to work to ensure that we can accelerate the investment but provide a freeze in terms of water and sewerage price rises in 2019-20 and meet our commitment to cap future price rises to no more than 3.5 per cent going forward.

In terms of local government and the working relationship I want to put on the record my thanks to Doug Chipman and LGAT for the role they played and to once again make the point that we have a strong and robust relationship with local government that is providing dividends for Tasmanians.

In terms of the economy and jobs, I have spoken in this contribution about significant investments we have made to health and education and looking after our most vulnerable, and the reason we are able to do that is because we have a strong economy. We have taken measures already to ensure that we continue to strengthen that economy by reducing payroll tax, ensuring that our businesses with payrolls up to \$4 million are the most competitive in the country. That will stand us in good stead. At the end of the day you need to have an engine room. That is certainly our economy and it is going very well at the moment.

Time expired.

[3.52 p.m.]

Ms WHITE - This is a budget that continues to fail people. Having had the opportunity now to interrogate it over the last couple of weeks and look through the details, it is quite clear that chronic underinvestment into essential services remains the modus operandi of this Government.

You only have to look at what we are seeing today in our health system. Take a walk down the street and look at the Emergency Department of the Royal Hobart Hospital, where there are

12 mental health patients waiting in the ED, which is a completely unacceptable and inappropriate place for people suffering from mental ill health to be waiting for health care. Ambulances are ramped at each of our state's main hospitals and patients are waiting days, including a young boy waiting 90 hours in the LGH over the weekend. It is completely unacceptable.

This Government continues to champion the mantra that it is a golden age, yet we have people sleeping in tents on the Domain, right across the state people unable to access appropriate accommodation and sleeping rough. They are unable to find rentals because they are locked out as a consequence of growth in the sharing economy with Airbnb and Stayz, which means that the properties that were once available for rent are not any longer. I was speaking to somebody today who is aware of a family with three children who were in a rental property and whose lease expired because they were told there were renovations that would take place on that property. They are living separately now, one with one parent and three children and the partner with his family because there is not enough space and they cannot find another property. Guess what happened to that rental they were in? It is now on Airbnb.

It is a significant problem and something the Government continues to ignore and has failed again in this Budget. There is no money to provide support for emergency accommodation for people sleeping rough this winter. Despite our calls for the Government to bring forward investment into emergency accommodation so that people sleeping rough in Tasmania right now can get out of the cold, there is not a single cent in this Budget to support people this winter to find appropriate accommodation, and that is a great shame.

This is a budget that fails people. Despite the points the Treasurer made, despite the rhetoric from the Government that this is a golden age, it is certainly not a golden age for everybody. There is growing inequality in our community and I have concerns not just about what it means for people, but also how people were conned by this Government at the last election.

Take a look at their commitments given around health and education and have a look at what is actually reflected in the budget papers. There is a commitment of \$747 million to Health, but just \$370 million of that is in the Budget, and less than half of the money committed to Health at this election is in the Budget across the forward Estimates. That creates a problem for the Treasurer because it means that for years five and six to fully deliver on the election promises made this year, they have to fund \$387 million in additional spending. So there is \$370 million additional spending in health provided over four years and we are expected to believe that you will provide an extra \$387 million in years five and six, plus get re-elected to deliver on that promise.

That is a broken promise. When the people of Tasmania heard the Liberal Party was going to provide \$757 million extra into health, they thought it would help fix the crisis. It is not, the money is mostly in years five and six. It will make no difference whatsoever this term and that is why we still have patients ramped at the emergency departments in every single one of our hospitals.

It is the same story for Education. A \$324 million commitment was made by the Liberal Party to improve spending in Education at the last election, and just \$261 million is provided for in the Budget and forward Estimates. For the term of government, four years, there is just \$261 million of their \$324 million commitment provided for. That is \$63 million you now have to provide for in just two years, when already the additional spending that has been provided for is about \$65 million each year. Now we are expected to believe that in the out-years you are going to provide that too. It is hard to believe. It is named up as a risk in the Budget, and so it should be.

The other biggest risk in this Budget is the GST. In Estimates, when asked about this extensively, for about an hour, as to the guarantee that had been received by the Treasurer from the Prime Minister and the federal Treasurer, the Treasurer really could not provide an answer. He could not say what that dollar and cents figure was that he claims he has been guaranteed. He did confirm there is nothing in writing, not a cent or dollar in writing, just some kind of vague verbal guarantee. He repeatedly said that he had formed a view that it was business as usual. That is no guarantee. He confirmed that as of last week he had not been briefed on the Productivity Commission's report that is looking to change the way GST is distributed.

I asked the Treasurer today if he has been briefed because we know that federal Cabinet is meeting today, as we speak, determining their position on that Productivity Commission report. That will have significant consequences for this and future budgets because it is named up as the number one risk and we all understand that. The Treasurer talked about speculation that there could be a cut to GST around the order of 8 per cent, equivalent to about \$200 million a year if you believe an 8 per cent cut is what we could be delivered. That surplus has gone, the fake surplus is dead, they are all eroding across the forward Estimates, but apparently the Treasurer has formed a view that it is business as usual and nothing to worry about. That was the most concerning exchange we shared during the Estimates process but there were a number of other issues that came up.

Regarding wages policy, this Treasurer continues to be of the view that an austerity wages policy of 2 per cent is appropriate despite the fact that his own budget papers say inflation is rising by 2.25 per cent. The cost of living is going up greater than the wages policy of this Government. We will soon have the worst paid nurses and teachers in Australia. It will be impossible for us to recruit the best and the brightest and retain them to support the delivery of essential services, unless you change your wages policy.

We talked about the unallocated infrastructure fund vanishing. Even the Infrastructure minister did not know it had vanished. You had spent it all at the election. All the promises you made completely eroded the infrastructure budget. There is no unallocated infrastructure budget anymore in the Budget and that is because you promised everything to everybody to get elected.

We had discussions about Macquarie Point. I was very interested in the exchange we had. I will draw the House's attention to the fact that special legislation was to be brought in by the Treasurer in the output group when we examined State Growth. When I asked the Treasurer to explain why it is needed, he could not explain it at all, just that there were some minor matters that had to be dealt with.

The biggest slight of all was the whack he gave to Matthew Groom. The Treasurer was asked about a matter in State Growth and he said:

He was not in a position to answer that because it predates my time as minister.

Ms O'Connor said:

That is right but these are Department of State Growth Estimates and the department did not come to life when you arrived as minister.

To which the Treasurer replied:

It might have got a spring in its step.

Poor Matthew Groom.

When we went on to talk about Macquarie Point and the absolutely abysmal lack of action on any development at that site, who cops another spray? Matthew Groom. He did nothing for four years. Now we need to have special, site-specific legislation but the Treasurer could give no answers when asked about why it was needed and what it would give effect to, apart from talking about the minor reset work that Matthew Groom had announced. Apparently it is going to help progress that but he could not articulate how.

There were so many issues we spoke about. The cities deal, the fact there is no money whatsoever to support the Hobart City Deal which is going to require a contribution at some point. There are holes all through the Budget.

Time expired.

[4.02 p.m.]

Mr BROOKS - Mr Chairman, you always know the Leader of the Opposition is in trouble when she starts reading *Hansard* into *Hansard* to fill in some time because she cannot even make a contribution for 10 minutes on the Budget. It is a very important Budget. The Treasurer and the GST that delivers -

Mr O'Byrne - She can read her emails.

Mr BROOKS - I was wondering how long it would take the failed former finance minister to get going. Remember, you were sacked by the people if you recall, Mr O'Byrne. Welcome back.

I will talk about the David 'O'Byrne Legacy' job losses, sacking a nurse a day for nine months and the economic destruction of accumulative deficits of \$1.1 billion. That was your legacy. What we are waiting for is the 'O'Byrne Ultimatum'. We know your challenge to the Leader is coming. That is going to be the funny bit. What we know is, your only job was to deliver confidence to business and you collapsed it. I notice it is on here - on the dot points for us to talk about is election commitments.

Mr O'Byrne - The dot points you have been given to talk about?

Mr BROOKS - The ones you listed, you clown. I mean, seriously.

Mr CHAIRMAN - Order.

Mr BROOKS - You can tell he has not been here for that long. He cannot even remember these are the points the Opposition have raised that I am responding to. Seriously, I would expect that from one of the newbie members up the back but Mr O'Byrne, seriously. As a wannabe leader, you have a fair bit to go. We saw the Leader of the Opposition struggle to get to 10 minutes. She had to resort to reading *Hansard* into *Hansard* again but that is the way it works.

There are a few things I wanted to talk about. We saw the recalcitrant attitude of those opposite during this Estimates hearing where, unfortunately, they thought, like the Greens think, that they are above the rules.

One thing listed here is election commitments. We deliver on our election commitments. We believe in delivering on our election commitments. The Labor-Greens opposition election commitments was to do another deal and sell out their communities, shut down and destroy communities and jobs, and shut down 20 schools. They were not too concerned about the community when they announced that in their budget. At the end of the day what we have here is we have record investment in Health, Education and infrastructure, a significant boost to the resources of police, 125 police officers, restoring the numbers that the member opposite sacked when he was the minister for police.

Mr O'Byrne - Didn't sack one.

Mr BROOKS - Sorry, you are a bit twitchy about 'sacked'. Let us say, there were fewer police when you left as minister than when you started, but you didn't sack any. No problems. We restored those numbers. We see the continual complaining by those opposite of our initiatives, such as relocating Mineral Resources Tasmania. That is just one example of an initiative that a majority Liberal Hodgman Government delivers for the community. We have a government agency whose job it is to stand up for and support the mining industry. Rather than being in the capital city of Hobart, we had a policy initiative to put MRT on the north-west coast, in the heartland of the mining sector. All we heard from the then leader of the opposition, Bryan Green, and the current temporary Leader of the Opposition, Ms White, are continual complaints; complaining about the jobs we have created on the north-west, out of Hobart. More importantly it has delivered more confidence to the mining sector.

I know you know, Mr Deputy Chair, but that lot don't - we know they would never understand this - that confidence in business and in investment delivers jobs. That is why under the Labor-Greens disaster there were 10 000 jobs lost and under a majority Hodgman Liberal Government with an agenda to back business, community and industry, we have delivered 10 000 more jobs. More people have jobs in Tasmania and are staying here with a better future than they had under the unfortunate circumstances that they were subjected to under the rabble of the Labor-Greens government.

There are some really exciting things in this Budget. It delivers a surplus. We have proven again that the shadow treasurer is lazy; he could not be bothered coming up with an alternative budget. He cannot count, but we all knew that. The Budget delivers a surplus. It is a fairly simple concept: you cannot keep spending more money than you have coming in or you will run out. We all remember that they spent the super fund as well.

We have heard them criticise our funding for the Tasmanian Hospitality Association. We have an industry that is growing at a rate which is the envy of probably every other state in the country, yet they are complaining that we are supporting the recognised body that supports that industry.

Then you have the anti-everything brigade over there, who hate everything from meat to anything that contains metal, to V8 Supercars to football; you name it, they don't like it. They do not like roads either. We have a positive plan and this Budget delivers it.

Out of all the Estimates and out of all of the questions, they still complained that they did not get the right information. Maybe they should think about the questions they ask. They were repeating the questions. No wonder the Leader of the Opposition has fled the Chamber. I would be ashamed if, on a 10-minute contribution, I ran out of time after seven minutes and had to read *Hansard* back into *Hansard*.

It is a privilege to stand up here as a member of the majority Liberal Government, in support of the Treasurer, my good friend and colleague, Mr Gutwein, who has done a fantastic job in fixing the budget mess that you created, oversaw and supported. Shame on you, Mr O'Byrne, no wonder the community threw you out last time; I do not blame them either.

The Hermal Group project on the north-west will create 200 jobs, an amazing turnaround for a forest industry that was destroyed by the Greens cabinet members and the sellout Labor Party that forgot who put them there in the first place. It is just a typical approach of those opposite that rather than coming up with anything positive or an alternative, they just want to complain. They want to complain there are more jobs in Tasmania now, they want to complain that we have delivered a surplus, they want to complain that there is record investment in health, education and public safety, and they want to complain that we have managed to attract investment and consumer confidence.

Retail trade is up yet again, small business confidence is still the highest in the country and it was the worst in country when you were in charge of it, Mr O'Byrne. That is the stark contrast between those opposite and our positive plan that this Budget continues to deliver.

We have never said that all the work is done. There is a lot more work to do and we will continue to do the work and I certainly support that. Before I finish, it is very important that we remind members that not everyone is as fortunate as those opposite. Some are doing it tough and unlike those members who shut schools, who shut industry down, who killed off jobs, who did deals with the Greens to destroy the economy, we are standing up for the economy. We are standing up for those working Tasmanians who want a career and a life here. We are building and investing in the north and the north-west, a region that was forgotten. Remember the shadow treasurer, the laziest treasurer you are ever going to see? He bagged out Launceston and said, 'Is it as bad as I remember?' What sort of attitude is that? That is why you are on that side.

Time expired.

[4.12 p.m.]

Mr O'BYRNE - Mr Chairman, it is exasperating listening to that same speech day in, day out from the member for Braddon, the lapdog of the Liberal Party who was given a job and stuffed it up. There is a reason he is on the back bench yet he thinks he has the moral authority to come up here and lecture and mislead people in terms of the facts and the situation of the previous government. It is embarrassing. He gives the same speech every time, but if he wants to do that it saves people a lot of time in just flicking through his contributions on *Hansard* and politics. It says more about him that he cannot argue the substance but rather denigrates other people and their contributions to not only this place but the community. That is a matter for him.

I rise to provide a contribution in response to the Estimates hearings last week. We have seen a significant change in the Tasmanian economy over the last four or five years, predominantly led by global and national circumstances. There has been significant depreciation in the Australian dollar, which is an appreciation in terms of trade, and Tasmania being an export-orientated economy, those global and national circumstances have improved significantly and the wind has moved from a headwind to a tailwind.

Following the recovery from the global financial crisis, we have also seen an improvement in the Australian national economy and that has led to significant uplifts in terms of GST receipts for the Government. The ability of the Government to respond in this environment to fund services, particularly given the dominating nature of GST in terms of the Government's revenue, has provided

more flexibility and more ability for the Government to lead and to provide that community and economic leadership within the state.

Whilst many commentators have acknowledged that by virtue of the changing economic circumstances and the improvements in the GST revenues to the state there is no doubt things have improved, I am hearing business leaders and community people across the state bemoan the lack of leadership, the lack of micro-economic reform, and the lack of ticker in taking on some of the structural challenges facing Tasmania. It is very difficult to embark on an ambitious or visionary leadership or reform agenda when economic circumstances are difficult. It is altogether different when the economic circumstances are in your favour, and that is what the Tasmanian people have been calling for but unfortunately we have not seen that from this Government

Through the Estimates hearings last week it was clear in terms of the minister's Local Government responsibilities that his contribution to one of the most unseemly episodes of dysfunction between two tiers of government, the Tasmanian Government and local government, around the hostile takeover of TasWater, is a disgrace. The Minister for Local Government should hang his head in shame about embarking on such a hostile takeover with little warning or justification and not only taking it to the election seeking a mandate, but to so meekly crab walk away from the only thing they could point to in terms of micro-economic reform. We saw 18 months of war between the Tasmanian Government and the local government sector and resources expended at local government and state government level on this unseemly fight.

Under questioning about the cost of this war and the resources put to this failed reform, the Minister for Local Government could not answer. He glibly shook his shoulders and said, 'Oh well, there's a cost to everything, OPC and Treasury doing papers, et cetera', but 18 months of an unseemly war was completely avoidable and unnecessary. Why do we know it was completely avoidable and unnecessary? Their election document was about a faster fix for water and sewerage and cheaper prices, saying the majority Liberal government will take control of TasWater and sewerage, lower prices, fix infrastructure sooner, and support councils so that rates will not rise. They went to the election seeking that mandate and then within days after questioning and answering, a single conversation took place between the chair of LGAT and the Clarence City Council Mayor, Mr Doug Chipman, and all of a sudden this 18 months of war, this 18 months of unseemly interactions between two crucial tiers of government, was off. All of a sudden the mandate they had sought at the election only days before, the 18 months of vitriolic and personal attack at times, particularly on the chair of TasWater, Miles Hampton, was off, for whatever reason.

There was 18 months of war and then that single conversation days after the state election, and a matter of six weeks after that conversation on the opening day of parliament they produced an MOU, which was seen to be the equivalent of peace in our times in terms of the Tasmanian water and sewerage war that had been waging for 18 months. The only thing you could say was that it was a humiliating backdown for the Government and personally for the Treasurer to have this signature piece of micro-economic reform rejected. Business and industry and others in the community have been calling on the Government to undertake reform, not necessarily around this alone but around just some level of reform, some level of work to take on the structural challenges facing not only the Tasmanian economy but the Tasmanian community.

All of a sudden that is off and we have an MOU which, despite the claims of the Government, does not provide a real cost decrease for TasWater customers. It does not deal with the cost increases Tasmanians are facing through TasWater. It provides no extra funding for water and sewerage infrastructure whatsoever. In our view we believe that the capital injection of \$20 million

per year over 10 years will only attempt to take out the cost impost of the rate cap. Some analysts believe that the capital infrastructure program of TasWater is at risk toward the end of the MOU. It does not bring forward water and sewerage infrastructure upgrades. It creates a governance nightmare with a complicated ownership structure. Under questioning, there was no indication around a deadlock provision that would allow for an appropriate, professional and strong relationship being established between the state and local governments, given that the Treasurer flicked a switch on an 18-month war on a whim. Who is to say that once we work through the deadlock provision and this negotiation he will not flick the switch and plunge TasWater into chaos again? Is that another 18-month folly on behalf of the Government, with 18 months' worth of resources, wasted time and no focus on resolving the challenges facing the Tasmanian people? It provides no certainty for councils and it erodes the independent role of the Economic Regulator.

In our view and throughout questioning through Estimates, there is no justification for the 18-month war or for the backflip. There is scant explanation of the crab walk around the set-in-stone principle, the mandate they sought. We have seen a meek government have their hat returned to them in not-so-good condition. We believe this has been a massive folly, a massive cost on the taxpayer, and despite the community calling for this Government to lead and provide vision and micro-economic reform, we have seen nothing.

In other matters, the Glenorchy City Council was a folly as well.

Time expired.

[4.22 p.m.]

Dr WOODRUFF - I had the pleasure of speaking to the Minister for Local Government about a number of endemic problems in the management of local government by this Liberal Government that have appeared over the last four years. There seems to be a trend, an increasing tendency to intervene in local government administration when there is a large development in the wings.

I could point to the Huon Valley Council and the Dover woodchip export port development application - a massive expansion of forestry activity in the whole of southern Tasmania and a huge increase in logging and trucking across the whole of the southern and south-eastern Tasmania. By any measure, as Mr Barnett has been saying for years, it would be effectively restarting the forestry industry in southern Tasmania. It would, in the same breath, be restarting the old forestry divisions and a whole lot of angst among local communities. It would be restarting the constant flow of public taxpayer money to a private company so they can generate wealth, such as companies connected with Malaysia, Chinese Communist Party-backed businesses and the United States' Global Forest Partners. They are massive companies. That is one thing on the books.

On the east coast of Tasmania many problems are being reported by members in the community to the director of local government, or by councillors on the Glamorgan Spring Bay Council to the director of local government. For years now, there have been allegations of misconduct, allegations of corruption, allegations of financial impropriety, allegations of favouritism, allegations of lack of due process under the Local Government Act in giving notification of meetings, giving information to councillors in a timely fashion, allowing consultation processes to be undertaken with the community in the proper manner, as described under the Local Government Act. This has gone on for years and the director of local government has failed to act.

When I asked the minister about the Minister for Local Government's different approach to managing these things, I received a hostile and typical response from this minister, which is to

throw his hands in the air and say, 'There is nothing here, what are you possibly talking about, kooky Greens'. A range of people on the east coast of Tasmania, of every voting persuasion, are incredulous that it could possibly be the case that there could be a signing ceremony in Beijing, China, for the new town of Cambria Green at Dolphin Sands in eastern Tasmania before the local community even heard of the rezoning application coming before their own council meeting.

How could it possibly be that a process could run through - people in Tasmania live right next to the land proposed to be rezoned from agricultural land to a subdivision for an intensive tourism activity that will have 20 flights a day landing on their own private air strip. 3185 hectares of prime agricultural Tasmanian land is being handed over in an enclave-style specific area plan-type of zoning cooked up by this Government - specifically to allow an open door to any type of development under the flabbiest of master plan guidelines that needs to be presented to the Tasmanian Planning Commission.

Let us all pray the Tasmanian Planning Commission does the full, thorough and open consultation they have been known to do in the past. Let us all pray the minister, as he is empowered to do under the act, does not step in above the Planning Commission and make his own decision about whether that land is rezoned if it is knocked back by the Planning Commission. If that were the case, it would be a travesty of the word 'planning' in the title of the Tasmanian Planning Scheme. There is nothing about that development that does anything good for the people of Dolphin Sands, Freycinet Peninsula or Swansea - who will have a development twice the size of their town - for the people of the whole of the east coast who will have helicopter flights, aircraft landings, 20 times a day at a minimum, or for the people who rely on the water source that will be used up in supplying water for that development, a sky hotel opposite The Hazards, one of the most beautiful places on the planet. Unbelievable.

When I asked the minister why the director of local government has repeatedly, over the years, failed to properly investigate what is happening on the Glamorgan Spring Bay Council, I am not surprised that he tries to deflect and avoid answering the question, because the failure to investigate serious cases of financial misconduct on so many levels for years is a total outrage. Meanwhile he punishes the Huon Valley Council community, the ratepayers, and he punishes the Glenorchy City Council ratepayers by exacting the price of the board of inquiry on them and then has the hide to come in and lie to me about it in Estimates.

Mr Hidding - To you, of all people?

Dr WOODRUFF - Yes, because I questioned exactly this thing and Mr Gutwein said:

Let me correct some assertions. In the Huon Valley Council my understanding is the cost of the board of inquiry wasn't over \$400 000, it was around \$336 000.

I take your word for that, minister. Then you went on to say:

Under the Local Government Act it would not matter who sat in this chair. At the end of the day the act is clear that a council will pay for the cost of a board of inquiry.

Minister, the act does not say that. The Local Government Act 1993, Part 13, Inquiries, division 1, Board of Inquiry, section 229, Cost of Inquiry, specifically says that the minister may require a council to pay any costs associated with an inquiry but he does not have to do it; it is not

a must. The failure to act by the director of local government's office in the Huon Valley Council for years meant that those residents were given a bill when you should have paid for that failure, because it was your office that failed to investigate properly that led to the dysfunction that required a board of inquiry to intervene.

Time expired.

[4.32 p.m.]

Ms DOW - I rise to speak on Estimates committee A under the portfolios of State Growth and Local Government, both of which I sat in on and participated in.

I begin by highlighting a number of the things we spoke about. My surprise in the first instance was that skills and training development was not addressed during the State Growth Estimates process. It is critical to the future of our industries and our state's future economic growth. I was surprised about that and right across the process I was surprised about the small amount of time that was allocated to talk about the importance of skills and training in Tasmania. That is something I will be advocating for next year when we talk about the times that are allocated to talk about skills and training in Tasmania to hopefully have some agreement with the Government about allocating more time to do that, and also to look at some of the initiatives that have been implemented in this year's Budget and previous budgets to see what the trends are and whether we are seeing an increase in the number of people obtaining skills and training, and employment outcomes as part of that.

The Northern Cities Project was talked about. That is an important project that has been around now for quite a number of years, which I acknowledge has been very well supported by the Government. I was disheartened to see that the funding for the Burnie UTAS development being pushed out another year. I am interested to find out more about that and will do so in the coming months. I was pleased to see that the Treasurer ruled out the sale of the Burnie Port and I thank him for that.

Mr Gutwein - Do you want me to answer the UTAS one now?

Ms DOW - I wasn't there for that because I was in Veterans' Affairs, so if you could that would be good.

Mr Gutwein - Under the deed they had to submit their DA by the end of last month. They expect to submit it in October and the funding is linked to the deed, so it is only a couple of months.

Ms DOW - The sooner that project starts the better for confidence in the north-west, particularly for the development of the associate degrees. Having that physical presence close to the CBD is one of the benefits that will bring.

My question about the Momentum call centre jobs was deflected to the Minister for Energy and I will need to follow that up myself. I would have seen that as part of the decentralisation about creating employment opportunities in regional Tasmania, so I think it fits under the auspices of State Growth but nonetheless I am determined to find out more about that over time.

It was pleasing to see the inclusion of the Dutch Mill support package and to explore that a bit further during Estimates and understand the winding-up of the assistance package that was provided to the Circular Head community. This is an important project and one which I will be monitoring and watching the progress of.

We spoke again about the Hermal Group. I note Mr Brooks talks a lot about the destruction of the forest industry. This is a shining example of the growth of the forest industry in Tasmania, the importance of research and development, forestry certification and the need for that in attracting new markets. It was good to talk again a bit about that project and understand that it will not be part of the payroll tax exemption which is included in the Budget, but the Government is committed to supporting that very important project.

We talked about the JCTEC committee and some of its achievements in the past and the lack of clarity around its future. We will also be watching how that progresses because it has been responsible for a number of successful infrastructure fundings for Tasmania in the past, including University of Tasmania developments.

I am very interested in the employment partnership jobs action plan in regional Tasmania and its work in disadvantaged communities. I have undertaken to seek some more information on this as I was not able to obtain that in great detail through the Estimates process. I will be watching and monitoring and looking for an update again on it next year to see how many people have been transitioned into work through that program.

I am also very interested in the breaking down of the funding of skills across advanced manufacturing and education through State Growth and have sought further information. I am awaiting that to understand better how that funding is allocated and also understand better how that has been allocated to key industries. It was pleasing to note that there is room for other key growing industries such as that in the service sector of aged care to be included in some of those funding packages for skills and training, and I will be watching to make sure that happens.

We also asked for some information around the number of businesses that have benefited from payroll tax incentives and the minister committed to providing that information. I am particularly interested to see those who benefited from regional Tasmania and over the course of the next 12 months how many more will benefit from that.

We talked about small business as well and the fact that the Treasurer now has responsibility for small business, not that there is a parliamentary secretary role, something that had been raised with me by stakeholders.

We then moved to Local Government, and Mr O'Byrne has alluded a lot to TasWater. We talked about the takeover of TasWater and the Government's ongoing relationship with local government through that process. It was interesting to note there has not been any tangible progress on the local government reforms that were introduced by the Government during their first term. Although the studies have been completed and the evidence base provided, a number of them have not commenced that process of implementing those recommendations and the low-hanging fruit around some activities of reform. It is also interesting to note that there is no funding allocated to local government in this Budget to help with that process.

Having been involved in local government for a long time, I understand the need for additional resources because there has been the requirement in planning reform for local government to undertake that work and to have people go offline to provide a committed endeavour to that work and the task that it is. It is a significant amount of work across a number of local government areas. I encourage the Government to work closely with local government on that and to be open to providing financial support to enable that to happen. We talked about the review and development of a new local government act. There has been a lot of tinkering around the edges of the Local

Government Act, purely in response to topical issues of the day and the activities that have occurred over time in a number of local government jurisdictions in Tasmania. We talked about the Board of Inquiry, that process and the outcomes of that. The Treasurer and Minister for Local Government has been clear there will not be any forced amalgamations, but \$600 000 has been wasted on the proposed reform with no tangible outcome. It will be interesting to see how this progresses, if at all, over the next four years.

It was interesting to be part of my first budget Estimates process and to understand how it works. There was the opportunity to ask a lot of questions. We did not always receive clear answers and there are a number of items we have asked for on notice. It will be pleasing to receive that information, to enable us to better understand some of the breakdown in the Budget, some of the output groups and how much funding is allocated and to which specific output groups.

It was noted a number of times the Budget is delivering election commitments on time. This is the start of that process, particularly when we look at capital works. It will be interesting over the next four years of the forward Estimates to see if those time frames are met and those projects are delivered on time.

Estimates of the Treasurer, Minister for Local Government and Minister for State Growth agreed to.

DIVISION 1 AND 5

(Minister for Human Services, Minister for Housing , Minister for Planning)

[4.42 p.m.]

Ms STANDEN - Mr Chairman, I make our first contribution to review of the Estimates committee hearing in relation to Mr Jaensch on Housing, Planning and child protection.

I will begin with Housing as I am spokesperson for the Opposition in the lower House for that. I will paint a general picture of a pleasant minister and departmental staff trying to do their best early in the term to provide open and transparent government with a lot of information provided, a lot of which was offered to be taken on notice. Three months into his term, Mr Jaensch is struggling with the burden of inheriting a difficult situation in Housing and child protection in particular, almost a perfect storm. We appreciated his openness in relation to providing a lot of information but I feel he has inherited quite a mess.

With public housing waiting lists, we were advised there were nearly 3200 applicants as at 31 May. Roughly 1200 of the applicants are people with children, meaning 1198 children are on the waiting list for a house. Rather a difficult situation, a burden on society, with 2212 of those applicants classified as highest priority. Unfortunately, this means almost 900 applicants in the general category have a ticket to wait almost indefinitely until they receive a house, with the waiting list for vulnerable Tasmanians who urgently need access to public housing continuing to blow out.

The quarterly results released by the Department of Health and Human Services, as it was, reveal priority housing applicants were waiting on average 72 weeks for housing in the March quarter, compared with 63 weeks in the previous quarter. It is an untenable situation with that blowing out to upwards of one-and-a-half years, almost a ticket to wait indefinitely.

Understandably, high priority applicants are prioritised first but it effectively means those people in the general category - although it is understood that the majority of those have a roof over their heads, some do not - around 300 or so of whom do not have a roof over their head are stuck on those waitlists and the untenable demand is a boiling pot waiting to overflow. In March of last year, the average wait time was 43 weeks and it is now more than six months longer, a desperate situation. We asked about Housing Tasmania's approach to the internal audit of the waitlist that occurred in 2017; how many applications were removed and for what reason? This was one of many answers that were taken on notice. No specific information was available and I would be interested to see a breakdown of those figures when they are provided.

Moving to the big picture of the state's massive housing debt. It is good to see Tasmania has now signed onto the NHHA, the National Housing and Homelessness Agreement. However, for too long, the massive housing debt of approximately \$157 million has meant that half of our payments from the Commonwealth go straight back into Commonwealth coffers, rather than being targeted to reduce further the burden of public housing in Tasmania. I asked the question, whether the minister was satisfied that with the move to outcomes-based reporting this was going to mean there would be a penalty. The minister admitted the debt is a drag on our ability to deliver housing. He said we will keep banging on the door and bringing it up to those relevant, and we will do everything we can to be more successful at it. This week we heard evidence of the Government's inability to take it up with those who matter in Canberra in relation to the GST. What assurance can Mr Jaensch provide us he will have any more effect in this area? Has he thought, for instance, of trying to negotiate an innovative, perhaps interest-only, arrangement in order to reduce down this untenable debt? It is an ongoing drag on the public housing situation.

It was noted we are bringing forward year one of the stage 2 Affordable Housing Strategy, \$25 million into the 2018-19 financial year. Although the figures of 1500 new affordable homes and assisting 2000 households look attractive, the proof of the pudding will be in the eating. If we look only at social housing dwellings, we know that in the quarter to March only 9 per cent or so of those 430 promised new dwellings have been delivered, yet the minister outlined an ambitious plan over the next year-and-a-quarter to achieve a further 291 social housing properties over the next 12 months. Bully for him, we hope it is so. The roofs over people's heads depend upon it. He is expecting us to believe that Housing Tasmania will pull a rabbit out of its hat, so to speak, when the Government is nowhere near halfway on its plan for building social housing, with only 37 houses built against a target of 430. It was good to hear the Housing Tasmania director say we hope to overshoot that target, but it is difficult to believe.

On top of this, we have the motion recently supported by the House on 13 June calling on the Government to commit to the delivery of 900 new homes. This was by the end of June 2019, with over half of that supply to be delivered in the Greater Hobart region. The context of that was in relation to Airbnb.

We know that in the context, just today, of showing median house prices going up yet again; a 5 per cent increase in rental prices for the March quarter to 13 June 2018; 12 per cent increases in prices in the last 12 months alone; and a 212 per cent increase in Airbnb - it is a melting pot of tragedy waiting to come together. How are we expected to believe that these 900 new homes, of which there was no detail provided, will be delivered by the end of June 2019?

We talked about evictions from public housing. The minister was pleased to announce that there had been an increase in evictions in the last three years. There had been an increase over the last year from 44 to 49 evictions. He put 11 of those down to antisocial behaviour, whereas

apparently there had been no reported evictions for antisocial behaviour in the year before. The minister was apparently pleased to announce an 11 per cent increase in total evictions and yet there was no reassurance as to what duty of care there was over these clients and no responsibility taken for where these tenants would go, and how many of those would effectively be evicted into homelessness. It would be interesting to know what proportion of those clients had any kind of support or review.

In relation to maintenance of public housing, figures were provided for general maintenance, including some money set aside for prioritising heaters, but there is a long way to go. I do not know that the minister has yet taken full account of this part of the responsibility within his portfolio. He needs to understand that not only is this an issue of quality of life, particularly with an ageing stock that he has inherited in his portfolio of public housing, it is also a cost of living issue. From his background, I think he ought to understand this. I urge him to sharpen his pencil in that regard.

I will move on briefly back to Airbnb in relation to short stay and the Government's recent announcement about short stay incentive payments - the \$13 000 landlord incentive scheme. There was some examination of this within the Estimates committee, but no answers provided in relation to Cabinet processes for ministers to avoid real and perceived conflicts of interest in this regard. It begs the question as to whether members of the Government stand to benefit from this initiative and on what basis the initiative was put forward. There is no reassurance that an incentive payment like this is not going to drive up pricing within the market rather than provide any real relief to the housing situation, particularly in the Greater Hobart area.

I note that Rebecca White asked on 27 June:

How many of your colleagues have significant property portfolios and will they be eligible for these incentive payments?

No answer provided to that very important question, so I believe the House has an interest in getting to the bottom of that matter.

I have spoken briefly about the house pricing situation. The point I want to leave the House with today is that this is a picture of the haves and the have-nots in the so-called golden era in Tasmania, particularly in the southern area, but right across the state. It is good news for those who are already in the property market, those who own their homes.

CoreLogic revealed today that the median dwelling price for Hobart's houses have gone up to \$436 000, passing Darwin at \$433 000. This should be another alarm bell for the housing market and to the Government in what that means for young people in Tasmania. There is a widening gap between the haves and have-nots generally. This housing situation is not just about people who are in the lowest income brackets but there is a creep into median income brackets as well.

There was some examination of homelessness. We know that, belatedly, the minister was shamed into attending the showgrounds and examining the situation in the Domain and he provided some data on the number of households and people affected by homelessness. The data he provided was very general in nature and related to the 2016 Census. It goes to show that homelessness is something we do not have good public data on. We need to cooperate better with the community sector to get a greater understanding of exactly what the need and the possible solutions might be in this worrying situation.

In the broader area of splitting the Department of Human Services from Health: I do not know that this was a question specifically asked of Mr Jaensch but the cost of establishing a new Department of Communities was certainly asked in other Estimates committees. It might have been asked of Mrs Petrusma. The answer was nothing, not even for letterhead or for new business cards. No, all within establishment.

As a former bureaucrat I find it hard to believe. I asked, if nothing else, can we talk about the significant opportunity cost, the downtime for public servants in creating an entire new department, let alone the staffing costs for secretary and senior executive structure, et cetera. Let us hope that the policy intent of creating this department delivers better outcomes for Tasmanians because I am sure that the cost of establishing a brand new department would not be nothing.

In relation to child protection there was some examination of the number of unallocated children to case workers. It was only through an RTI that some data came to light about this. I have a recollection of the minister taking most of the questions on notice. He reported that there were 280 recorded cases to Child Safety Service of children potentially in danger who had not been allocated a case worker. Of those, 147 children were not allocated to a case worker in the north of the state, where the situation was most acute.

It was understood that the minister is trying to come to terms with this portfolio and that there is a plan for recruitment underway. He cannot escape the reality that our children are some of our most vulnerable people. It is not tenable for team leaders in particular, rather than case workers at the front line, to be taking carriage of that case load. In 2016 the Government injected 31 FTE staff into the Child Safety Service but none of the 31 FTEs were child safety officers. That is desperately needed to assist with the 280 children who do not have a case worker.

There was a blowout in investigation times, a discrepancy from the log's data indicating a reduction from 19 per cent to 18 per cent to the end of March 2018, in the number of investigation outcomes determined within 28 days. As of 12 June, we asked how many children were allocated to staff who no longer worked for the service, and 29 children within the two-week period were allocated to nobody whatsoever. There is something like an 8 per cent vacancy FTE for child safety officers, despite the department's best attempts. This is obviously an overburdened system and who would want to work there, frankly? Labor understands the sensitivities of that and we are willing to work with the Government. We do not want to talk up the problems, but it has to start with a point of honesty and understanding of the very real problems that we have.

The minister took on notice a question about a 15-year-old child living in shocking accommodation. A report in the newspaper last year showed that the child had been visited five times in the last 12 months. It just goes to show that a child can be living in such a dreadful situation, with a mattress on the floor, and there were shocking images of the living circumstances of that young boy. There had been five visits in the last 12 months. It would be interesting to understand, not just in that terrible situation but the systemic issues around that, what assurance the public can have that the department is on top of its caseload and systemic abuse is not increasing.

In relation to the Ashley Youth Detention facility, we remain unconvinced that the Government was able to explain that this \$7.3 million was designed to improve outcomes for kids in any way whatsoever. The money is for a major redesign and fit-out that, by the minister's own admission, is an enormously expensive model of care. I think the ratio of carers to kids was something like one to eight or 10 staff per detainee, and \$2500 on average per child per day is expended on this very expensive model of care. There were really no answers and no reports or recommendations

the minister could point to, to demonstrate to the public that this was a decision made by the Government on the basis of sound evidence-based recommendations. With two former commissioners for children recommending the closure of this facility, there are still very big questions that Tasmanians rightly have to ask about this model of care, let alone the quality of care for the detainees, with something like 32 per cent of the young people in Ashley being Aboriginal and no specific Aboriginal programs to support those children.

Time expired.

[5.03 p.m.]

Ms O'CONNOR - In Mr Jaensch we had a minister in the committee with his training wheels on, and that is understandable. But one of the frustrations, certainly from my point of view at the committee, was with the self-congratulatory and totally out-of-touch introductions we got from the minister to the various outputs. The first one was seriously deeply embarrassing to the minister. I have not seen a minister present to an Estimates committee with six pages of introduction and prepared notes. It went on and on and on, and, in fact, if we went back and had a look at the minister's budget reply and his Estimates introduction, they would be almost word for word. He has plagiarised himself and plagiarised the department in the process of writing that introduction.

Imagine getting up in an Estimates examining the safety and wellbeing of children in Tasmania and after you introduce the officials and say how pleased you are to be here, you say:

Tasmania is now a much stronger, prouder, more confident place than it was just five years ago. Our economy is one of the strongest in the country, our budget is under control and we are able -

and on and on he went, with page after page of introduction. Okay, we can handle self-congratulatory propaganda to buy time, but then we got onto the Housing portfolio and what did we hear at the introduction?

Tasmania is now a much stronger, prouder and more confident place than it was five years ago. Our economy is one of the strongest in the country -

Honestly, Chair, what a load of garbage. He got up as the Minister for Human Services and started talking about money when there are people sleeping at the showgrounds and at the Domain in tents. There are children who are the subject of notification to child protection and within 29 days an investigation has not commenced for 65 per cent of them, and you got up as the minister and failed to mention human beings until well into the intro. Seriously, Chair, that says it all to me.

I have no doubt Mr Jaensch is a kind and compassionate man, but this is a philosophical problem where we have a budget that puts more priority on bridges and roads than it does on properly funding child safety services, the increase in supply of social and affordable housing and family support services. We know that this Government has a blind spot to social disadvantage because the Treasurer can get up in this place when there are people sleeping in tents and where inequality is manifestly worsening in Tasmania and say we have entered the golden age. Well, not if you are sleeping in a tent at the Domain and not if you are at the showgrounds with your six children looking for a home.

It was that level of misunderstanding of the real social circumstances many Tasmanians experience that was a recurrent theme from ministers throughout Estimates. The Premier on radio

the other day was basically saying that everyone in Tasmania is benefiting from the economic boom. What is more galling than almost anything else is that the reason Tasmania's economy is booming has very little to do with the Liberals in government. It is because the wilderness was protected and we have natural assets that people want to come and see. It is because David Walsh had the vision and courage to build a contemporary museum unlike anything else in the world that made us cool. It is because President Xi came in here in 2014, after which tens of millions of dollars in money from mainland China, including people coming here with businesses and work visas, came to this island. The economy here has so little to do with the Liberals in government and it is really deeply galling to hear them talk it up and take credit for things that have been happening here for some time.

When you go through this document, for example, and try to examine how many houses the Liberals have built over the past four years, you see them taking credit for programs which have been in place a very long time such as HomeShare and Streets Ahead, longstanding programs within Housing Tasmania to help Tasmanians who need a home get one. What we do know is that the Liberals in government over the last four years delivered precisely 37 new affordable homes. Wrap your head around that. In the four years of the Labor-Greens government we delivered 2200 new affordable homes for Tasmanians.

Mr Jaensch - Federal money?

Ms O'CONNOR - Yes, partly federal money, absolutely, because at that point we had a federal government that cared about housing. We had the National Rental Affordability Scheme money which, when it was abolished by Tony Abbott, your people said nothing about. We had the Nation Building Economic Stimulus package money which helped keep this country out of recession. We had extra homelessness funds from the Rudd government and we had money in the housing fund here.

The issue, Mr Jaensch, is that we prioritised the increase of supply. That was a core mission of ours in government and the demonstration of that is 2200 affordable homes against a woeful track record of 37. Do you know why it is 37? It is 37 because no new money went into housing until the last budget of this Government's last term. All those human resources went into the Affordable Housing Strategy, which is now somewhat outdated, but no new money. Meanwhile, Airbnb, short stay accommodation, went through the roof. We know this is the perfect storm to create housing crisis and homelessness; a government that manifestly starves the housing budget of the funding needed to increase supply, that has no plan for population growth and lets Airbnb go feral because that is what has happened. The short stay accommodation market has gone feral. We had an opportunity in this place a few weeks ago to put a moratorium on whole homes being used for short stays - not supported by the Liberals even though they know it would have an immediate and positive effect on the supply of housing in Tasmania.

I will talk briefly about the Ashley Youth Detention Centre. The question was put to the minister a number of times, 'Was the decision to keep Ashley open made in the best interests of the child?'. After avoiding the question for an extended time, after trying to pretend it was not a political decision based more on jobs in Deloraine than the wellbeing of the child, the minister had the hide to say, 'Yes, the decision to keep Ashley open was made in the best interests of the child.', dismissing the recommendations of children's commissioners going back to Aileen Ashford and Mark Morrissey. All the evidence tells us Ashley is the wrong place to send juveniles who find themselves in the criminal justice system or on the wrong side of the law. All the evidence tells us

a therapeutic response is required, it will lead to better outcomes for those individuals and it will lead to a safer community.

The Ashley model is hugely expensive and costs the state taxpayers around \$10 million a year. There is a ratio of about eight to 10 staff for each juvenile detainee. This is not a decision made in the best interests of the child. It is not a decision made in the best interest of the taxpayer. It is a decision made in the best interests of the Liberals and the members for Lyons. That is why Ashley Youth Detention Centre is being kept open. It is nothing to do with providing therapeutic outcomes for young people.

I acknowledge, because of the excellent people in the department and people such as Ginna Webster, you will have an opportunity to make it somewhat more therapeutic than it is now. It was a disgraceful decision based more on politics than the welfare of the child.

Time expired.

[5.13 p.m.]

Mr O'BYRNE - I rise to make a contribution around elements of the minister's responsibility for planning. If there is a great example of an area in which this Government is full of shallow boasts, full of big talk but no walk, planning is it. This Government has, over a number of years, claimed we have a statewide planning scheme up and running and it could not be further from the truth. It is years away from being implemented. I had the opportunity to cross-examine the new minister in the Estimates hearing about his, in his own words, ambitions for planning in this space. I asked him when the statewide planning scheme would be in place. He could not give a date, refused to give a date, despite repeated questioning. The local planning schedule is another key element in implementing the statewide planning scheme. I reminded him of the previous minister's handiwork and the mess that he left it in, quoting a number of press releases from the previous minister, the Treasurer and former planning minister in release after release, saying -

The Government's new planning system is on track to be up and running in full by 2017, one year ahead of schedule.

That was released on 12 November. On 17 November 2015, simply titled the Tasmanian Planning Scheme, a press release from the Treasurer -

The Government's new planning system is on track to be up and running in full by 2017, one year ahead of schedule.

Under questioning it was clear to this minister, who said, not only have we not met 2017, we are not going to meet 2018. I asked how such boasts could be put out into the public domain. His response was, 'The previous minister was ambitious.'. I made the point there was a difference between being ambitious and misleading the public as to your lack of work and your lack of direction. We know not one local planning schedule has gone through the approval process, only three local government areas have lodged, simply lodged, their local planning schedules. Not one of them is close to having them worked through and finalised. There are 26 to go. We know this is the crucial element of the statewide planning scheme that will give effect to consistency and clarity across the state. With the shallow boasts of this Government, this is the kind of micro-economic reform required to enable economic activity to occur with certainty. That is what developers, building owners and property owners want. They want certainty. The lack of work, lack of direction and lack of support in this area is astounding.

It is not only for people who want to build and who want to do the work, it is also for people in the community who are concerned about what is happening next door or over the back fence, and the lack of direction, lack of consistency and their lack of say in the planning process is significant. It became clear from the new minister's efforts in Estimates that he, too, has the same ambitions as the previous minister. It will be roundly disappointing for the Tasmanian community - ambitions not met, ambitions and boasts. This Government is so boastful. They are quick to pat themselves on the back but this is another example of a time they cannot even find their own back.

We were promised a statewide planning scheme to be put in place by 2017 and it is not even close. Across the state - local government, state government representatives, departmental people - anyone with any interest in planning knows the silver bullet, if there is such a thing in planning, is the work of policy. The policy work that needs to be done. We found under questioning, and we see in the Budget, that the Planning Policy Unit is chronically underfunded to do the work, to provide the support and evidence required to ensure developers have certainty, that communities have certainty as to what is allowed, what is not and what can be proposed in local communities around land use planning.

Ms O'Connor - Also that we are looking after the place through our planning system.

Mr O'BYRNE - That is right. It is about certainty. It is about saying in this area, in this part of the community, these are the kinds of things we as a community want and accept and we want to encourage. That is why we are seeing this constant argument in the public. They are developer-led arguments because this Government, despite boasting they could have a statewide planning scheme implemented in 2017, are nowhere near it and have dumbed down the work we did in government in bringing those three regional land use planning strategies together. They have amalgamated it to the lowest common denominator to bring at least some level of consistency, but the local planning schedules and the policy work required to inform those schedules and to inform land use planning in Tasmania is appropriate and consistent with not only the needs of the local community, but the opportunities that Tasmania has.

If you get planning right then you open up a significant amount of investment and you provide certainties for local communities in terms of land use planning. The minister at the time might say 'We have allocated \$300 000 to allow local planning schedules to get through and we have given them resources' but effectively most of the \$300 000 is expended and we only have three local government areas that have lodged local planning schedules. It is not enough, minister. It is nowhere near enough to allow local communities to put schedules together to provide that certainty.

We had the minister say that our absolute focus will be on those local planning schedules, but we know, as I have said previously, policy is the key issue. Policy is the way to inform this process. In questioning, I said, 'Why don't you put the money into the policy? Get the policy work done first?' If you do that policy, then the local planning schedule process is much easier. Local government people are essentially saying that once we get through the local planning schedules, then you will allocate the work for policy. Then we will have to go back and amend the local planning schedules. It is the cart before the horse. You talk to anyone in local government about this. They think you have the order wrong because you will have inadequate and hastily put together schedules, which will need to be edited once the planning - you are shaking your head, minister, but talk to local government.

Mr Jaensch - You are wrong.

Ms O'BYRNE - It is not wrong. I am not wrong at all. Why is local government -

Mr Jaensch - You just do not understand.

Ms O'BYRNE - You say that I do not understand. Then why are local governments saying that the problem is a chronic lack of policy work. We asked the minister why he was not resourcing the policy. He said, 'We are', but then in another answer to another question he said that they are focusing on the local planning schedules. We asked, 'How are you going to manage both?' The reply was, 'We are going to do a work plan and we are going to order that.' We know what that means: that is code for 'no policy work'.

You will not resource the Planning Policy Unit, which is so under the pump and which is the key to resolving this issue. You say that you are a government that wants to create economic activity and to provide certainty in areas of local planning decisions, yet you will not put the resources in to resolve these questions. There are no strategies.

Ms O'Connor - Because 'open for business' says it all, Mr O'Byrne.

Ms O'BYRNE - The Labor Party is also open for business, but for sustainable business.

They have developer-led arguments and then say 'Nothing to do with us'. Because there is a lack of certainty, lack of planning schedules and lack of policy, they let the developer do the work. They cop the whack and it is not their fault, and then nothing gets done. Community dislocation -

Time expired.

[5.23 p.m.]

Ms HOUSTON - I had the pleasure of talking to the Minister for Human Services in Estimates Committee A. First, I thank the minister for his responses to all the questions and the ones he agreed to take on notice - there were a number of them. I look forward to the responses to those questions.

Not surprisingly, most of my contribution will be about the Ashley Youth Detention Centre. We confirmed that Ashley is a 51-bed facility and yet it runs at under 20 per cent capacity the majority of the time. It is doubtful that it has reached 50 per cent in recent years, let alone 90 per cent, and so keeping a centre of this size running in a remote location, far from the services the children imprisoned there require to reintegrate into the community, seems a highly unusual and illogical move. While it is true the buildings are not at the end of their life, they could be put to good use for another purpose.

What is apparent is that the current Ashley Youth Detention Centre is not fit for purpose. The proposed upgrades will go some of the way to allow a therapeutic model to be delivered but will not render it fit for purpose.

Renovating the current site was the least desirable of all options outlined in the Noetic report. Four options are outlined in detail and the one selected is the least effective. The report clearly outlines a number of issues with the current centre. They put the daily operating costs at \$3562. The department talks of \$2500, which is still significantly more than the national average for such centres. There have been a number of times where isolation has had to be used to defuse situations - 102 between July 2017 and March 2018. The recidivism rates at a centre intended to rehabilitate

are over 50 per cent. It has failed in that regard. Staffing is at between eight and 10 staff per child, or around 60 staff at the centre. Much of this has to do with the location, the practice and the design.

Alarming, on average, Aboriginal detainees make up around one-third of the young people at Ashley; however, the current figure was closer to 39 per cent. That is horrifying and reflects the underlying and persistent disadvantage and inequality experienced by Aboriginal people in this state. Despite this, there is no Aboriginal liaison officer. Despite the high percentage of Aboriginal children in detention in Ashley, there is not a specific Aboriginal worker, no-one to design diversion or cultural programs.

The fixed running costs at Ashley are extremely high and they will not be reduced by the proposed \$7.3 million remodel.

There is a therapeutic model. My work towards a therapeutic model has begun. I am concerned that its success will be limited by the physical environment and isolation of location of the current centre. Further, therapeutic measures are currently being layered over existing and engrained punitive measures and there is a level of resistance from staff to the change of approach. It is apparent that not all staff have been adequately trained and supported to understand the shift to a therapeutic model or its benefits. Several models were recommended by the Noetic report, none utilised.

Ashley has a dark and troubled history; it is remote and far away from essential services. The centre is depended on for the success of a truly therapeutic program. The distance from community, family and required assistance hinders the ability of the centre to deliver an authentic therapeutic model and requires through-care arrangements essential to successful outcomes.

I have carefully scrutinised the Noetic report and looked in depth at the recommendations and the suggestions of models of practice. I note with interest that the preferred options were all overlooked. Instead of two purpose-built, fit-for-purpose centres, one in the north and the other in the south, with service centres attached to each, we will have a \$7.3 million refurbishment that will not result in a fit-for-purpose centre. I have struggled to understand why any minister would choose this option. After all it is the least effective solution. I note the minister inherited this decision.

Certainly it would cost more in the initial capital outlay, but the long-term cost savings and social benefits far outweigh this. A truly authentic therapeutic model with an evidence-based demonstrated outcome delivers value for money. It also delivers a reduction in reoffending and prevents the cycle of youth offenders graduating and becoming adult offenders. A saving that the report puts at around \$6 million per person over a lifetime. Success is dependent on the therapeutic model. There is a need to access and utilise it in its entirety, a proven, tested, evidence-based therapeutic program.

Cherry-picking elements from therapeutic programs and applying them is fraught with risk and is a certain path to failure. I certainly hope this is not what has occurred and the department has purchased a tried and tested model. I am assuming I will find out when I receive my copy of the model. I look forward to seeing this model and it being implemented at Ashley Youth Detention Centre, and seeing how it connects to the essential through-care arrangements. I agree that we need a youth detention centre that meets community expectations. Surely those expectations are that we have a fit-for-purpose youth detention facility, one that reduces reoffending, and puts young people back on the right path to become valued and contributing members of the society that will save us all over time.

[5.30 p.m.]

Ms WHITE - I appreciate that, minister, and look forward to your contribution on this in your first Estimates report back to the parliament.

There is no doubt there are a lot of pressures on you in this portfolio thinking about some of the challenges in the Human Services space which we explored over the last couple of weeks and in the Estimates committee including child safety services, Housing and Planning. They are all very important areas, some with some very complicated aspects. I have to say I have some sympathy for the minister given the portfolios the Premier has provided him, all facing significant challenges in their own right. My colleagues have addressed some of those things in their contributions.

It became clear to me through the Estimates process that the Minister for Human Services was one of the few ministers who shared information with us, so I have to say thank you, minister, because over Estimates week it was very difficult to elicit answers from some ministers, but where you could you shared information. So I thank you for that, particularly in the two areas where I sat opposite the table from you in children's services and Human Services and Housing particularly. No doubt there is a big task ahead of you to meet some of the targets that have been set by this Government when it comes to building more houses and making sure we deliver on better services for children in need in the out-of-home care sector and supporting families.

My colleague, the member for Franklin, David O'Byrne, spoke about some of the challenges in the Planning space. It is also quite clear that the minister has not been very well supported by the Treasurer or the Premier. Some of the things we have been calling for in this Budget, including support for emergency housing solutions this winter, simply are not there. Despite there being a bringing forward of some \$25 million in funding for Housing services there is nothing in that to put a roof over people's heads this winter. The minister has to deal with that now as a consequence of this being apparently a 'golden age' but there are certainly many people in this community and our state who are missing out, and that is a great shame.

We spoke about a number of things in the children's services space and my colleague, Jen Houston, has just spoken about a concerning development with Ashley Youth Detention Centre not just having an over-representation of young Aboriginal children in detention there but also the fact that the cost per child per day is extraordinarily high. The decision by the Government to essentially ignore the Noetic report's recommendations for the future of custodial options for young people in this state means we are continuing to be lumbered with a very outdated model that does not reflect what we know to be in the best interests of restorative justice and rehabilitative practices for young people who are found to be in need of detention for whatever reason. These are young people who we can hopefully help rehabilitate to set them on a better path, but what we found from the minister is that more than half of them after being released from Ashley end up back there. What we put on notice in a question to the minister is how many of them then graduate on to Risdon and we will be interested to receive that information from the minister.

There were quite a few questions put on notice to the minister. You do not think we took that on notice?

Ms Houston - I think we put it to the Attorney-General.

Mr Jaensch - They are coming on notice but I think, as was mentioned in the hearing, after kids leave Ashley they are not in the system and you cannot track them when they are free.

Mr CHAIRMAN - Order. Ms White has the call.

Ms WHITE - That is typical of Mr Jaensch trying to be helpful and provide more information, so I welcome it. He is being constructive, Chair, but he is quite right, it is a matter for the Attorney-General and Minister for Justice to provide details about the number of young people who have transitioned, unfortunately, from Ashley into Risdon. It is something we are not seeing addressed by this Government with their decision to choose a model to fund upgrades to the current existing Ashley infrastructure rather than adopting the recommendations from the Noetic report. I understood from the Estimates hearings in the other place that the minister admitted he had not read that Noetic report. I hope he has taken the time to do that now because it outlines significant problems with the current model and provides solutions for how we can provide better options for those young people so they do not end up back in Ashley or Risdon. There is obviously a cost to them in their life and their contribution to community but there is also a cost to the taxpayer as well that we can avoid if we listen to the evidence and research and make a different decision there.

There are 31 questions on notice to the minister that I can see in front of me from the minutes. It would be interesting to know from the minister an update about the time frame for when those will be responded to because quite a lot of them go to a level of detail we were not able to interrogate in the Estimates process, including the caseloads and the vacancies across the Child Safety Service, because there was confusion about how many had been employed, at what date and what the vacancy rate was because we were working off 31 March as well as some more recent data. I am seeking some more clarification around that which I hope will be provided in answer to the questions on notice.

Housing remains a big concern for many Tasmanians across the state. Questions raised in another Estimates output but relevant here regarded the regulation of Airbnb and how that is having an impact on access to affordable rental properties, and whether those Cabinet ministers who have an Airbnb property or an investment property have exempted themselves from Cabinet decisions regarding this policy, or the landlord incentive program, which is another significant policy decision the Liberal Government made, when there are ministers in the Cabinet room who have investment properties. When the minister was asked about this in parliament he was unable to give a guarantee that those ministers would be exempt from applying for incentives to accept renters as a result of that scheme being set up.

There are serious concerns we have around conflicts of interest and how they have been managed, which were issues I raised with the Premier and are on notice as questions to be answered. It goes to the integrity of the Government as to how they manage some of these serious social issues in our community, ensuring they do that with integrity and honesty, declaring conflicts of interests where they exist and ensuring that policy is developed based on what is in the public's best interest rather than self-serving interest. That is always something we have to be mindful of and it is certainly something we have been very critical of this Government about, especially this matter.

Mr Jaensch was helpful in providing us with the details around what he expects the builds to be over the next year, meeting particular targets, and updating the committee that your target for social housing builds is 444 houses by 30 June next year. Previously it had been reported as 430. Whilst we welcome that we are rightfully sceptical about the ability of the Government to meet that target, given that Mr Jaensch inherited a portfolio where in the first three years they had progressed just 37 builds of the 430 they had indicated they would build. You have a lot of work to do. You have inherited quite a difficult area with a lot of reform happening. I do not know what you did to the Premier but he has handballed you some of the most difficult areas of government policy to fix.

Mr Jaensch - He needed his best man on it.

Ms WHITE - He needed his best man on it? Well, strength to your arm, Mr Jaensch, because Tasmanians are depending you, because it is our children, our most vulnerable members of our community, without a roof over their head who need you to be their champion around the Cabinet table and make sure that these areas are properly resourced and staffed and that some of the concerns raised over successive years are fixed. We have seen a previous minister demoted from this portfolio for her failure to progress improvements in some of these critical areas.

I wish you the best of luck, Mr Jaensch. There is no doubt this is a big task ahead of you and there are many Tasmanians who are counting on you to get this right. One of the concerns I have is that the minister was not able to rule out further giving away of public housing properties to the community sector or privatising public assets. I respect you are new to the portfolio so there is a lot you still need to learn. It is concerning to me you still have an open mind to stop the leveraging program continuing.

[5.41 p.m.]

Ms BUTLER - I rise today to talk about homelessness in Tasmania as part of Committee A. I received a call through my electorate office today. These calls happen frequently, daily. There is always a new case. This case involves a couple. The gentleman was made redundant. They are in a private rental. They could afford the private rental whilst he was employed. Since his redundancy they have been able to meet the demands with the private rent but the redundancy money is almost spent and he and his wife will be relying on Newstart with some rental assistance. They could scrape through, they and their six kids, on that. However, the lease on their private rental has been stopped because it was near its term. They are good tenants but they simply cannot afford any of the private rentals available and they have recently enrolled to be considered for social housing. I understand it now looks like a 72-week wait. They have six children, what happens?

We know when those people come into our office they may be lucky to obtain crisis accommodation. We will watch those eviction dates come closer. I have managed a lot of cases such as that. You can see it coming and you can call all the services but most of them are full. Most of the crisis accommodation is full. The people have been moved from crisis accommodation into caravan accommodation and the situation is becoming worse. This family has six children, so I will be managing that case closely.

This is only one case; today's case. These cases come through my office frequently and in my years of experience as an electorate officer I have managed hundreds of cases like this. The system does not gel. There are lots of different services that offer lots of different opportunities but, unfortunately, in a lot of cases, families like that end up homeless or they end up couch surfing. They end up staying at gran's house and then gran is put in a position where she has to then declare to Housing she has a family staying with her. There might be two, three, four or five people living in a bedroom sometimes. It is happening in Tasmania.

It is cold, it is winter, there are not many families and not many people who would say, 'I am sorry, you cannot stay here'. There are a lot of people making a lot of those decisions at the moment and we, as members of parliament, need to make sure we stay in touch with those people so we can do a better job of representing them and making sure the reality of their lives is brought here to the House, and so we can make better legislation, forming better relationships with our service providers.

I have another case at the moment. There are two ladies living in their cars in Longford. Homelessness has never really been an issue for that area but we are starting to have homeless people come through Longford now. In St Helens we had a family living in a toilet block for a really long time. Another issue I am finding through my consultation with service providers is finding showers for people that are homeless or simply being able to brush their teeth. Some of the service providers hire motel rooms and they will provide homeless people with showers, an opportunity to brush teeth and clean up a little bit. That is an area we can be looking into. I have some ideas I would love to discuss with you further down the track, minister, in relation to that.

I am also sceptical we will be able to build these houses but we need to build them. We should have started building them a long time ago, many years ago when we could see this would eventuate. There has been additional pressure put on by short-term accommodation, et cetera, but we always knew we did not have enough money for the maintenance in Housing. We always knew the houses were becoming very old. We always knew it would come to a situation in which you have a family with six children come into your office. I will manage this case closely, but you know that some of those families end up sleeping in their car or they end up sleeping on someone's floor somewhere. We can be doing a lot better. There seem to be a lot of people in our community that are doing really well. They may own two, three or four homes and that is good for them, that is fantastic, but our whole community is not being pulled along together. We need to do that. As lawmakers we have an obligation to help everyone in our community and pull everyone along to the best of our abilities.

The 72-week wait for a social housing house is well and truly blown out. It does nothing to help our problem with intergenerational poverty, which is a massive problem for us in Tasmania. Homelessness is the ultimate deficiency of intergenerational poverty. A family may have three generations of people in their family who have not had a job. We want to break that cycle but if they are faced with homelessness it further exacerbates the problem.

I will do whatever I can, minister, to work with you to try to eliminate as much of this homelessness issue as we can. It is such a big problem for so many people in our communities. It is not only a southern thing. We keep talking about the showgrounds and yes, it is awful, but we have homelessness around our whole state, it is not only Hobart. We have many families really struggling. I think we, as members, need to be doing a lot more to try to fix the services and make sure that those houses are built. We really need them for our people.

[5.49 p.m.]

Ms O'BYRNE - I want to raise a couple of issues that have caused me and the community concern and were raised in the Estimates process. One was the minister admitted to not reading the Noetic report in the upper House, which I saw when I looked at their transcript. That struck me as a rather disturbing thing for the minister not to have read it, given that it specifically addresses the work that needs to be done around youth justice and utilisation of the Ashley facility. As we have heard from the contribution of Ms Houston, it is a highly expensive, resource-intensive, supposed therapeutic model targeted to a very small number of children. We need to have the conversation about the best way to spend the youth justice dollar. First, you want to put as much money in as possible to prevent children ending up being known to the youth justice system.

Some of the work that the minister would have been aware of in his incoming brief, which was done by the previous government, was looking at those things we had done as interventions, particularly for children who are known to the state, who we are familiar with through the child

protection system and their trajectory in youth justice. At what point do interventions make some kind of a difference? One of the key things is the security of housing for our young people.

We contacted the minister's office again today regarding a young man who is about to be evicted and will have nowhere to go. That concerns me significantly. I am hoping we will get some resolution from the minister as quickly as possible on that case. The minister is nodding so I am assuming he is aware. If not, I will flick him a little reminder, without mentioning the person's name.

The other issue, which Ms Butler raised, and I want to talk about too, is that the housing crisis is not a southern crisis only. We hear a lot about people who are sleeping rough in the south in frightening circumstances - trying to get your kids to school when you are living at the showgrounds - I am familiar with one college student who has been living at the showgrounds. Of course, that child's grades are dropping. It is really hard to do the work that you need to do at college if you have nowhere safe to sleep at night.

I wanted to talk about some of the cases that we have had in Launceston. I know a mum who is managing to get her kids to school every day from her car. That is a significant challenge. There is a significant risk that those children will become known to child protection as a result of not having anywhere safe to live. This is a woman who was told there was a two weeks' waiting list for Magnolia Place, the women's shelter in Launceston. That concerns me and I will raise it in another conversation. We know that the greatest risk time for women when they leave abusive relationships is at the point of leaving. If you do take the very brave step to leave an abusive relationship, not to be able to go somewhere safe at that point can be incredibly dangerous. I know that the minister is aware of those circumstances. They are complex for every family but women who make the decision to leave abusive relationships should be able to be housed somewhere safely straightaway. Otherwise the risk is that they will go back and place themselves in extra danger or that they will be living in vehicles or other inappropriate places.

Last week there were tents in City Park in Launceston with people living there. That is the first time I have seen that. That is extremely concerning. I am advised that there are a couple of young people who are living in a cave at Cataract Gorge. That cannot be acceptable. I have spoken to a woman who is living in one of the alleys in Launceston. That is pretty harsh. I know of a young woman who is living underneath one of our bridges.

Although we talk about this being a southern problem, it is fundamentally a statewide problem. The argument is that we are suffering in housing from the boom in tourism. Launceston cannot tell that same story but people are in some pretty horrific circumstances.

When we plan for increased tourism and population growth, the obligation of the Government is to also plan to house and support people. You cannot actually have one policy without the work that comes behind it.

Ms O'Connor - They have not done any planning on it.

Ms O'BYRNE - Ms O'Connor is quite right; there has been a lack of planning, but it is not only in this area. We have a government that is very big on saying, 'Here is this wonderful thing we are doing', but not understanding all the other work that normally needs to sit underneath those things to make sure they are sustainable.

We want to see increased tourism and increased population, but at the same time, you have to ensure that we have sustainable housing for people and enough accommodation. We are seeing this across government. It is about the flashy line and not necessarily about the work that underpins it. You can get away with that for one term of government. Governments of all colours all over the globe have done. However, the long haul will show when the work has not been done. That is a significant concern.

I wanted to voice my concerns about housing. I have been doing this job for a while and I have never had as many housing cases. Some of them we are able to deal with; we do not send them to the minister's office. Every member in this House will regularly deal with resolutions and put people in contact with support services. The numbers of people in critical circumstances are growing and that is disturbing.

There is a concern that there are vacant houses. We raised this with the minister before and he said that not all of those vacant houses are public housing. But some of them are and they have not had the maintenance spend and that is why they are not usable. I believe they are short-term options and not sustainable in the long term. Anything that gets people out of the bitter cold, and into some sort of framework so they can safely get their kids into their uniforms and fed in the morning and off to school, needs to be addressed.

I understand the minister has set some targets for when houses will be online. These are good things to do, but there is also an urgent and immediate concern to be dealt with; there are kids living in cars.

I do not know if minister for Education heard me mention that there is a college kid who is living at the showgrounds. Children cannot possibly succeed in their education if we do not put in place the things that they need around them to have a safe, secure and warm environment, basically an environment with roofs and ceilings. We do need a short-term solution, so we need you to look at properties that are available now that can be opened up to get people off the street. It is not long term, it is not perfect. I understand that but if we do not do that, then we are consigning these children to a pretty poor fate.

When we look at the number of people who are engaging in lifestyles that we do not want them to engage in, it needs to be dealt with. Some of them are doing it out of absolute desperation. They may be on your housing waiting list now, but the concern for you, minister, is that they will end up being on your child protection waiting list later. We will see them become known more regularly to the youth justice system and then probably to our adult justice system. That is the pathway when we do not have housing.

I look forward to the minister meeting the targets that he has identified. I am pleased to see them, but in the short term you need to do something that gets people housed now. I am genuinely frightened for some of the families who contact us. I am frightened when I walk through the streets and see people sleeping in alleys. To be honest, I was not familiar with anyone living in the caves at the gorge before. I reckon it is pretty cold, damp and miserable and certainly not safe.

[5.57 p.m.]

Mr SHELTON - It gives me great pleasure to rise this evening to talk about the Estimates process and the Estimates that we went through for the Minister for Human Services, Housing and Planning, Mr Jaensch. I start by congratulating the minister on his first Estimates. As the Chair of

the Estimates process I thought he did a marvellous job. He has only been in the situation for three months and did an extraordinary job.

Ms O'Connor - Particularly his opening statements, which were dripping with empathy.

Mr SHELTON - The question about opening statements - I have been in the Chair now for a number of years, including a stint when I was in the Chair when I was under the Labor and the Greens when they were in government. Some opening statements have been an issue for different oppositions over the time that I have been here. Given Mr Jaensch's situation and that they were there all day, I don't see anything extraordinarily long in his statements. He was concise in what he had to say.

Mr Hidding - You were to blame for not giving enough questions to the Greens. How did that go?

Mr SHELTON - I have left my folder at the desk. The Greens, right through, under some consistency of about 940 questions over the week for Labor, were running at about 50 per cent consistently across the week.

Ms O'Connor - That is what we are elected to do. It is called scrutiny.

Mr SHELTON - The Standing Orders say three to one; not two to one.

Ms O'Connor - On that front, the Standing Orders are garbage. Anyway, it was not for standing orders, it was for -

Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN - Order. Standing Orders were resolved by the House.

Mr SHELTON - The Greens grumble about their situation. I can understand when they have almost only one and bit. There are two members of this House, but their numbers went down by a third. At one point in the election it looked like it was only going to be one member of the House. I can understand how the member for Denison is a little disappointed in that.

Mr Hidding - I was nearly hoarse with all the DDs I was asking.

Mr SHELTON - I did not mention it but, as I believe according to my account, the Liberals, which was Mr Hidding, asked 13 questions over the week.

Ms O'Connor - Every question time we have to cop four or five.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN - Order.

Mr SHELTON - From my perspective the minister did a great job. Three months into the job he is working through the issues and has a really good handle on all the issues that are there, given the time frame he has had to do that. I am sure it was a huge workload. I congratulate him on everything he has been able to achieve so far and I know he has a huge responsibility because homelessness and child safety has to be paramount for any government and is paramount for this Government, which is why we are spending an extra \$24 million to protect children at risk.

The minister went through a lot of that expenditure through the Estimates process. We are investing an additional \$24 million in funding to support the redesign, employing more child safety officers and other frontline staff and assisting vulnerable children with their complex needs in out-of-home care. It is critical we go down that path. I will talk a little about Ashley later on but it is absolutely critical this money is spent in the right places and the Budget goes to that.

I know the Greens do not like talking about making money and expenditure and those things but the reality is, we have had a situation in Tasmania -

Ms O'Connor - No, that's not true, we just don't like that money is everything to you people. It is the only metric you apply.

Mr SHELTON - The point is, to offer these services you need to employ people, you need to invest in infrastructure and you need money to do that. It is absolutely critical that from a government's point of view we drive our economy, we create a better economy, there are profits around, people pay taxes, people sell and buy new houses and the state gets more income and that extra income can be allocated to these critical areas.

While congratulating the minister on what he has been able to achieve, and there are other ex-ministers for Human Services here, the department does a fantastic job. I congratulate those people within the department who do a fantastic job, dealing with some cases and situations that sometimes we would not even dream about being out there but are. Someone has to deal with that and it falls back on the Government and the minister and his department to overcome those issues.

Unfortunately, that is where it is at when we have failures in our system and that is why the old saying is there that these people need a hand-up, not a handout. There might be some desperate situations, as the previous member who resumed her seat mentioned, where you need to do it now and there is \$500 000 to help those people out there. This Government is about driving the economy and creating employment opportunities for people out there so they can overcome their current situation and be able to pick themselves up. It was fantastic to hear some honesty by the Labor member for Lyons, who talked about her case but then said that in her time as electorate officer she has seen hundreds of these situations come through her office over time, which indicates to me that this situation has existed for a long time.

This Government has been in power for four years, the previous government was in power for 16 years, and although it is highlighted now in the circumstances we have in Hobart, this issue has been there for a very long time. Regarding homelessness and the intergenerational aspect of what Ms Butler mentioned, lo and behold, four years is not a generation. If it is intergenerational you go back 15 to 20 years to the governments of the day overcoming the issues. Tasmania, over my time, has been seen as something of an economic basket case. We have needed extra help from Canberra and we have put our hand up and so on. What we have in Tasmania at the moment is what the Treasurer talks about as a golden era, and it is a golden era compared to where we have been in the past. The economy is such that we can create a situation where we can assist these people, and we are assisting these people.

Ms O'Connor - Why are we here?

Mr SHELTON - Ms O'Connor, you mentioned that the uptake in the economy was not a part of the Liberals being on this side. You mentioned that it was maybe other factors. Let me tell you, Ms O'Connor, in my view there is another factor involved in why our economy is so good at the

moment and that is because the Greens are not in power. If you talk to people out there about the Greens economic policies, you will not have much of a conversation. That is a problem, but one of the reasons our economy is so strong is because the Greens are not in power. It is important that we deal with all these things and this minister is getting on with the job. He is a compassionate person, he knows what needs to be done and he is getting on with the job, backed up by his fellow Cabinet members and all of the PLP. I am sure he will do a fantastic job.

Regarding the Housing issue, I am reminded every time I drive down the highway, which as we all know has been very frequently over the last four weeks, at the development just off the roundabout at Brighton where you turn left to come down the East Derwent Highway. I was there with the previous minister when she turned the sod. I do not know the exact number of units and what is going up there, but it is huge -

Time expired.

[6.07 p.m.]

Dr WOODRUFF - Mr Deputy Chairman, I want to share with the House for the benefit of people who did not have the joy of sitting through the Planning part of Mr Jaensch's Estimates contribution. I can let people who are listening or people who may like to read *Hansard* know that the minister was not capable of answering my questions about how the so-called improved planning scheme of this Government is going to allow people to make a case about the social and economic impacts of developments around the state, in addition to the environmental impacts and the narrowly defined development conditions of a particular proposal that is put to council.

What we had revealed before us was a minister who is so lacking in understanding of the portfolio he has the weight of managing that he had to run for cover and essentially ask the staff person at the table to fill him in on the basics of the Tasmanian Planning Scheme, including the difference between the scheme and the Land Use Planning and Approvals Act. He regularly misquoted the appeals tribunal as being a possible option for people to use in terms of putting forward their case about a development of a large scale and the issues facing large scale developments: the social impacts, the economic viability and the economic impacts on other businesses. We have in Tasmania a situation where the Liberals have effectively, as you said you would in the last term of Government, opened up the state. It is now open for any developer, large or small. The point I made throughout the Planning session and the questions I had the real pleasure of asking, was that this is a planning scheme written for the richest and largest developers. It is written beautifully with their needs put first and foremost because it provides no opportunity for the community to appeal on grounds of social and economic impacts, and only to appeal on the narrowest of definitions of environmental impact.

Ms O'Connor has reminded me, thank you for doing that, that this was a planning scheme written by developers. Mary Massina was the head of the Property Council until she took up that appointment with the Liberals in 2014. She was a person who had foremost in her mind the needs of large developers and she made sure that there was no pesky red tape in place for those large developments we have coming down in front of us right now, sitting on the table around the state.

We have a massive development proposal for a woodchip export port in Dover that will require large swathes of southern native forests as well as plantations to be chipped and exported out of the state, using our own taxpayers money to move them there. The company could not afford to do it on their own. We also have a massive development in Rosny, on the eastern shore of Hobart, which will take the top off that hill - a nature conservation area - and convert it from its current state as a

lovely tranquil place where people go to look at the beautiful vista of the water and the whole of southern Tasmania down the Channel and along past Bridgewater. That beautiful place is being opened up through a secret development process hooked up through the Office of the Coordinator-General.

Another essential building block in the Liberals' planning scheme is to create a secretive expression of interest process and to bring these things out when the community has had no time to look at them and have their say. First, within four days of a council meeting, and then with a possibility of 14 days' time to prepare their case and to mount their arguments in a planning scheme stacked against them. There are no proper appeal rights for ordinary people in many aspects in the planning scheme. Instead, we have everything sitting there for developers.

This is the question I ask the minister, and I asked him on numbers of occasions: could he point me to the part of the new, improved planning scheme that specifically enables residents or respondents to a development application to make a case for or against a development on the basis of the social impact, commercial impact to their business, or the economic viability or non-viability of a particular venture? He could not, and neither could the staff sitting at the table. No-one could point to that because it does not exist. It is not there because it was specifically written out.

The point I tried to make, and I believe the minister made it himself clearly with his inability to answer that question, was that it is a lie when the Premier and other ministers come to this place and stand in front of a microphone talking to a media outlet, saying that the Dover woodchip export development has nothing to do with state government. This will simply happen, it will go through the proper planning process at local government and people will have a chance to have their say. It is not true. They have not had a chance to have their say and they will not have a formal chance to have their say. They cannot do it through the development application process at local government because there is no capacity to properly assess the economic non-viability of a wealth-generating company such as James Neville-Smith's Southwood. There is no capacity to talk about the impact on other commercial interests such as tourism ventures, abalone fishing, mussels, or even, heaven forbid, Tassal and Huon Aquaculture's fish farms. There is no capacity in that formal space of council to do that, or make a representation on those grounds.

Similarly, we have no capacity in Cambria Green on the east coast of Tasmania for the community to have mounted their case in more than four days before the Glamorgan Spring Bay Council meeting, where they had to respond to a proposal to rezone the land from agricultural land to a tourism development site behind Dolphin Sands. We know the Chinese government business celebrated that land being created as part of a small, Chinese Communist Party-backed business estate four days beforehand. The community only heard about four days before the meeting. That is not enough time to make a decision. The minister was not being truthful when he talked about it being an improved planning scheme for everybody, perhaps only for the big end of town -

Time expired.

[6.18 p.m.]

Mr JAENSCH - Mr Deputy Chairman, it is a great honour to report on and respond to the reports on my first Estimates process as a minister. I will start by thanking my office and departmental staff for all their hard work preparing for the Estimates process, particularly to my staff for helping me as a new minister to come up to speed for the purposes of Estimates and more generally. Thanks also to the leadership team of the new Department of Communities Tasmania, which only officially commenced operation this week as a department on its own. It appeared with

its own chapter in the budget papers so it could be assessed and scrutinised as the department it was to become in this 2018-19 financial year alongside all the others. Aside from building a new department from parts of others, that team was able to assemble a full set of budget papers for this new department before it existed. I thank them very much for their excellent work in doing that.

I also thank the chairs of the committees I presented to in Mr Shelton, and Ms Forrest in the upper House, and the parliamentary staff for their guidance to the committee along the way. I thank the members who came to the table with genuine interest and real questions. These areas that I am now responsible for are ones with a good deal of common interest and goodwill. That has been reflected in some of the contributions made today in this place.

I note and acknowledge and do not apologise for taking quite a few questions on notice through the Estimates process. A lot of them were specific questions, and sometimes figures in a different format to the way they are kept. This might mean that the department is going to have to create data from its records specifically to respond to those requests. It is not the information we necessarily had to hand in the hearings. My intention was to ensure that we were providing correct information at every opportunity and not withholding it or giving more general answers which we could have done.

I will briefly respond to some of the issues raised by other speakers this afternoon. I respect everybody's right and opportunity to ask any questions or make any contribution they like. Dr Woodruff reflected her contribution in the committee. I note that a lot of time was spent in the committee where I asked the department to explain planning principles, not to me, but to Ms Woodruff, again and again.

Ms O'Connor - Who sat on the Huon Valley Council for how many years, six or seven years?

Mr JAENSCH - It is even more alarming that you are right, Ms O'Connor. Dr Woodruff sat on a council as a planning authority for many years and still does not understand the way this works. I note the reference she made just now that our planning system in Tasmania was designed by developers. Then she referred to Mary Massina and that the evidence was in some of the results we are seeing. The things the Planning Reform Taskforce designed are not yet in effect. That was explained to you again and again, but you do not get it. Frankly, I need to give up because I do not think I am going to get anywhere.

Dr Woodruff - Office of Coordinator-General. You could not point to the new changes that would be any different.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN - Order.

Mr JAENSCH - Ms O'Byrne, there is a lot of agreement there. You started with some comments on the Noetic report and Ashley Youth Detention Centre and the need for a therapeutic model. A number of contributors have referred to that. I note the work being done in Ashley, the Ashley+ Approach, and the changed management project that is underway there.

The Noetic report talked about how the system we need is not just about the facility and the buildings, but the broader context - the child safety redesign process, the work being done on intensive family engagement and the individual youth case management initiatives. These things, which have been funded to the tune of millions of dollars in this Budget and over the last term of government are all about this more therapeutic service regime for our young people.

The thrust of the Noetic report is a whole-of-system response. The Noetic report was commissioned to provide inputs to the Youth at Risk Strategy. There are many elements to the Youth at Risk Strategy. The decisions going forward at Ashley Youth Detention Centre are but one piece of a larger puzzle. There is progress on many fronts, all directed towards creating a more therapeutic through-care model which includes the child safety system as well as the youth justice system. There is a good understanding of that across the political divide here.

I also note that this approach extends into things such as our Affordable Housing Action Plan with the development, over the last quarter, of beds in youth supported accommodation facilities; the Moonah Youth At Risk Response Centre; the commissioning of a first tranche of backyard units, which are designed to be a mechanism for avoiding youth homelessness; the development of new crisis accommodation and rapid rehousing programs; and additional brokerage available to Housing Connect in the north as well as the south. When Ms O'Byrne and other members refer to some of the cases of homelessness or impending homelessness they face in their offices, I do point to some of those other actions.

I become a little impatient when members of the opposition parties stand up and characterise progress so far on the delivery of housing. They single out a certain number of social houses built, but do not choose to acknowledge the 15 extra units at the Hobart Women's Shelter, the 25 beds in Devonport, and the nine beds for supported youth accommodation in Moonah. They are all part of this picture. They are all part of responding to the homelessness and housing pressures that we are facing at the moment.

When they say we have no plan or no response and that 37 is a tiny number, this shows some wilful blindness to the overall Affordable Housing Strategy which is underway, that deals with all demographics and all areas of need, urgency and longer term security right across the state, not just houses built in Hobart. We need to keep that in perspective and understand that this is a complex issue that requires a complex response. Some of it is acute right now, but generally this is an issue that all governments at all times need to be dealing with and we have a plan.

Thanks to the Treasurer and the Premier - who Ms White said had not supported me. I would have to argue to the contrary. I have come into this role with a treasurer and a premier who are backing me 100 per cent to the tune of \$24 million for new child service support, including 25 new staff members and \$125 million over five years for the Affordable Housing Action Plan, which we are continuing to roll out over the next five years.

These are challenging portfolios. We have resources, we have more work to do, but we do have progress underway. I do not argue with any of those things. We have a plan and it is delivering. It is most definitely not finished yet, not all done, but we have the right plan and we do have resources behind it.

Ms White raised questions about the Private Rental Incentive Scheme. We have ruled out, in this place, on the record that Government members will not be participating in the Private Rental Incentives scheme. We know from the Register of Interests that there are Labor members who also own properties other than those they live in, but I have not yet seen a declaration that says that Labor members will not be participating in the Private Rental Incentives scheme, or anything to do with their participation in short-stay accommodation either.

Ms White said that we would not rule out giving away public housing or public assets in the future iterations of the Affordable Housing Action Plan. We have not given away any yet, but we

make no apology for being innovative and trying new ways of leveraging the assets that Tasmania owns in housing stock to generate more stock than it would have otherwise had. Some of that has been the Stock Leverage Program. We do not have any plans for further tranches of that at this stage, but I am not ruling anything out. I do not think Tasmanians expect it in the current climate when we have a shortage of housing supply -

Ms O'Connor - You have ruled out regulating Airbnb properly, haven't you?

Mr JAENSCH - We have regulated Airbnb twice.

Ms O'Connor - It is not properly regulated.

Mr JAENSCH - We will not be ruling out any option available to us that will deliver us more housing for Tasmanians who need it.

I want to move to a couple of the other questions and contributions that were made. Ms Butler referred to a family in acute housing need and referenced the requirements of our system at a number of levels, and I think I have covered that in my earlier comments. We have a challenge in terms of there being adequate supply at the moment but you are right, and your comments recognise as well, that a standalone family house is not the solution for everybody. We need to be able to continually review the need for immediate urgent shelter, secure accommodation, and brokered rapid rehousing for women and young children escaping violence through to homes for families of six. That means we need to have a multi-pronged approach and that is what we have.

For example, at the moment we are working through a list of long-term Housing Tasmania tenants of family-sized homes with four bedrooms or more who have expressed interest in being relocated to a smaller, more modern house that suits their needs, perhaps as a couple or an individual, and freeing up those larger homes in the Housing Tasmania stock for a family like the one you are talking about to move into. Again, this happens at many levels, all at the same time.

The numbers in each category are relatively small, as they are for the Private Rental Incentives scheme take-up, the stock matching initiative and aspects of the HomeShare and Streets Ahead programs where we are helping families on low incomes to become owners of their home for the first time, but they all add up. People find themselves in a range of different situations and we need to respond to them all. This is not just about building standalone family homes, but that is an important component of it and we remain committed to do that.

Ms Standen spoke about a range of things and raised a question about a review and audit of the Housing Register in 2017, and I believe we have an answer on its way through to her. It is a relatively routine update to remove listings on that list that are no longer current, or where the people are not contactable, with the proviso that anybody who has been on that list who has not been able to be contacted and is removed from the list and subsequently identifies themselves as still being in need can be returned to that list.

With regard to evictions there was some discussion about whether there had been an increase in evictions for antisocial behaviour in the last year. I note that in answer to a couple of issues raised about people who have been evicted from our stock, they are generally well informed of why. They have had three strikes, which is at least two more than they would have had if they were working under the normal provisions of the Residential Tenancy Act in private rentals. In those cases, I am advised that people evicted are routinely directed to other services which can assist them

to find accommodation so that the risk of them becoming homeless is mitigated to the greatest extent that we possibly can.

Again, eviction is a very last resort. The three strikes policy ensures that everything possible is done to assist people to comply with their tenancy conditions. At the same time, when we have 3190 households registered on the social Housing Register who need somewhere to live and who would be perhaps be ideal tenants, we need to ensure that those who have the privilege of public housing respect it and operate by the rules, for their sake and those neighbours around them, whether they be private tenants or other people in our social housing system.

There were comments from Ms Standen regarding cost-of-living improvements to homes and I believe in our hearing we referred to the remarkable progress with the replacement of direct heating with more efficient heat pump technology which I recall has, over the last few years, increased from 14 per cent of Housing Tasmania properties to over 50 per cent now, and the remaining 50 per cent are the key target for the next phase of that planned maintenance.

I was disappointed that Ms Standen got to the point of saying with regard to our child safety system, who would want to come and work in this system? She also made references to there being evidence of systemic abuse in the system which appeared to be increasing, both of which I categorically reject. I am also very disappointed that after the discussion we had about the challenges, now that there is an ongoing role in recruitment process and a new budget for investing in new staff over establishment in the child safety system, we would have a member of this parliament saying, 'Who would want to come and work in this system?' That is the last thing anyone needs to be saying. I would like to counter that to anyone listening by saying we have a new department, a healthy budget and a nation-leading child safety system redesign that we are rolling out which is dealing with the current growing demand for child safety services whilst it is reforming the system, which should divert more families and children from needing to be in that system.

This the place to work and be part of a nation-leading Child Safety Service, so if anybody in their networks knows of suitably qualified staff, be it in Tasmania or interstate, we would love to have them and please do not listen to Ms Standen. She is still learning the politics of this one and overreaching sometimes.

Ms Houston spoke passionately in the committee and here again today about young Aboriginal people in particular who find themselves in the Ashley Youth Detention Centre -

Time expired.

Estimates of the Minister for Human Services, Minister for Housing and Minister for Planning agreed to.

DIVISIONS 2 and 10 -

(Minister for Education and Training, Minister for Advanced Manufacturing and Defence Industries, Minister for Infrastructure)

[6.38 p.m.]

Ms O'BYRNE - I appreciate the opportunity to discuss the scrutiny of the Minister for Education and Training and I particularly want to deal with a number of the issues that were raised in education services. One thing that struck me as a bit odd in the Budget is that I could not track a number of the funding commitments, so I appreciate that the minister took on notice a commitment

to unpick all of the funding in in-school education to allow us to understand. That came out because there were a couple of issues, specifically in ECIS, where there was a commitment to fund it through to 2020 and yet in Estimates it was identified that the funding followed through, but I could not find a line item for that to have any comfort as to exactly what was being funded. We have quite a number of concerns around the future of ECIS in relation to their relationship with the NDIS.

As members would be aware, the NDIA does not have an education component, so some of the fantastic services that have been provided will not be provided under a model that is simply run under that framework. There have been concerns raised with us that some families have had services changed and potentially withdrawn, and in particular - and it is an issue that I will be writing to the minister on - that in order to transition potentially to the new model that the services are not necessarily being provided in the same way that they have been before, but as an in-place model. I have concerns as to whether or not that will deliver the very high-quality service that ECIS provides. The minister refers to it as a gold standard and it really is the best service in the country and because of that it needs to be protected.

I have known of countless families whose lives have changed because of the support they have received through ECIS. It has allowed their children to transition. One of those parents had one of their children participate in the Frank MacDonald prize a few years ago and they would never have had the education pathway to lead to the type of excellence that program seeks, had we not had the ECIS program in place and that wraparound support. We cannot understate how valuable that is. We talked about TASC and I am pleased to have some assurances we will not see the debacle we had last year. Last year was horrific, with students having physics and maths specialised scheduled within 90 minutes of each other. I do not know if anyone in this room has studied physics and maths specialised but no other state did or would have scheduled those things together. There is a commitment to ensure these scheduling issues are resolved.

The Government is working through a program to ensure the appointment of staff does not become as chaotic as it was last year. I am still concerned about some of the other issues. When an online formula that was used all year was printed out in exams the printing of it transposed the figures and the formulas were incorrect. I worry about what that does. Anyone who has lived with college students through exams knows how incredibly stressful they are and anything that happens to unsettle them during the exam can be damaging for students. I am still concerned about that.

I did not have a chance to ask about the Teachers Registration Board resolution of teachers requiring police checks while still requiring working with vulnerable children checks. The minister has been looking at resolving that. Whilst it is not one of those matters for consideration, which I admit, if the minister has any further advice it would be useful. It is something we need to turn our attention to.

The minister has promised to give me a complete breakdown of how the in-services school budget is allocated. Is the issue around areas such as autism-specific classroom support? Page 68 of the budget paper 2, part 1, identified that the \$3 million being allocated to the task force would also be responsible for extending the autism-specific classroom support. This seemed to be in a rather odd construct, given that the autism-specific classrooms, while valued, were an exclusion not an inclusion model and were not a recommendation of the task force. The minister has identified that money does not come out of the task force money and is somewhere else in the Budget. I look forward to understanding exactly how that is going to be funded and provided because that was of significant concern.

Other concerns around the Budget were that I genuinely believe the minister wants to deliver a needs-based funding model, but to deliver a needs-based funding model commencing with a rollout of term 1 next year is going to require some money. There does not appear to be an allocation to do that. The first part of the rollout is nowhere near the allocation we would need to implement a proper needs-based funding model into the out-years of this Budget and there are going to be costs beyond that. The only way you could fund it within the existing framework is to say the \$88 million we are currently spending we are simply going to realign and put into different places, which is not the commitment the community expect. We have a significant number of children who are not entitled to receive any support under our current model, who will be receiving support under a truly needs-based model that is not a medical model, which is about assessing their need.

There is going to be a significant budget increase. The question was put to the Treasurer, who seemed to think all would be fine even though it was not listed as one of the issues in the Treasurer's risk assessment as other matters are. The Treasurer's risk assessment would be the place because I accept we do not know how much this model is going to cost. Normally, if you know you have a funding commitment coming down the line, you would say in your treasurer's risk assessment, here is one of the big things we need to deal with. Conservative estimates from the sector are that it is going to cost an additional \$30 million. Some of the higher expectations are in excess of \$50 million. I accept we do not know where it is going to land but it is going to land somewhere, come term 1 next year. That is not long away and there is no budget allocation for it.

I am concerned about that because either the Treasurer has a significant problem with his budget or the Treasurer truly thinks the minister can fund this internally. If that is the case then that is not the expectation the community has. I know the minister would know it would be impossible to deliver this model that way. I note in *Hansard* there was suggestion that some families might receive less support. It would be a shock to those families receiving support now if there was an intention to withdraw any of their funding. Most of those families would say the support they are receiving is crucial to their children's continued engagement in school and a successful model. We already have significant demand on our support schools. We know there are waiting lists to attend the support schools. We know that schools are referring a number of children who do not make it to the waitlist to attend the support schools. We have a significant problem coming in funding for our students with additional needs, both SDR and the 50-70 IQ and those we will be seeing are part of the sort of numbers the NCCD has identified, which is at least multiplying the number of eligible students by two or three. Three is what it is suggesting. That is a significant concern.

We have a number of questions on notice we are waiting for. We look forward to those being provided. We tried hard to have the questions on notice done before we came back into these debates but we are looking for information on the support given to those teachers who leave in the first five years and whether any of the Government's initiatives have had any impact. The proportion of the disability funding, \$88 million of which is staffing. I thought it odd we could not have the Cosgrove numbers. The capital works list was in the folders of everybody there but was not tabled and I will talk about that. We asked about class sizes, absenteeism rates and the breakdown of that in education funding line.

I was puzzled by how long it took to have the minister say he was not going to contract out the education facility attendants. It concerns me the minister was of the impression the negotiations around the new agreement for EFAs and contracting out were somehow a similar issue. I am pleased we put on the record a commitment not to, but I am concerned it took so long and I am worried the minister might have that as one of the ways to address the new EFA agreement. I would hate to see it being held over those incredibly hardworking public servants who are very much a

part of their school community and features of their school communities. When these services are contracted out in other jurisdictions, we have seen how badly that plays out and how difficult it becomes. That is not something we would want to see. I am pleased we received the commitment.

The minister made it clear he has no intention - despite supposedly participating in good faith in negotiations and the AEU today making public their log of claims for their membership - there was no plan in place to ensure Tasmanian teachers are lifted from being the lowest paid in the country. If you are at the top of your pay scale at the moment, you are the lowest paid and a 2 per cent wage cap will entrench that. When we raised it the minister said there are a whole lot of other conditions in other jurisdictions. That is a bit of a slippery game to play because I am not sure if that is a threat, or whether he thinks it does not matter they have the lowest salaries.

Once upon a time we always said that lower salaries in Tasmania was not that bad, some years ago, because the cost of living here was so much cheaper. Anyone trying to buy a house here knows that the cost of living here is not cheaper. If we are asking our highly trained professionals to work in this environment, we need to recognise they will leave if they can find better salaries and better supports in other jurisdictions. That is a significant issue, particularly given the minister has also admitted we need to find an additional 400 teachers next year because we have an ageing demographic in our education workforce. The minister identified there were some 350 transitioning out that needed to be met and the additional 50-odd for the additional teaching numbers. It is a big ask at a time when there is less funding available.

The year 12 issue was raised often. I believe we need a review to understand what we have done. The easy line of saying every school goes to year 12 is not the picture we are getting. Colleges are being disadvantaged. Colleges are probably engaging better with schools and that is a good thing but that can be done in a way that is not punishing colleges. I am concerned we have an attendance strategy rather than an attainment strategy alone. If it is only attendance it is missing the opportunity that exists. There are a number of students who are nominally assigned to year 11 and 12 extensions who are attending colleges. That is fine but we could be honest about that. Maybe we just need to have a proper review to understand what we have done well. I have always said there will be good things in this because good educators make good things work and capturing any young person is good. However, I am genuinely concerned that at the same time as capturing in an effort to prove the model, we are limiting the opportunities for some other students. I know of schools that feel they have to prove the minister's model and encourage their students who would have transitioned to stay. I know of kids who would have transitioned with a bit of support and done really well who are doing lesser options than they could have done had they gone to college. These are not good outcomes for young people, and certainly when you look at particularly those in the urban areas and the impact on years 11 and 12 there, it is a significant concern. We would like to see some work around that.

I am concerned about the Infrastructure budget. We are always happy to see more money spent on schools, but the minister has tabled in the parliament, and the Estimates procedure before, an assessment process against which schools are measured in order to get their priorities. Yet because of the commitment the Government has made knowing what they do, which is more access to information than we would have had, a number of those category 1 schools are not going to be supported in the next four years. That is a significant shift, which also puts our category 1 schools up to category 2 schools and our category 2 schools to category 3 schools, so the flow-on from that is quite significant. We raised the issue particularly for the learning centre in Clarence which was a category 1 school and from the advice given at Estimates it was accepted that was predominantly because of the Early Learning Centre part of Clarence High and the photographs were pretty

concerning. From that we need a far more transparent process around the infrastructure list, how schools get there and why they should be there.

The minister has done an audit of our kindergarten and prep spaces and gave a commitment on that. A similar audit on all our schools would bring up some very interesting things about the schools that need funding. You should not have to be the loudest school or the school the minister visited on a particular day in order to get funding. We need a more transparent process. We need better learning spaces. I worry that we have some schools that still have quite poor learning spaces and that have been identified as category 1 that will miss out. At the same time as we are not investing in their learning spaces, we are also going to make their teachers the lowest paid in the country. That concerns me significantly as well.

We got the key data so we will be analysing some of that. We have some additional information we have asked the minister to provide through questions on notice and I thank Mr Bullard for his flexibility and understanding what that would be. That is a piece of work that we got back in 2014 and have not been able to get since, which really breaks down in greater detail what is happening in every one of the school sites and education facility sites. We will have a bit of a look at that. Some of the members of the upper House were a bit annoyed that the key data report they asked for, because they wanted to use it to peruse for their own questioning, was held over in order to be able to be dropped in the lower House Estimates. That is the sort of thing that sets their teeth on edge, but the minister can deal with that into the future.

We looked at the rollout of staffing, so it will be interesting to see how the Government will meet that, particularly given we are not doing anything around salaries. The concern around chaplaincy and proselytising we raised again. I am still not convinced that the minister by getting organisations to not brag about the proselytising they have done will actually stop it. I would like to see a far more rigorous approach to those organisations going into schools. It concerns me that organisations with a particular philosophical bent will go into schools and run agendas with our students. That is not good enough. I had thought we had a bit more progress with the minister about how to resolve that issue but that has not been the case. That concerns me greatly and will concern other people who have raised it with me.

Childcare centres on school sites was raised. I do not mind childcare centres on school sites. I am surprised that some school sites that did not ask for them have been given them, particularly given that there are viable centres just down the road that will close as a result of it. The best they have been offered is the option that they can tender for it. That is a significant concern that the minister will have to address. It feeds into the great concern that exists around the early years that the minister is attempting to achieve early years by stealth. We have the childcare centres on the sites, we have the type of investment and the conversations he is having around the early learning centres - or child and family centres, but he does not want to call them that; I do not know why - and he is building the child and family hubs which is also about childcare centres. His program around children at risk could be meritorious if it was not being targeted as a term-only basis. I do not know if the minister understands how families at risk might get pressure points, but the pressure point of all the other kids being home during the school holidays is probably greater than the pressure point when all the other children are at school.

The fact that it is a four-term model for eight hours a week with a new process around how you would assess them - so the National Quality Framework we all signed up to that we worked so hard on is not good enough - I imagine most childcare centres either will not have the hours or if they do, they will not be approved under whatever the new model is, and the default model will be

schools. The minister might not recognise it but I am pretty sure the department is going to achieve the early start by default and that concerns me because the minister did not understand what he was doing when he brought in the policy and had to withdraw it. Now I think he is probably not aware of how it is going to work.

We raised class size and the minister has taken on to give us actual class size breakdowns rather than the averages. The minister can rightly say the averages will probably be the same across the previous years but the issue is how many children are in a classroom, because there are small schools, as the minister is familiar with because his children go to a very small school, who will have very small class sizes. When you average them with classes that are extremely large, that is concerning. Over 30 kids in a maths methods 4 class is not an optimal learning environment but you only get more moneys at years 11 and 12 if you are an extension school. If you are a college you have to make do with the funding you have. That was a bit of a challenge.

As to the rolling out of staffing, we will be monitoring that -

Time expired.

[6.57 p.m.]

Ms O'CONNOR - I appreciate the opportunity to speak on the Minister for Education and Training, Advance Manufacturing and Defence Industries, and Infrastructure's Estimates. I have to say going back through the transcript it was one of the more enjoyable Estimates sessions.

Ms Archer - You didn't come to mine.

Ms O'CONNOR - I did not come to yours, Ms Archer, I am sorry, but I will pay special attention and read it.

I appreciated the genuine effort to answer questions truthfully and the information provided. On philosophical issues we may well differ but I appreciated that, particularly having come out of Estimates with the Premier and the Treasurer, which were deeply frustrating - and Mr Barnett is a realm all of his own.

I wanted to talk briefly about a couple of the major issues in the time I have. We acknowledge the move to extend years 11 and 12 into all Tasmanian high schools by 2022 comes from a good place. It comes from a strong desire to see every Tasmanian student achieve their full potential. Whether that is to go on into university education, TasTAFE or other skills training, the intention of the policy is good. What is of concern is that - and it was something Ms O'Byrne was talking about before - because you have a party that is attached to slogans and a policy becomes a set of four, five or seven words, I am not sure enough thought goes into it before it is announced as a policy. You therefore end up in a situation like this where there are very genuine concerns about the future of our colleges, and potentially a failure to look at other jurisdictions that have a similar college system to ours, such as the ACT and Canada, and understand what it is about the richness of that educational experience that so many young people and teachers appreciate.

Ms O'Byrne - The new Gonski report talked about separating senior secondary.

Ms O'CONNOR - Yes, but wasn't it separating them from year 7?

Ms O'Byrne - From 7 to 12 you keep them separate. They were taken with what we used to do.

Ms O'CONNOR - The concern we have, and it is a concern shared by college teachers and parents, is that it seems there are some inefficiencies. One of the cases we talked about was Ulverstone High School, which has a biology class of two students, a physics class of two students, and a phys-ed class of five students with a team-based sports curriculum that makes it difficult for those students. Ulverstone High School is down the road from Don College. Another example is Taroona High School. If you extend Taroona High School, an outstanding public high school -

Ms Archer - Yes, and it has the best view.

Ms O'CONNOR - Yes, it did a good job for three of my four children. It is a fantastic school.

The concern is you have a college down the road, which is Hobart College, an outstanding college that consistently, academically, stands right up there at the top of the state with other premium and private schools. Hobart College has an outstanding achievement record and that is across the academic and the skills and vocational training sector.

How do you have both? How do you make sure there is a quality educational experience for students and the teachers of years 11 and 12 at Taroona, the extra resourcing required for that, and make sure you are not taking something away from the colleges? It is a reasonable concern. Due to the way the forward Estimates is projected and the policy not coming into place until the final year of the Budget, it is hard to see what the impact would be on colleges. I take on faith what the minister said about working closely with college principals, collaboration and how this all might work. I wish him well in that endeavour because parents and students vote with their feet on our colleges.

At the end of grade 6, at the end of primary school, there is a significant shift into the private schools. Parents make that choice and at the beginning of years 11 and 12, around 600 students on average return to the public system, to the colleges, because of the quality of the education, the diversity of the subject choices and the excellence of the teachers. That is a resounding thumbs up for the colleges.

I also raised the issue of the Respectful Relationships Education program in schools. It is, again, another outstanding part of the curriculum, along with the health and wellbeing programs run in schools that can make a real difference to students' lives, to their emotional intelligence and how they can be successful in life in dealing with people, have healthy and happy relationships and self-respect at the same time. The concerns raised with us about the patchy and variable application of respectful relationships needs to be dealt with by the minister and the department. The understanding we have is that this excellent resource is sitting there but it is inconsistently applied in schools, which means not all young people are receiving the benefit of that outstanding Respectful Relationships Education program.

I will tell you what they are receiving mixed and variable benefits of, that is the chaplains program. Is that correct, Mr Rockliff? Does every public school have a chaplain?

Mr ROCKLIFF - My understanding is that most public schools have access to a chaplain but I stand to be corrected.

Ms O'CONNOR - I do not think they are all resident. I do not think there are enough chaplains. We asked the minister the question about access to the Commonwealth funding, and it was \$8.76 million over the past four years for the chaplains program. I am not going to verbalise the minister but I suspect some of the concerns raised about this program are shared by the minister. This is a school of thought that says the Earth was created in six days and we had a day off on the seventh day; that the Earth is only 6000 years old; and that women were created from the rib of man. The concern is amongst parents -

Mr Bacon - Do you share those views? People might read *Hansard* and not be sure.

Ms O'CONNOR - Of course I do not share those views because I am highly rational.

The concern amongst parents is that you are providing an opportunity for proselytising in schools, but I also take on faith and heard the minister say you are aware of this possibility and have measures in place to make sure that that is not happening. I believe the minister said it is in the grant deed, which is a positive.

Finally, because it is far too brief an opportunity to talk about the transport and infrastructure output, the best news that came out of that was that there is a plan for a 30-year infrastructure plan. The minister used the word 'visionary' and we had an interesting discussion across the table with the head of Infrastructure Tasmania, Mr Garcia, about how you make sure that it is a genuinely visionary plan for the next 100 years. I was encouraged by the receptiveness to talk to climate scientists, engineers with expertise in resilience, and the kind of approaches and technologies we are going to need in the future when the world we inhabit now will be so different. We are heading for two degrees of warming by the year 2040, we will have more extreme weather events, we will have more sea level rise; it will be hotter world. Down here in this beautiful little heart-shaped island at the bottom of the world, we have an opportunity to make sure we are resilient, self-sufficient to the greatest extent possible, retain our strong sense of community and the infrastructure we have in place is infrastructure for a century and serves us well. Putting too much energy into building roads when other infrastructure solutions are needed will be self-defeating over time. I acknowledge the work is about to be done.

Finally, we talked about the West Coast Wilderness Railway and that it sits alongside lot 191, which is Future Potential Production Forest land. No government in its right mind would log that wilderness but it points to the ridiculousness of logging those beautiful 356 000 hectares of high conservation value forest from 1 July 2020, which is Mr Barnett's intention.

Thank you, minister, for a quite enjoyable Estimates.

Time expired.

[7.07 p.m.]

Ms DOW - I rise to speak on Estimates Committee A, the areas of skills and training and TasTAFE and the area very close to my own heart and on which I have worked with you in the past, minister, of advanced manufacturing and defence. It is important to local jobs and the local economy in my electorate.

I will begin by saying something I highlighted when I spoke previously, which was the importance of skills and training and the way it is attributed across the Budget. In the session we held with you, Mr Rockliff, we did not have a lot of time to talk about skills and training. When I

raised it with the Minister for State Growth, also as part of his output group, he deflected it to you. I firmly believe skills and training is fundamentally important to industry growth in Tasmania and the future of our economy. It is an area we need to have concentrated effort on now, as we know that many industry groups are calling for greater investment in skills and training and there are a number of skill shortages. There are also lots of opportunities for further training in new areas of growth in Tasmania, such as the service sector.

It was with some disappointment I realised there was not the opportunity to discuss this more fully. Not having experienced Estimates before, I did not raise it when negotiations were made around the time allocations. You can be sure I will be advocating strongly for a greater time allocation to discuss skills and training in the next budget Estimates. I understand there are a number of initiatives aimed at increasing access to skills and training for Tasmanians in this Budget; for young Tasmanians, and those that find themselves transitioning out of employment in traditional industries or a change of job. Skills and training being afforded to those people is important as well.

There will be a number of areas we will need to monitor closely over this next period to understand whether the targets set by the Government, which we have asked for more information about, are being met as well as meeting the increasing needs of industry around the state.

In skills and training we asked and are waiting for more information around the breakdown of the workforce development skills funding across the Budget, across sectors and across the regions. I am looking forward to receiving that information.

I also mentioned on behalf of my colleague, Jen Butler from Lyons, the ongoing funding of online access centres and we received an update on that. It was also highlighted in our discussions with the Minister for State Growth, but also with yourself, that a number of key industry areas were identified and it was mentioned that we felt it was a missed opportunity in the service sector and particularly around aged care for skills and training, given that we have the oldest population in the country in Tasmania. I personally believe that offers many opportunities for new areas in employment and we should be focusing on investing in skills and training to provide care for our ageing population who have contributed greatly to our society and economy over many, many years. It was pleasing to note that there are dedicated criteria for that funding and in fact the Minister for State Growth said there may be opportunity to consider other areas such as aged care for access to skills and training.

We then came to TasTAFE as part of our discussions during Estimates and we raised a number of concerns. The first was about the independent audit that was conducted and the findings that were released earlier this year, albeit later than what was originally promised or intended by the Government. Nevertheless, we have received those now and they confirm the serious findings of the Integrity Commission report which was done earlier and led finally to the independent audit being undertaken. There are serious issues identified within the audit. We believe it is only reasonable, and we raised this during Estimates, that there be some sort of reporting mechanism against those recommendations outside of what happens internally in TasTAFE, because it is a matter of public importance and there should be some transparency around that. Given that during Estimates the time frame of December this year was given as the time for completion of all of those items it would be great to be provided with a public update on how that progresses or indeed the completion of that in accordance with the time frame given.

The other thing we spoke about in relation to the audit was the limitation of the scope of the review and whether you felt that all of the information that was requested by the auditors was provided by TasTAFE, and I believe you confirmed you were satisfied with that. Nonetheless, that was an issue that we raised.

We also talked about the culture of TasTAFE and the fact that additional resources will be required to implement the recommendations of the audit and sought reassurance around that. We also talked about the impending accreditation of TasTAFE and the need for teachers, in particular, to be well supported during that process to enable the body of work that needs to be done in preparation for that and during that accreditation process.

We are interested also in TasTAFE and the apprentice numbers that are coming out of TasTAFE. You alluded to a few of those this morning during question time, minister. I also raised issues with regard to TasTAFE around declarations of interest and purchasing. That was all we talked about, but I reinforce again the importance of that progress against the recommendations of the audit being made publicly available so we can get a good understanding of the standard being met in that audit process.

That brings me to Advanced Manufacturing and Defence Industries. This was a great opportunity to look at a number of initiatives that the Government has in place around advanced manufacturing, which really started when there were changes in the workforce, particularly in Burnie and surrounds with the transition of Caterpillar to Rayong. It is important to say that Caterpillar is still in Burnie operating and has up to 150 employees undertaking really great R&D work in the city, which is really good, but it also led us to think differently about advanced manufacturing in Tasmania. It was good to talk more fully with you about the way the manufacturing skills development funding is allocated and to have an understanding of how much of that is attributed across the Budget to advanced manufacturing specifically but also to other initiatives and activities to support advanced manufacturers not just in the defence industries.

We talked a lot about the trade mission you undertook and you provided details of that and who attended. We are certainly very interested over time to hear of more developments that have unfolded as a result of that trade mission. Part of the move towards trying to attract more defence work for Tasmanian businesses and industries is the role of the Defence Advocate. We examined that quite a lot during Estimates and it is important to say that for a role such as this it is really important it is evaluated over time. It has come at a significant cost. Whilst it is an important role, it needs to be evaluated and it also needs KPIs associated with the contract of engagement with that individual, which has not happened in the past. It was important to note that will happen in the future and we will be seeking more information on that as time goes by to understand better the outcomes that individual role is bringing to Tasmania.

We also had a breakdown of the primes that have been invited to visit Tasmania and those that have come to the state to meet with our businesses, key industries and government, and that was certainly a key initiative of the defence strategy which was put together in 2016. That is important as we look to identify different opportunities. The last thing I want to talk about is the last state election, where we made a promise around making the provision of a welding simulator at TMEC. I note that the Liberal candidate for Braddon has made an announcement about that today. It was interesting to receive a breakdown from you around those businesses -

Time expired.

[7.17 p.m.]

Mr O'BYRNE - I rise to make a contribution on the Infrastructure output in the Estimates. It was four hours of forensic investigation of the minister's portfolio area and I must admit, you are not a bad bloke, Mr Rockliff. You are very polite and I think you are trying. You are the best of a bad bunch. You genuinely want to answer and obviously we made a couple of points we felt strongly about and you disagreed, but you were respectful. You are not spiteful in your responses. You are very collected and in four hours it could have gone a bit differently.

Having said that, regardless of clearly being a decent bloke, given it is my former portfolio I am very passionate about infrastructure and about the -

Ms Archer - What do you have against Bruny Island?

Mr O'BYRNE - Nothing. What has the Government got against Bruny Island? This is a very serious issue because the islanders and the tourism industry and people are very upset about the decision you have made and that will obviously work its way through.

Mr Rockliff has inherited two major problems. He has inherited a series of thought bubbles from the previous minister, who clearly had his heart and sights set on a different role, and his Treasurer has spent all the unallocated infrastructure funds so he has very little wriggle room -

Mr Bacon - And didn't tell him about it.

Mr O'BYRNE - And he did not tell him about it, that is right. There are some significant issues facing Infrastructure in Tasmania and whilst the spin and the palaver coming from the Government is a record spend, big strategy, we are forging ahead, it is wafer-thin. There is no strategy because Infrastructure Tasmania has not done the work and the Government has admitted that by creating a round table.

We support the concepts of bringing industry to the table. Labor has generations of experience of bringing industry and community to the table to build long-term solutions. Our Leader, Rebecca White, has announced that with our industry advisory councils we will do the hard work. The acknowledgement by the minister in establishing this round table is that Infrastructure Tasmania has been a political exercise and colossal waste of money. It has not done the work required. We had the structures in place at the end of our term in government with the Infrastructure Advisory Council. For purely political reasons that was collapsed and discarded. All the work they had done in setting up, the work that the Government now acknowledges is required, was sitting there for them to pursue.

We found major challenges in the Estimates process in the lack of money to provide flexibility in the unallocated infrastructure funds and the series of thought bubbles, which are years away, at best, from happening. The head of Infrastructure Tasmania has acknowledged that may or may not happen. You worry about the Government's commitment to dealing with, particularly, the issues of congestion in Hobart. First of all it was a fifth lane in the election for the Southern Outlet, then it turned into a bus lane, and now it has turned into a study and a public consultation on a bus lane and a commuter lane; a tidal lane on the Southern Outlet with scant detail and no money in the Budget. We can guarantee one thing; if there is no money allocated in the Budget it ain't going to happen.

The 100-day boast of taking over the couplets of Macquarie and Davey Street we know will not occur until at least the end of the year and that is months away from occurring. The Premier and the then infrastructure minister announced an underground bus mall with great fanfare which, we found out through the Estimates process, may not be underground at all. It may be 'at grade'. I think that means above ground. What it means is it is below ground at Franklin Square but it above ground because of the slant of the road. There is no date on that. There is no money attached to it. It is a concept.

These are all ideas that Labor supports, including the ferries. What is lacking is a coherent strategy to deal with traffic congestion in Hobart. It is a genuine issue that needs to be dealt with. We applaud the concept behind moving people from vehicles to public transport but there is no public transport strategy that will create a massive uplift. There are reports and ideas but precious little action in dealing with the infrastructure needs and the problem of congestion in Hobart City. We are years away. That has consigned the Hobart and community and surrounds to years of congestion. It is not going to get any better, it is going to get worse.

Not only is that a problem in the south of the state but we have seen it in Launceston with the concept of the Tamar bridge. We do not know how much, when or how it is going happen. Again, it is another thought bubble that this minister, genuine and gentlemanly though he may be, has inherited, a real mess in terms of trying to fix and deliver on what are clearly thought-bubble election-motivated commitments from a minister who was heading off to what he thought were greener pastures.

The two decisions they have made - the Mowbray Connector and the Bruny Island ferry - are absolute messes.

Mr Bacon - Generous way to describe it.

Mr O'BYRNE - It is a generous way to describe it. Thank you, Mr Bacon. If the planned Tamar bridge occurs, even greater traffic is funnelled to the Mowbray Connector area. Lights are not going to cut it. The local community has asked for a proper treatment of that intersection. There is an uproar. One decision has been made and it is a shocker and the Launceston community have rejected it.

The other decision was the Bruny Island ferry. An island that is already congested dealing with significant demand, especially at peak times, and they have signed a contract which reduces capacity - within three years you would reduce capacity by a third. From an island that is expected to have an increase in visitation either by locals, locals' families, Tasmanians and tourists, you have completely cut them off at the knees in disabling people getting across to the island. It is a backward-looking, short-sighted confusing decision, which is not only a dead hand on the economic development of Bruny Island and how that is managed appropriately, but it is also a slap in the face to the local community. They made it clear that they needed a significant increase in capacity. With that you would not need a booking system because there would be the capacity to get people across. They have privatised it by stealth. This is a government that says that it is not privatising, but this is an asset that was in the public hands and they are privatising it.

They had a chance to stand up for Tasmanian jobs, and compel the tenderer to build those vessels in Tasmania. The successful tenderer already has built vessels in Tasmania. They chose not to lift a hand for the Tasmanian manufacturing industry and boatbuilders in Tasmania.

It is a betrayal to privatise. It is stupid to reduce the capacity. It is mindless to turn their back on Tasmanian workers, particularly manufacturing workers. The only fig leaf they have for infrastructure is Labor's 10-year plan for the Midland Highway. That is their only fig leaf of strategy and it is not theirs; it is ours. You are delivering on a Labor plan from 2013-14, which was committed to between state and federal governments.

Ms Archer - Which you never delivered.

Mr O'BYRNE - So we did not do the Brighton bypass; the Brighton hub; the Kingston bypass; the Geilston bypass and we did not establish the 10-year Midland Highway strategy which you are rolling out.

[7.27 p.m.]

Mr BACON - I rise to speak on Estimates Committee A, the examination of the Minister for Education and Training, the Minister for Advanced Manufacturing and Defence Industries and the Minister for Infrastructure. Just a few brief comments on the Education output. I note with some concern that it appears that we have a Minister for Education in this state now who thinks it is acceptable to see teachers take a real wage cut when it comes to a 2 per cent wages cap, which the Government brought in at the time of the GFC when revenues were shrinking. Now we are in what is called 'the golden age' by the Treasurer and others. To see teachers expected to stick to a 2 per cent wages cap when at the same time we have got inflation predicted to be a 2.25 per cent means that teachers in our state are effectively taking a real wage cut.

I do not think that is good enough. I do not think the Tasmanian people think that is the way we should be valuing our educators in this state. I urge the minister to take this up with his Cabinet colleagues. We know the Premier has made noises about removing the 2 per cent wages cap. There is no more important portfolio than Education. Teachers around the state are looking at a real wage cut. We want to make sure that we can get the best and brightest into our schools, teaching the next generation.

I also wanted to talk about the Minister for Infrastructure's output. As the shadow minister for infrastructure has just put on the record, there is a range of concerns when it comes to this area of government spending. We see the Government talk about \$2.6 billion investment in infrastructure. We certainly hope that rolls out in an appropriate manner. We want to see jobs created for Tasmanians, particularly young Tasmanians, in this area. There is a range of concerns around a range of projects. There does not seem to be any contingency in the Budget to deal with any problems when it comes to infrastructure projects. There has been talk about a Hobart City Deal but we know there is no funding in the Budget to assist with any of those infrastructure projects. In last year's Budget there was \$335 million set aside for the allocation of unallocated infrastructure and now we have seen such a huge pork barrel brought out for the election that that has all been spent. There is no unallocated infrastructure fund in this year's Budget. It has been in place for around eight years. It is best budget management process to have those funds there to deal with not only new infrastructure you need to announce across the 12 months of the Budget, but also to deal with any cost overruns or changes in timing around large infrastructure projects. It appears the Royal Hobart Hospital is going to run over time certainly, and is set to run over budget as well. There is no provision in the Budget to deal with these issues.

That was clear to all Tasmanians on budget day, but in a bizarre situation in Estimates it appeared that the Minister for Infrastructure did not realise there was no longer an unallocated infrastructure provision in the Budget. He offered to take that on notice and find out exactly how

much was in the fund, which clearly shows he was not aware that all that money had been spent through the election campaign. He is now dealing with not only a whole range of infrastructure projects that have no spare capacity through the unallocated infrastructure fund, he also has those thought bubbles, as pointed out by the member for Franklin and shadow minister for infrastructure. He has these fanciful projects, talking about a fifth lane on the Southern Outlet, another causeway at Sorell, mythical bridges over the Tamar, and the fantastic underground bus mall that may or may not be built on top of the ground now.

You only have to walk about three minutes from this very spot where we stand tonight in the House of Assembly and you can see a bus mall that is above ground. We realise now there is no funding in the Budget for the underground bus mall because the bus mall is above ground and was built in about 1982. There is no funding for it because it has been there for 30 or 40 years. It is extraordinary that we have a government that thinks the Tasmanian people are so stupid.

We know it is not this minister's fault. The shadow minister for infrastructure is 100 per cent correct when he says that this minister is the best of a bad bunch. He is a tremendously nice fellow. A lot of people on this side of the House say he is good looking. I will even agree with that, although we are not sure about the sweater vests or whatever this new look is he has been running for about two months now. A lot of people have said it is little Peter Rabbit with a cold upon his chest, but we all know the solution to that is a rabbit with camphorated oil.

I will say this minister is a tremendously nice fellow and we all respect him on this side of the House, but he has been left a mess, there is no doubt about that. The former minister for infrastructure came up with a whole lot of harebrained schemes through the election campaign and they are not looking to fund them in the next four years. There is no money in the Budget for these projects. The minister talked in the Estimates process about vision and that is all well and good, but we know it is not his vision. This is the former minister's vision. This minister has been given a hospital handpass and we think he will do the best he can with it, but even that is not going to get us anywhere near a second causeway at Sorell, a bridge over the Tamar, or an underground bus mall.

The only one I would say that the minister really has, and I think this has been done since the election and I am not sure how much work was done before the election, but when it comes to the Bruny Island ferry service, as the shadow minister said, it is not only privatisation by stealth, but you have capacity constraints on Bruny Island at the moment, particularly in peak times. You go to the Government and say to them, 'What is the solution to capacity restraints?' You have a vessel that can take 68 cars. What would you think, Mr Chair, about trying to get more cars onto the island? Would you say to get a boat the same size, or maybe even a bigger boat and carry more cars? That is not a bad idea. We cannot get enough cars onto or off the island at the moment. The boat we have can carry 68 cars, so should we get a boat the same size?

The logical answer would be to get a bigger boat. What does the minister do? Does he go out and get bigger boats? This is the funny thing. The minister has gone out and actually got smaller boats and they are not only slightly smaller, these boats can carry only 32 cars. The boat we have at the moment, the *Mirambeena*, takes 68 cars. It is a comfortable trip, I did it earlier this year, yet the minister goes out and buys not one but two boats that are much smaller. This is extraordinary. We are now going to have boats on the run that can carry 32 cars and we are going to have more cars on and off the island. It is a classic bureaucratic answer to a real world problem.

I know there are two boats operating at the moment that carry 100 cars and we are about to increase capacity up to 72 from 100. It is an extraordinary bureaucratic answer to a real world problem. You only have to talk to anyone involved with Bruny Island to know that this is not a solution that people on Bruny have been talking about. I have been talking to Pam, who is a frequent visitor to Bruny Island. She had one look at this and knows it is ridiculous. The minister knows it is ridiculous and I do not know how long it is going to take before we get an apology from this Government or this minister on this. He should back away from this plan as soon as he can and get a proper solution for the issues in terms of getting people on and off Bruny Island. As the shadow minister said, it is not just for our tourism industry, it is also for industry on the island but also locals on the island who want to be able to get on and off. Back away from this, minister, please.

Time expired.

[7.38 p.m.]

Ms BUTLER - Mr Chairman, I thank my colleague, Anita Dow, who raised questions to the minister on online access centres during the Estimates process which I would like to speak to today. I will start off with the lack of recurrent funding for the remaining 20 community-managed online access centres in Tasmania, and also the lack of forward budgeting for those online access centres in this year's Budget. We can confirm that those online access centres will be funded, we are hoping, until the end of next year. We put that question on notice and we will be waiting for a response from the minister.

In October 2016 there was an attack on the online access centres and I was able to work with a group of the coordinators from the remaining online access centres after they contacted me seeking support and for the first time drawing together. It was an interesting time. I must admit I was a little bit naive on what services online access centres provide in the communities, and by visiting all online access centres I was able to get a much better picture about the significant job they do in Tasmania.

The remaining 20 online access centres are vastly supported by their communities and they exist due to need. There is no data indicating a consolidation strategy to integrate online access centres with LINC's would be effective, especially in maintaining and providing the much-needed specialist services currently offered by the state's OACs.

I raised previously in my budget response that the department is currently including performance measures to manipulate data. I am concerned there could be an attempt to pursue the line that LINC's and online access centres service is the same. They are not at all. I was concerned in Estimates, when I read through the *Hansard*, that it was said that libraries always deliver the same services as online access centres but we do not need to call them that. It is part of the contemporary library service, funding is only available until next year and the department is conducting a review of the grant program.

Previously, the consolidation strategy to integrate OACs into LINC's was flawed. That was in 2016 and I still believe it is flawed. In 2016, the department tried to use incorrect statistics, saying that over the last four years there had been a 21 per cent reduction in visits to online access centres across the state. This statistic did not provide true representation of the remaining 20 OACs, which generally reported an increase in attendance and services provided. I know all OACs have maintained extensive data collection since 2016, in case there is misrepresentation from the department once more. I can tell you that usage of OACs statewide has increased. It might be

beneficial for the minister and members of the department to consider visiting OACs across the state and try to look at the different services LINC provides from OACs.

LINC personnel report that - not all, but when a survey was done LINC personnel reported that they do not have the capacity in their limited hours to provide effective and equivalent assistance to people wanting to access the varied services provided by online access centres.

To date, communities across Tasmania have lost 50 online access centres and coordinator positions during the consolidation of services strategy. We fought off the closures in 2016 and we will continue to fight it now. Online access centres provide access to information in areas of Tasmania with the highest social disadvantage indicators in Australia. Online access centre coordinators and volunteers provide instruction and assistance to people with poor literacy, myGov assistance, census forms, passport applications, TAFE courses; services the current service consolidation strategy has not considered. Why consolidate an online access centre that ultimately removes services a LINC centre cannot provide when the online access centre is both cost-neutral and assisting a disadvantaged community?

The Dropping off the Edge report measured various disadvantage indicators and one of them was access to information. In 2015, the report found that only six Tasmanian local government areas account for 80 per cent of the most disadvantaged ranks in position. In 2016, all online access centres provided an updated account of the volunteer hours provided on a weekly basis by their communities. Sixteen participating online access centres reported 473 hours per week, or 23 650 per annum, were volunteered by community members. Using the Volunteering Tasmania value of volunteering calculator, these volunteers delivered an estimated \$1 145 504 in value to the Tasmanian community each year. As part of the cost-benefit analysis, each remaining community-managed online access centre provided an estimate of grant funding by the state government. It was found the state government contributes an estimated \$466 725 to the remaining online access centres. The correlation between volunteer contribution and actual state funding is cost-effective. Volunteer contribution to the community-managed online access centres outweighs state grant funding. All online access centres report that funding has not increased in many years despite increased costs due to CPI adjustments and inflation.

How much time do I have, Chair?

CHAIR - Two minutes.

Ms BUTLER - I would also like to draw your attention to the vast distribution reach of quality publications, gazettes, directories and papers produced through the OACs. Between the 20 remaining online access centres, over 350 000 Tasmanians are reached on an annual basis. I think this is more when you compare, for example, *The Highland Digest* has 100 000 readers, the *Meander Valley Gazette* has 200 000 readers, the *Great Oyster Bay Community News* has 60 000 readers, the *Fingal Focus*, 2000 readers, *Tresca Community News* goes to 800 homes, *Tresca Sport and Recreation Staying Active newsletter* has 3000 readers and the *Derwent Valley Business Directory* goes to 7500 homes.

The current, high quality publications of the community-based OACs attract significant public support. This support base, coupled with volunteer contribution hours donated by communities across Tasmania OACs, is vindication of the importance of the centres. It is economically counterproductive and a public relations nightmare for the state Government to revisit the LINC service consolidation strategy, minister. Tasmanian communities are already unhappy with the loss

of 50 online access centres and the 50 coordinator positions. The risk of losing the remaining 20 online access centres and their coordinators is too high a price to pay for the many people who rely heavily on the presence of these centres.

[7.47 p.m.]

Dr BROAD - Mr Chairman, I rise to give a brief contribution, mainly about the infrastructure component of the member's ministry. I must admit, I feel sorry for the minister having to come into this new position and clean up what has been one hell of a mess. The minister for thought bubbles has left him with a number of issues to work with.

If we start at the top, it is the underground bus mall. If we can draw it, we can build it, and the minister has had to come in to try to clean that one up. It is almost as if there has been a master painter at work and he has set up this large canvas but all he has done is signed the canvas and the minister has to come in and fill in the blanks; and there are a lot of blanks. We have had an artist's impression of what an underground bus mall looks like and it looks as if there is a bit of contention around what constitutes being underground, whether it is underground or if viewed from the bottom of a hill adjacent to it it may appear to be underground but it is above ground. I am a bit confused.

We have another one of these, the minister might own this one, and that is the fifth lane on the Southern Outlet. I do not know if the minister has driven that section of the road but I am not sure how he is going to cope with the split level nature of the Southern Outlet or whether this fifth lane is only going to run until it goes to a split level, which is probably only a kilometre. Do they plan, through some miracle, to be able iron out that difference in levels or are they going to be able to put a curve on it? Will you grade the whole thing, take a massive racing line as you are heading up the hill because it is all on one nice big slope? The engineers are going to have an absolute field day to fit a fifth lane on the outlet.

A member - I think it is called cambering the corner.

Dr BROAD - Cambering the corner? You have to make up the drop of some five or six metres. It is quite solid rock through there, too. That might be what is called a dolerite intrusion, so you are going to have to stick a whole bunch of TNT into it. They will be drilling and it would be worse than Swiss cheese. I am not sure how you are going to do that one.

Then we have the Tamar bridge. The Tamar bridge popped out of nowhere. The previous minister for thought bubbles was underwriting instructions; let us promise everybody everything they want. How do you solve the traffic issues in Launceston? Well, you build a bridge across the Tamar. You do not fund it, you did not even draw this one. We have this blank canvas that does not even have a signature, it does not even have a stick drawing. I am not sure how the Tamar bridge is going to work, but that one is on the list. The Minister for Infrastructure, with no money, is going to struggle with that one.

Then we have the Bridgewater bridge, which is going to be delivered, apparently. In his last four years, the minister, on his own, has already done four or five press conferences there. There have been so many press conference there, someone should set up one of those coffee vans. Every time the media show up, they could hand out coffee. The bridge has been relaunched many times. I have been in parliament 16 months and in my time there have been four press conferences to launch the Bridgewater bridge. The minister is onto that one; it is obviously a priority.

The biggest issue we have is an infrastructure budget with no fat in the system. If there are any overruns or anything new or we agree to anything else with the Commonwealth, there is no money to deliver it. It brings us back to the budget situation in itself in that there is very little fat in the system. We know they are only \$14.8 million in the black in three years' time and only \$27 million in the black in two years' time. Unless there is a continued upswing in revenue there is going to be absolutely no money for any overruns.

The main thing is the whole idea of these little thought bubbles. There were some farcical scenes at King Island. You are very lucky, minister, this one was not recorded. One of the essential promises that the Government made when the new boat came online was that it would be an all-weather service and there would be stock transport via Geelong. There is still a bit of argy-bargy about who is going to pay for the roll-on, roll-off ramp in Geelong because you cannot crane stock on and off a boat. It is very tedious and also very dangerous. You need a roll-on, roll-off ramp. I am not sure about the time line on that but it is something King Island needs.

There are lamb producers on King Island who have very few options in Tasmania because the small animal chain is still not operating at Longford so they are relying on Tasmanian Quality Meats. TQM only take so many lambs. If they want to transport their lambs to a more vibrant market, it has to come through Tasmania. The sheep have to be spelled. They lose so much condition between leaving King Island and getting to the markets in Victoria that the producers lose a lot of money. The producers are very keen to see this boat operate, the north-bound freight service for stock, as was promised, between King Island and Geelong. It still has not happened.

We have farcical scenes where there is some uncertainty as to whether that was promised or not. It was only when the adviser said 'Ahem' and handed over something that aligned to a Liberal press release from last year that even the infrastructure honchos at the table realised that the Government had promised a north-bound freight service, delivering stock. It was not just about fertiliser from Geelong. Taking fertiliser out of Geelong to King Island is very good because a lot of the fertiliser facilities are in Geelong so that suits King Island very well. It is more than just fertiliser. A north-bound stock service was an essential part of the promise they had made to King Island to make up for all the mistakes they had made with the interim service and the way that was completely mismanaged by the previous minister.

The previous minister did not set foot on King Island in that whole period. It was left up to the now Infrastructure minister to mop up that mess, even before he got the ministry. Maybe he thought now was a good time to take over the infrastructure ministry because someone has to clean up the mess and it may as well be him.

You have taken ownership of this so you have a few things to work on. You have your underground bus mall, the fifth lane, not to mention the Sorell Causeway duplication - no mention of how you are going to get through Midway Point. Maybe you are going to go around Midway Point, or perhaps over the top. No mention of how you are going to deal with traffic issues apart from taking over roads, but Macquarie and Davey streets have not been taken over in your first 100 days. Who knows when that is going to happen and how you are going to do that?

There are a number of challenges for the minister. I suppose we have a few more years to judge his performance. The last minister left him with no end of trouble and a bunch of issues he is going to have to deal with.

Drawing pretty pictures after four years in government and not delivering any major infrastructure projects that were not funded by Labor in previous governments, and coming out now and promising that you are going to build absolutely everything from the Bridgewater bridge to the underground bus mall, from the fifth lane of the Southern Outlet to a Derwent ferry service, from a Tamar bridge to the airport roundabout and the Sorell bypass. Now we have new ferries to Bruny Island; less capacity, more trips - perhaps to try to make up for it. There is such a workload for you. You have a number of issues to develop and try to work through and no fat. Now is the time for delivery.

This next four years will certainly be very busy. Just drawing pretty pictures and saying 'This is what we are going to do,' is definitely not going to be enough. You will actually be judged on results. Turning a sod in three-and-a-half years is just not going to cut it.

[7.56 p.m.]

Mr ROCKLIFF - Mr Deputy Chairman, I thank you and thank members for their contributions this afternoon and their contribution throughout the day of Estimates. I include those in another place as well. It is always a very good opportunity for ministers to get their heads around portfolios and get an understanding of what is important to other members, whether they are shadow ministers or local members.

I thank all my departmental officials in Education and State Growth, for their work in leading up to Estimates. I am just not talking about the secretaries, Mr Bullard and Mr Evans, but all those people in the department who work so hard, including my office. I have a wonderful team.

There are a lot of points here and I will not be able to go through them all in 20 minutes. I enjoyed the discussion. We have a number of challenges ahead. I am not scared of being held accountable for those challenges or scared of results, good, bad or indifferent.

Our educational results are improving. When it comes to all the criticism of our years 11 and 12 high school extensions policy, it is working. The Deputy Leader of the Opposition and shadow minister for education acknowledged in her contribution today the closer working relationship between colleges and high schools. That is a good thing. It is one of the very positive outcomes of our policy. Around 680 students are now participating in years 11 and 12 in rural and regional high schools or in more urban high schools, such as New Norfolk, which was not on the original list, and Ulverstone High School. I recommend that as many members as possible speak to the students who are participating in years 11 and 12, as well their parents, and get an understanding of the value of the program.

We expect closer collaboration between high schools and colleges. We have eight colleges in Tasmania to deliver an entire senior secondary curriculum. Surely, our 56 high schools can support the eight colleges in delivering the senior secondary curriculum as well. That is why we have a collaborative model. I recognise some of the concerns expressed by those within colleges in terms of the future of colleges, but I have made it abundantly clear over the last four years that we support and value the colleges.

I met with the principals of the eight colleges very recently and highlighted and reinforced that. It is not about just buildings, whether it be at a high school or a college setting; it is actually about the students themselves and the outcomes. Our TCE attainment has increased some 10 per cent over the last two years. That is a big jump. It is a testament to the students achieving that and to

those who are supported them. I include the families of those students, and also the principals, teachers and support staff of our schools.

We had a lot of discussion around disability education and I include ECIS in that. I recognise with the NDIS changes there has been some uncertainty when it comes to our ECIS centres across the state. I visited the Hobart and Burnie campuses. I look forward to visiting the Launceston campus and Devonport as soon as possible. I got a very good understanding of the value of the Early Childhood Intervention Service. I spoke to parents and teachers and I made the comment privately and publicly that this gold-standard service will remain. I will not accept a lesser service for those families as a result of the changes to the NDIS and I make that commitment again today.

Needs-based funding is important, particularly for students in Tasmania where we have proportionately the highest level of disadvantage of any other state, including the Northern Territory. A total of 54 per cent of our preschool students are in the bottom two quintiles of disadvantage compared to 34 per cent nationally, so we have some challenges in that space. That is why needs-based funding and the Gonski model are so important, and that is why we extend the needs-based funding philosophy or model into disability education as well. That is what we are working on now. We committed \$250 000 to design a needs-based funding model at the election and we will deliver that. That is what we committed and it was welcomed by those advocates in the disability area. We will design and fund a model that is truly needs-based, but the work has to be done in order for that to happen.

I am pleased with the progress that has been made in disability education over the course of the last four years and the work that has been done by a number of people across our education sectors as a result of the ministerial taskforce on disabilities. There were a number of recommendations from that, there has been funding to implement those recommendations and we look forward to the next very important step as we design a needs-based funding model for students with disability. I recognise that importance.

Attendance, absence and suspension were raised as well. The new Education Act 2016 really assists students and schools in this area. We now have a less combative approach, which has directly led to prosecution in the past when it comes to absenteeism. We now have through our Education Registrar compulsory conciliation conferences so if a student has been absent for a length of time we sit down with the student, if appropriate, parents, the school and those involved to get a better understanding of the deeper reasons for why a student is absent for a length of time. That is important. My anecdotal evidence is that the process is working really well. It is not combative, we are not going down a prosecution path but are working sensibly in a measured way, discussing the issues and how we can return a student to school so they can continue their education. I believe that is working very well indeed.

When it comes to workforce development and staffing we have a challenge to roll out 250 new teachers in our schools over the course of the next six years. A total of 192 of those will be rolled out over the course of the next four years. That is a good challenge to have and why we are working very closely with a number of stakeholders, including the Teachers Registration Board, the Peter Underwood Centre for Educational Attainment, the University of Tasmania, the Australian Education Union, the Tasmanian Principals Association and the Department of Education sitting around a table and getting an understanding of where the gaps are in terms of areas across the curriculum. We are undergoing a workforce scan and then developing an effective workforce development and training program so we can successfully deliver our commitment of 250 additional

teachers in our schools. I am personally pleased that we have 142 more teachers in our schools than we had just four years ago. It is a good thing that resources have increased in our schools.

I recognise, and always have done, that our schools can be a challenging environment for various reasons. Teachers and principals value more support staff and I am pleased that we have 60 more support staff in terms of school nurses, speech pathologists, school psychologists and social workers working in our schools. That is important.

Ms O'Connor mentioned that we had some discussion about chaplains. They are a valued resource in schools as well. Going back to 2014, my understanding is that 125 schools applied to have a chaplain. At that time the funding from the federal government decreased and we have between 80 and 90 chaplains across both primary and high schools. They are a valued resource. I accept what Ms O'Connor is saying about some of the concerns but we have a process in place to ensure there is no proselytising in our schools, and I know the schools really value that resource.

That brings me to TAFE. I valued the contribution from Ms Dow and I understand her understanding and commitment in this area, particularly when it comes to the importance of advanced manufacturing in her electorate and more specifically in her home patch of Burnie. It was devastating to see Caterpillar centralise their operations to Rayong in Thailand. The loss of 280 jobs really focused everyone's attention on the importance and the value of advanced manufacturing in Tasmania, particularly in communities such as the north-west coast and Burnie.

I am pleased with the outcome of the Caterpillar Transition Taskforce and the number of recommendations there, and the focus on the advanced manufacturing since and our defence industries. We have really high capability in Tasmania as well. I welcome the appointment of the Defence Advocate. Retired Rear-Admiral Stephen Gilmore was appointed in August 2017 and the work Mr Gilmore has done to support the Tasmanian Government to get our defence industries capability on the map is important. That was clearly evident in Washington DC in April this year and a considerable amount of work continues today. In my humble opinion the Defence Advocate, which a number of the other states have, is a very good and valuable resource for this state to have and if one met Mr Gilmore they would never doubt his commitment to the job at hand and the task we have. Fortunately we have some very capable advanced manufacturing companies in the defence industry space for Tasmania.

I am very excited about the next four years and this budget for Infrastructure of some \$2.6 billion of infrastructure being rolled out the door. I recognise in that another challenge, and that is our workforce capability, which is where TasTAFE is so important. I recognise TasTAFE has had their challenges as well over the course of the last little while, but am very pleased with the leadership at chair level, Jenny Dodd, the new CEO. I cannot reinforce enough the importance of a public training provider in vocational education and training in Tasmania. We need to talk more about the importance of vocational education and training and the great careers in the trades. TAFE will be critical in supporting industry to utilise that infrastructure funding as we build new schools and redevelop existing schools, health services, roads, bridges and all the exciting infrastructure projects we have over the course of the next four years and more.

We highlighted the importance of a long-term vision for infrastructure, the 30-year infrastructure plan. It is important to set a clear, task-oriented vision. I am looking forward to the round table. We talked about the 10-year infrastructure pipeline, which will be about working with industry so we do not have these boom and bust cycles within infrastructure.

I recognise the pressing infrastructure challenges, particularly in southern Tasmania. The Budget provides over \$50 million towards our south-east traffic solution program, including the major works to ease congestion at the Hobart Airport junction. That project has proven to be challenging in design and it has required a number of environmental approvals. There are geotechnical issues as well, but we are working hard to bring that project to market by February 2019.

Planning will also start this financial year on other projects to ease congestion in the south-east. They include the Tasman Highway adjacent to the Tasmania Golf Club, Midway Point intersection solution, the southern Sorell bypass and the Arthur Highway overtaking lanes. We are committed to a feasibility study of the duplication of the causeways between Sorell and Midway Point. This study will also include investigation of the cost benefits of widening both causeways and the duplication of McGees Bridge.

An allocation of \$38 million is provided towards a Greater Hobart traffic solution; congestion-reducing measures on the Hobart couplets, the Derwent River ferry service, developing a fifth lane on the Southern Outlet project, planning for the new bus transit centre, establishment of the traffic incident response team and upgrades to pedestrian and cycling infrastructure. I recognise some of the criticism of these visionary projects. Coming into Hobart every day, 75 per cent of the traffic coming into those areas from the Tasman Highway, the Brooker Highway and the Southern Outlet, creates congestion when school is in. We all recognise that. When schools is not in and there are holidays, that reduces by some 3 per cent to 9 per cent; it makes a very big difference. Anything we can do -

Mr O'Byrne - You get one bingle and the whole network -

Mr ROCKLIFF - Yes, and I am not sure if you saw images of Sydney a couple of days ago. There was one bingle and it was a complete disaster.

Mr O'Byrne - I worked in Sydney for years, I know exactly what -

Mr ROCKLIFF - There you go. The Derwent ferry service, seeing people utilising and changing their preferred mode of transport from the car to public transport through a ferry or a bus lane will make a big difference. We will have that shift, as highlighted by the small amount of difference in traffic congestion when school is not in, for example. That does need to be recognised.

Mr O'Byrne - The Treasurer has taken your money. Even if you do come up with a good idea, you cannot do anything with it.

Mr ROCKLIFF - I disagree with that. The reason we can afford to support key infrastructure projects as a state government is because we have balanced the budget. When you balance the budget you can ensure you fund essential services in Health, Education and public safety. We have a clear commitment to infrastructure in this state and because we have balanced the budget we have the flexibility to respond to circumstances such as unforeseen infrastructure requirements, natural disasters or global economic changes. We have come through some challenging times in infrastructure over the last couple of years. The floods of June 2016, for example, and other challenges, not wholly infrastructure-related, including the drought of 2015-16, for example. These issues come up from time to time and we are in a position to support communities in need, whether that be supporting individuals or infrastructure improvements as a result of a natural disaster, and still balance the budget.

I look forward to delivering on our Infrastructure commitments. I like Infrastructure as a portfolio.

Time expired.

Estimates of the Minister for Education and Training, Minister for Advanced Manufacturing and Defence, and Minister for Infrastructure agreed to.

Progress reported; Committee to sit again.

ADJOURNMENT

[8.17 p.m.]

Mr FERGUSON (Bass - Leader of Government Business) - Madam Speaker, I move -

That the House do now adjourn.

Health System - Issues

[8.19 p.m.]

Mr O'BYRNE (Franklin) - Madam Speaker, I rise on the adjournment debate to make a contribution on behalf of an old friend of mine who asked me to. I will not identify them. They have authorised me to pass on their story without identifying them personally. It is an email, and I have had a subsequent conversation with an old friend about their experience with the health system in Tasmania. With Madam Speaker's indulgence I will read it into *Hansard*. It is about Tasmania's health care system -

Hi David, I hope all is well. Just thought I would send you a short note to give you my experiences in the past month regarding the health system in Launceston recently.

Mum has been recently diagnosed with lung cancer. We have tried to gather some answers or options available for the short term prognosis or treatment through the GP and also a lung specialist. The GP was available in 2 weeks from booking an appointment and the referral to the lung specialist which took approx 2 weeks to get in.

After the consult with the lung specialist he put things in motion to admit mum to the LGH asap for further treatment. His office filled out the relevant paperwork for admission and said to await a phone call for a bed to become available. Some 11 days later still waiting for a bed, we had to call an ambulance at 12.30 a.m. as her breathing was low and in distress. Then some 35 hours awaiting in the emergency ward she finally had a bed in a rehab ward. But unfortunately we still await treatment from the lung specialist as he is away on holidays.

Been back and forth to the hospital in the last month with [my partner's] dad, who unfortunately passed away last week with a short illness. We cannot fault the professional and high-quality service from staff and doctors whilst in the hospital, but the wait to get medical care is unacceptable and I fear people's welfare and wellbeing, short and long-term, is compromised by a 3rd world health care system.

I thought I would send this message to you, as I fear people will die whilst waiting for urgent medical care through government mismanagement and incompetence.

The health system in Tasmania is in crisis. The Royal Hobart Hospital is regularly at level 4. It is not an exception now but sadly, becoming more the rule. I was speaking to an Emergency Department nurse two nights ago who told me about two people who were in the Emergency Department for 96 hours awaiting mental health beds.

These are two stories of many we receive as local members of parliament. It is concerning and heartbreaking. Tasmania needs to do better for its people. If someone gets sick and presents at an emergency department and we cannot guarantee to look after them, not only do we risk their lives but we consign them to becoming even sicker, and that creates a larger impost on the health system. If we get to people early and provide the care they need, they do not present as often to emergency departments. I would like to pass on my best wishes to my mate's mum and hope for her speedy recovery.

The House adjourned at 8.22 p.m.