

Wednesday 29 August 2018

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

RECOGNITION OF VISITORS

Madam SPEAKER - Honourable members, we have some very enthusiastic visitors in our gallery. We welcome the Mountain Heights School, grades 4, 5 and 6. Welcome to parliament.

Members - Hear, hear.

QUESTIONS

Cricket Tasmania - Contact with Premier

Ms WHITE question to **PREMIER, Mr HODGMAN**

[10.02 a.m.]

Important documents relating to Angela Williamson's case about her dismissal from Cricket Tasmania are expected to be tabled in the Federal Court this week. Last week you were asked whether you had any conversation about Angela Williamson with any member of the Cricket Tasmania Board at the Ricky Ponting Medal Event on 29 March. On both occasions you were asked this question you deliberately avoided answering it. With evidence about to be released I will give you one more opportunity to answer the question. Did you speak with any member of the Cricket Tasmania Board about Angela Williamson at the Ricky Ponting Medal Event on 29 March?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I thank the Leader for the question, which appropriately points to the fact that these matters are the subject of court proceedings and, as I said in this place last week after repeated questions from the Opposition, it is important that proper processes be respected, whether it be the court process, which is underway, the police inquiry that was commenced by the Labor Party and found to be without substance, or the independent inquiry undertaken by the Secretary of the Department of Premier and Cabinet. In each case, at least with respect to the latter two, I am confirming that there was no wrongdoing or no inappropriate conduct by myself or my minister in relation to this matter.

Ms White - Did you have a conversation? Still not answering.

Mr HODGMAN - For the umpteenth time I confirm the fact to the Leader of the Opposition that at no time have I sought to influence Cricket Tasmania's employment relationships with Angela Williamson. The answer is no.

Ms O'BYRNE - Point of order, Madam Speaker. Before the Premier attempts to run back to his seat the question was very specific: did he have a conversation with board members at the Ricky Ponting Medal event?

Mr HODGMAN - No.

Members interjecting.

Madam SPEAKER - At this point I am going to stand. I have some very firm advice from the Clerk of the House that there is a rule about sub judice law and if there is an impending court case with a date set.

Ms O'BYRNE - Madam Speaker, we are aware that Ms Williamson has indicated she may be tabling and she has a time frame to do so. There is no matter before the court as it stands.

Mr Ferguson - Your Leader's question just alleged it.

Members interjecting.

Madam SPEAKER - Order. I will take some advice.

The ruling is, if civil proceedings do not have a date set then that rule of sub judice does not apply.

Cricket Tasmania - Contact with Minister for Health

Ms WHITE question to MINISTER FOR HEALTH, Mr FERGUSON

[10.05 a.m.]

Documents in the Angela Williamson case are expected to be lodged in the Federal Court this week. Before that happens you now have one final opportunity to set the record straight.

Did you share personal and private information, medical information, about Angela Williamson's termination of pregnancy with her employers at Cricket Tasmania before she was dismissed from her job?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, to be very clear the record has been very straight. Like the Premier I refute any suggestion that the Government or any member of this Government has sought to influence Ms Williamson's employment with Cricket Tasmania. In relation to the advice that has been reflected through Madam Speaker to you and the member's question specifically points to a Federal Court action. It is entirely appropriate that the Government say this and say no more because these questions have been addressed repeatedly and fulsomely.

Ms O'BYRNE - Point of order, Madam Speaker. If the minister disputes your ruling there is a form of the House that he can use if he wishes to formally dispute your ruling. Otherwise the ruling is that these questions are legitimate. It is about time the minister answered whether or not he disclosed private medical information about Ms Williamson to her employer.

Mr BARNETT - On the point of order by the member for Bass, clearly the member is making a point in terms of the Minister for Health and we all know that you cannot direct a minister how to answer a question. The Opposition members know that. Secondly, and importantly, the matter is heading to the Federal Court. Whether it is a civil or criminal matter the matters should be dealt with a great amount of temperance and care.

Madam SPEAKER - I will rule on the first two points. Yes, I do think the whole matter needs to be handled more carefully than it has been but I am ruling out both points of order.

Spirit of Tasmania - Deaths of Polo Horses

Ms O'CONNOR question to MINISTER FOR PRIMARY INDUSTRIES AND WATER, Ms COURTNEY

[10.07 a.m.]

It is now seven months to the day since 16 prized polo ponies died on the *Spirit of Tasmania*. We have asked you repeated questions about this tragedy and why it is taking so long for the animal welfare investigation into these deaths to be completed. In parliament previously, and in Estimates, you have refused to shed light on the subject or to respond meaningfully to the resignation of Dr Malcolm Caulfield from your animal welfare advisory committee in part over lengthy delays in animal welfare investigations like this one.

Now that TT-Line is being sued by the owners of these ponies, will you take this opportunity to update the House on the progress and results of DPIPWE's investigation? Tasmanians who care about animal welfare want to know what happened aboard the *Spirit* that resulted in the deaths of these beautiful animals.

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I thank the member for her question. I make it clear that I understand your angst about this situation. Many of us have participated in events where we see beautiful horses and animals participating. I know many of us around the Chamber have participated in the Barnbogle event. I understand the emotive nature of it.

However, I want to be clear that this investigation must be allowed to run its course. Information will only be released when it is appropriate to do so in line with confidentiality and legal requirements. All allegations of animal cruelty are taken seriously and the department's first priority is to ensure that any immediate animal welfare concerns are addressed followed by compliance investigations where an offence of legislation is suspected.

Biosecurity Tasmania and the RSPCA independently investigate animal welfare allegations for potential breaches of the Animal Welfare Act 1993. As was alluded to by the member for Franklin, I am aware of the reports of civil actions against the operators of the *Spirit of Tasmania*. Any civil action is separate to the animal welfare investigation being undertaken by the department.

Ms O'Connor - When will it be complete?

Ms COURTNEY - I will not be making any comments on that matter.

Ms O'CONNOR - Point of order, Madam Speaker. I asked when the investigation would be complete and if we could have an update on it. This is not a question that I am asking out of a personal concern for animals. This is coming from a constituency of great concern. When?

Madam SPEAKER - I ask the minister to proceed and answer the question.

Ms COURTNEY - Thank you, Madam Speaker. I understand your concern about this case. It is shared by many members of the community.

Ms O'Connor - Champagne at the polo is not an investigation.

Ms COURTNEY - Ms O'Connor, we are talking about a serious investigation here. We are talking about a number of animals that died. Making those types of comments is inappropriate. These types of investigations are done independently from my office.

Ms O'Connor - It is not done independently. It is done by DPIPWE.

Ms COURTNEY - For me to be able to influence that would be grossly inappropriate. For me to unreasonably expedite a thorough investigation and somehow impact on the results is completely inappropriate. I am not going to do anything that is going to jeopardise the investigation. I understand Ms O'Connor's concerns around this issue -

Ms O'Connor - Do not pretend to empathise with me.

Ms COURTNEY - I want to be clear that while the Government shares the community concern, it is appropriate that these investigations are undertaken in the appropriate manner. As has been articulated earlier, this is a complex matter across three jurisdictions and it is essential that this investigation occurs in an independent way and in an unbiased manner. Creating artificial deadlines is not appropriate.

Although this matter is being investigated, the department has provided information to the RSPCA and Equine Industry that the matter appears to be an isolated one. No ongoing concerns have been identified in relation to the movement of horses or other livestock across Bass Strait in line with Animal Welfare Regulations.

Royal Hobart Hospital - Accreditation Issues

Ms WHITE question to the MINISTER for HEALTH, Mr FERGUSON

[10.12 a.m.]

The Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists President, Professor Steve Robson has praised the brave actions of Dr Frank O'Keeffe in standing up to you and comparing Tasmania's hospital system to a broken down car. In addition, Professor Robson has raised serious concerns that the Royal Hobart Hospital is now at risk of losing its training accreditation for Obstetrics and Gynaecology.

What are you doing to not only address Dr O'Keeffe's concerns about a lack of beds for surgical patients and a lack of training for doctors, but also the concerns of the college that accreditation is at risk?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I thank the Leader of the Opposition for the question. I will let the member know, in case she is unaware, that the Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Obstetricians

and Gynaecologists granted accreditation to the Royal Hobart Hospital for a period of four years in 2016.

The Government is continuing to invest more funding into elective surgery with the \$7.2 million of women's health package, the latest example of our commitment to boosting elective surgery activity, providing more volume for surgeries, principally for women but the benefit will be also for training registrars. Importantly, it is estimated that this package will provide 900 more procedures, targeting those who have been waiting the longest and bringing down the waiting list. This is real funding that will deliver real life-changing outcomes for these women.

I sought advice on the comments that have been made by the member opposite, who again wants to play sport with our health system. It does not help anybody.

Members interjecting.

Mr FERGUSON - I have been asked the question and it is a serious question, so I hope the member will listen.

Members interjecting.

Madam SPEAKER - Order.

Mr FERGUSON - My advice from the THS is that RANZCOG had not raised any concerns or issues with the training program at the Royal Hobart Hospital.

Given recent comments, and Dr O'Keeffe's comments as well, which have been highlighted, the THS and the Government are reaching out to RANZCOG and will continue to work very closely with them to ensure that training programs meet the required standards. That is what we always do. That is important.

This Government values our training programs. The Government has been very clear. I know the Leader of the Opposition is disappointed to know that only in 2016 the Royal Hobart Hospital was re-accredited for four years. I know you are disappointed.

Ms WHITE - Point of order -

Mr FERGUSON - Here's the point of order. Disruptive.

Mr Bacon - You're a big sook.

Madam SPEAKER - Order, please.

Ms WHITE - The point of order, Madam Speaker is standing order 45. I ask you to draw the minister's attention to the question that was asked. It was good to hear that he acknowledged there is an issue, but the question went to what he is doing about it. I ask you to consider this and provide an answer.

Madam SPEAKER - As you know, standing order 45 does not give me any power at all. Whilst the House condones that, we will have to ask the minister to answer the question as quickly as he can.

Mr FERGUSON - Madam Speaker, I am not going to let those comments pass unremarked. As any reasonable person looking at my answer to this questions will see, I am directly answering her question. The problem is that Labor does not like the answer. They do not like the fact that we are reaching out to RANZCOG and looking at how we can work even more closely together. If there are issues, let us have them understood and considered. It is upsetting to Ms White to know the hospital has been re-accredited for four years as recently as 2016.

One of the concerns raised by Dr O'Keeffe was the issue of bed access for surgical overnight patients. This is a real issue for us across our hospital system. Even though we have taken the beds out of storage that the previous government put into storage; even though we opened those wards; and because we are redeveloping the working hospital, it is tight. We acknowledge that. Does the member opposite acknowledge that? It is tight. We will need to work very creatively. We need to engage with clinicians, not just doctors but also nurses and allied health professionals, on solutions.

We will be working very closely with RANZCOG on any identified issues they would like to bring to our attention. We will work through them very carefully, respectfully and professionally. It is disappointing that the opportunism of the Opposition is all we ever get to see. This Government is delivering more funding, more surgeries and we are employing more health professionals. We have the Royal Hobart Hospital redevelopment on track and it will be finished in a year.

Tourism Opportunities in National Parks - Update

Mr HIDDING question to the MINISTER for PARKS, Mr HODGMAN

[10.17 a.m.]

Are you able to provide an update on the expressions of interest process that supports tourism opportunities in our national parks, reserves and Crown land?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I thank the member for his ongoing interest and his contribution to government policy that is, as the question suggests, opening up Tasmania's opportunities to develop sustainably and sensibly in our wilderness areas.

With great pleasure, I inform the House today that yet again a record number of visitors have been to our national parks and reserves this year. Of the 1.28 million who have visited Tasmania from interstate and overseas in the last 12 months, a record 551 000, or 43 per cent of them, said they visited a national park. It is one of the key reasons why so many people are visiting our state. It is a key driver of our visitor economy and people are voting with their feet. They are welcoming the opportunity to support Tasmania's visitor economy to visit those precious places. It supports jobs and local businesses right across the state including in regional areas.

Our plan, as contained within the state Budget this year, has key commitments in this area including additional investments into marketing our state. It also commits additional funding to boost our rangers and our frontline Parks and Wildlife staff, increased investments in infrastructure to maintain and improve our parks and reserves. There is upgrading of new iconic experiences such as at Cradle Mountain and the next iconic multi-day hut-based bushwalk.

There is a new initiative to provide an incentive for older Tasmanians to visit our natural areas in our national parks with free access to our 19 parks across the state for a year and then a discounted rate.

Importantly, \$8 million will be provided over four years to support essential asset repairs and maintenance work to ensure our parks are safe and well presented.

Tourism development in our national areas supports the growing numbers of visitors to our state, it also creates jobs, stimulates local economies and provides new and exciting ways for visitors to experience our incredible environment. With over 47 per cent of the state conserved in national parks, reserves and crown lands, our environment is one of our greatest assets. It is why, when coming in to government, we implemented a new process to open up tourism opportunities in national parks, seeking expressions of interest, which are rigorously tested, assessed and required to meet all the usual environmental and planning processes -

Ms O'Connor - No public consultation.

Madam SPEAKER - Order, Ms O'Connor.

Mr HODGMAN - to enable best-practice environmental tourism and open up ideas which are compatible with the natural and cultural values whilst supporting sustainable economic growth and jobs growth.

I am pleased to advise the House that this initiative continues to attract significant interest, with 149 application packs sourced and 18 new ecotourism proposals submitted. The combined value of all projects in the EOI pipeline, some of which have already signed lease or lease agreements -

Ms O'Connor - Death by a thousand cuts.

Madam SPEAKER - Order. I have the pedometer on. It is very disorderly; the children have all left.

Mr HODGMAN - Thank you, Madam Speaker. It goes to the economic value of what we are doing and the jobs growth that I am advised will be around 230 more jobs when fully realised and \$70 million in new investments. There are several exciting, quality new developments underway as a result of the EOI process, including three new tourism ventures - helicopter tours to the spectacular Tasman Island, e-bike trips to explore the beauty of Maria Island, and nature-based boat tours at Moulting Lagoon on the Freycinet coast.

It is about getting the balance right. Most Tasmanians agree that we can allow more access to our precious wilderness areas and support jobs and economic growth and, indeed, some from the most unlikely of sources, including the Bob Brown Foundation, which previously commissioned a study into the feasibility of constructing a 10-day walking track within the Tarkine. They said:

A Trans-takayna/Tarkine track will create hundreds of direct employment opportunities in the northwest and over time create many more indirect opportunities ...

That is very much in line with our vision.

Ms O'Connor - It is not protected and you want to log it.

Mr HODGMAN - While the two Greens in here would rather lock up our Tarkine and other wilderness areas, the Bob Brown Foundation agrees that there are opportunities for development in these places. Then again, we have learnt that Bob Brown himself wanted to fly a chopper across the Tarkine and our wilderness areas. We know they have also previously supported our plan to reduce deer populations to protect our environment and it is clear that the Bob Brown Foundation is also supporting ecotourism opportunities in our precious wilderness areas to grow our visitor economy.

Our plan is delivering results, jobs and economic growth in regional Tasmania and is providing more opportunities for more of us to enjoy our wilderness areas.

Victims of Crime Compensation - Domestic Violence

Ms HADDAD question to ATTORNEY-GENERAL, Ms ARCHER

[10.23 a.m.]

Yesterday the Full Court of the Supreme Court of Tasmania handed down a ruling that victims of crime compensation cannot apply to domestic violence based on emotional abuse and intimidation, a ruling that was made on an appeal lodged by yourself. Chief Justice Alan Blow said yesterday's decision was likely to affect a number of pending compensation claims. On 19 July this year in relation to this case, the Premier said the Government would consider amending laws and introducing new laws to ensure they can provide the right level of protection, but instead you chose to appeal the case. Why did you choose to appeal when another option was available to you and in fact had been flagged by the Premier? What will you do to ensure that any future changes to legislation will be retrospective, so that the woman at the centre of this case will not be left with nothing after years of abuse?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I thank the shadow attorney-general for her question. I welcome the opportunity to provide reasoning to the House as to why the appeal was necessary. I took no pleasure in having to do that, but as first law officer of the state, and indeed in government, sometimes these difficult decisions need to occur.

At the outset I say that the Hodgman Liberal Government has a proud and indisputable record of protecting victims' rights, legislating to protect our most vulnerable and funding services that support them. Yesterday was evidence of that. I do not wish to reflect on the debate but the National Redress Scheme is just one of many measures along with our family violence suite of reforms led by the Premier.

The Government does not take any decisions to appeal lightly and certainly I do not in my role as Attorney-General. We are extremely sensitive to the challenges victims can face, including in a court setting, and as a Government, we need to make difficult decisions. This is an example of that.

The decision to uphold the appeal supports the Government's view that such action was necessary to at the very least provide clarification to ensure our laws are interpreted appropriately, that the Government acts lawfully and also that our criminal injuries compensation commissioners

can do their important work with confidence in making those interpretations of the law. When the reasons are provided - because yesterday's decision was purely about upholding the appeal; we have not yet received the reasons from the three Justices on the Full Court bench - the Government will carefully consider them and assess whether further legislative reforms may be desirable to clarify victims' rights.

We will consider a broadening of eligibility to the Criminal Injuries Compensation Scheme to apply to victims of family violence, but we will do this in a thorough and considered way, as we do with all policy focused on supporting victims and protecting our community. That is a really important point to stress. There is no point in pre-empting these things and not going through the normal process that we would, particularly public consultation. I notice there have been various third parties on radio expressing exactly that - that they would like to have an opportunity to participate in that consultation as to how any future laws might be framed. I also make clear that in making this appeal we will not be seeking costs from the respondent.

Senator Eric Abetz - Attitudes to Energy Sector

Mr O'BYRNE question to MINISTER for ENERGY, Mr BARNETT

[10.28 p.m.]

One of the biggest barriers to renewable energy investment and renewable energy jobs in Tasmania is Senator Eric Abetz, the man who led the charge to topple Malcolm Turnbull and has championed coal and nuclear energy. The attitude of Senator Abetz, his extreme right-wing colleagues and the ideological war he has waged in your party, has put thousands of jobs and millions of dollars of investment at risk, including projects such as the second interconnector and pumped hydro. What are you doing to tackle Tasmania's biggest threat to the energy sector, Senator Eric Abetz?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I thank the member for his question. On my records it is the first question I have received from him since the election. He has either been suppressed all this time by the current Leader of the Opposition, or he thinks things are going pretty well in the Energy portfolio. It has been a good six months so I welcome any question from my shadow minister. He was once the minister for economic development but he was really the minister for economic demise. On his watch 10 000 jobs were lost, energy prices went sky high - up 65 per cent on the minister's watch - and 180 police thrown out of their jobs.

Let me make it very clear that in terms of energy we have the Tasmania-First Energy Policy and we stand by it. It is very clear. We have been recognised across the country as having the lowest energy prices in Australia for residential customers and for business. What more do you want? Low cost energy that is reliable and clean. We have what the rest of the nation wants; we are proud of it.

The Hodgman Liberal Government is delivering and we have plans. We have a target that by 2022 to be fully self-sufficient, 100 per cent clean, fully renewable and to have the lowest power prices in Australia and we are on track.

When it comes to the federal government, we are working shoulder to shoulder with the federal government in terms of investment in the Battery of the Nation, and investment in further interconnection which will unlock a range of renewable energy developments across the state. I hope we will have Greens' support and I hope we will have support from the Opposition. I want support from all parts of Tasmania for these fantastic nation-leading, nation-building infrastructure projects. The Premier has been hard at work; I have been hard at work on behalf of the state Government to deliver our Tasmania-First Energy Policy.

We had an excellent relationship with the former prime minister and former minister for energy and now, with the new leadership in Canberra, we have a terrific relationship and we will be working cooperatively and positively with them. I have had contact already with my counterpart in Canberra, Angus Taylor, who is a Rhodes Scholar. He has a big job and he supports what we are doing in Tasmania in terms of working together cooperatively and you should recognise that.

I want Labor to come on board to support our major projects to deliver billions of dollars of investment, thousands of jobs, and deliver lower prices. Why will you not put Tasmania first, Mr O'Byrne? That is the question: will Labor come on board and support these projects which are nation leading, infrastructure building, and thousands of jobs delivering with billions of dollars of investment? Why will you not do it? Why will you not support those projects? I call on the Labor Party to support the Tasmania-First Energy Policy.

Infrastructure in Tasmania - Update

Mr HIDDING question to MINISTER for INFRASTRUCTURE, Mr ROCKLIFF

[10.32 a.m.]

Is the minister able to update the House on how the Hodgman majority Liberal Government is getting on with the job of delivering the infrastructure Tasmania needs?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I thank the member for Lyons for his question on the ongoing interests in the matter of infrastructure. This Government is getting on with the task of delivering our budget's \$2.6 billion investment in job creating infrastructure. This investment will help deliver what communities need right across Tasmania, including schools, hospitals, ambulance stations, housing, police stations, roads, bridges and ferries on the Derwent River.

This \$2.6 billion is just one component of the \$13.9 billion over the next 10 years that is detailed in Tasmania's first 10-year infrastructure pipeline, another initiative of this government. These unprecedented levels of investment mean we must continue to make decisions and take actions which enable us to deliver on that pipeline, getting money out the door. That is exactly what the Government is doing.

Already we have announced a 30-year infrastructure strategy. We have released the 10-years of pipeline at works and we have been working with industry in roundtable discussions on how we can change the way we do business to help them deliver.

Further, we have delivered on our election commitment to allow Metro to operate beyond buses. Metro is embracing the opportunity and has noted a preliminary briefing for industry stakeholders with an interest in being involved in a new service.

Last weekend the tender was advertised for the beginning of works on the airport roundabout. This means that work will begin this summer as phase 1 of the project. This will include construction of a second lane, improvements in the entry and exit points, and the removal of the 'merge' on approach to the roundabout from Hobart.

Members interjecting.

Madam SPEAKER - Order. Could I remind the Opposition you are usually much more polite to the Deputy Premier and I would like that to continue.

Mr ROCKLIFF - While the planning and design for the new Hobart Airport interchange is well underway these immediate improvements will help to combat the queues and travel delays. This is just the first in a series of projects we are delivering in the south east. We have a plan to tackle congestion and make travel to and from Hobart better.

In the north a contract has been signed on the Perth Link Roads project and work will soon be underway to deliver a safer and more productive road in the north, linking key communities, allowing for population growth and increasing liveability. This is on top of all the substantial works undertaken on the Midland Highway, which I am sure you will all agree has come a long way since Labor themselves described the highway as a goat track. We acknowledge that this activity will require additional resources from the Department of State Growth to plan, to scope, to consult and to manage these important projects. The department is now recruiting and just last Saturday six project management and planning positions were advertised. This is the first stage in the recruitment of up to 18 new positions in the Department of State Growth also covering stakeholder engagement and traffic engineering. This recruitment is necessary because what we have is a plan and a budget that delivers on that plan.

Meanwhile contrast those opposite: no plan and no vision. In fact they expect to be paid more than the rest of us, a greater pay rise. They think they deserve to be paid more: paid more for doing less. On this side of the House we have accepted the 2 per cent as in line with Government wages policy. Of course it is not good enough for those on the other side. The lazier they get the more they expect to be paid. It is not good enough. We as a Government have a plan, a vision for infrastructure and we are implementing that and it is in stark contrast to those opposite.

Spirit of Tasmania - Deaths of Polo Horses

Ms O'CONNOR question to MINISTER for INFRASTRUCTURE, Mr ROCKLIFF

[10.37 a.m.]

We have just heard that the DPIPWE investigation is incomplete with no time frame set by the minister. TT-Line is accused of failing to ensure the wellbeing of 16 prized polo ponies that died on the *Spirit of Tasmania* in January of this year.

Have you requested or received any advice from TT-Line management about this tragedy? If so, could you please share it with the House? Further, can you guarantee Tasmanians who are

concerned about animal welfare that the GBE for which you are responsible has undertaken all necessary steps to ensure animals will not die on the *Spirit of Tasmania* crossings in the future?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I thank the member for her question. I agree with the member as all Tasmanians would agree that this is a tragic event. The deaths of these ponies is nothing but tragic and I recognise that it will have a significant impact on all Tasmanians. It is the subject of an animal welfare investigation which is ongoing and it is not appropriate to make any comments about these matters at this time.

Ms O'CONNOR - Point of order, Madam Speaker. It is not acceptable for a minister of the Crown who is asked a question about an area that he is responsible for to provide no answer at all. Were you given advice? That is not a sub judice issue.

Madam SPEAKER - On the point of order, you know I cannot instruct the minister to answer the question in any other way than he sees fit.

National Energy Policy

Mr O'BYRNE question to MINISTER for ENERGY, Mr BARNETT

[10.40 a.m.]

On 10 August you said about the NEG process:

This important step continues to build the case for increased interconnection and Tasmania's position as the Battery of the Nation, delivering clean, reliable and affordable electricity to Tasmanians and the nation.

Four days later, your colleague, the Treasurer, then acting Minister for Energy, said:

This is not the time for politics. We have the opportunity to reduce power bills across the Australia and to create thousands jobs and billions of dollars in investment in Tasmania alone.

What is Australia's current national energy policy and exactly what have you signed Tasmania up for?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I am delighted to receive the second question in six months from my opposition spokesman on energy. Obviously he has not been listening to my answers in here and in the public arena regarding the Tasmania-First Energy Policy, which is delivering growth, development and jobs across the country. At all times we will put Tasmanians first and continue to do so.

We will continue to work with the federal government because they have invested millions of dollars, first with further interconnection, project mariners and they have invested \$20 million through ARENA with TasNetworks, with a major report due by the end of this year for which we

will be waiting with bated breath. In the meantime there is more to be done. They are working assiduously and that federally and state-funded project is continuing with millions invested in it.

Likewise with Battery of the Nation, the federal government and the state Government are investing millions of dollars to bring forward the business case in building the merit and the case for the Battery of the Nation and pumped hydro. The report so far that was released at Lake Cethana with the then prime minister, the then minister for energy, Premier Will Hodgman, Guy Barnett -

Members interjecting.

Madam SPEAKER - Order. Today has been very boisterous but it has all been in good humour and I am very appreciative of that. We only have 20 minutes left and I have three more questions that must be asked. Please allow the minister to answer his question.

Mr BARNETT - Thank you, Madam Speaker, that is much appreciated because this is important. The project document made it very clear that Battery of the Nation could lead to \$5 billion of investment over the next 10 to 15 years.

Mr O'BYRNE - Point of order, Madam Speaker. I asked the minister what is the current policy, not the policy of a prime minister who is no longer in the position and an energy minister who is no longer in the position. We are asking what the current policy is that he is signing up to. It is a very important matter. This has thousands of jobs at stake and billions, potentially, of investment in Tasmania at risk. I ask you to draw his attention to the question.

Mr FERGUSON - Madam Speaker, on that point of order, the member is simply debating his question, which is disorderly, and he is only trying to interrupt the minister's answer. I draw your attention to the issue that the member is looking for an opportunity to repeat the question.

Madam SPEAKER - I believe the member is making an important contribution but I will ask the minister to get to the point.

Mr BARNETT - Thank you, Madam Speaker. We are working together with the state and federal governments, and that report said billions of dollars of investment, 3000 jobs in rural and regional areas, delivering a doubling of our energy capacity in Tasmania. The objective of the federal government is lower energy prices and reliability. Tasmania has been acknowledged across the nation as having the lowest energy prices in Australia. This is a key priority for the Tasmania-First Energy Policy for lowest energy prices. How can you complain about reliable energy across the country?

Mr O'Byrne - We have the highest bills in the country.

Madam SPEAKER - Order. Mr O'Byrne, you are on a warning.

Mr BARNETT - Our expectation is that the Morrison government will continue to consult with the states regarding the national energy strategy and we will continue to work with them to deliver what is best for Tasmania.

The member opposite was asking about leaderships matters. We know Labor's state conference is on next week and there are two motions concerning the state leadership of the Labor Party on the agenda. We know one of those motions. I will read one of those motions:

The state returning officer shall open nominations for the positions of Leader and Deputy Leader following a written request by four members of the state Parliamentary Labor Party.

Which four members?

Madam SPEAKER - Order. Minister, that last part was irrelevant.

Wages Policy

Mr BROOKS question to TREASURER, Mr GUTWEIN

[10.45 a.m.]

Can the Treasurer update the House on the importance of a responsible wages policy and is he aware of any other alternatives?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I thank the member for his question.

Opposition members interjecting.

Madam SPEAKER - Order. You are testing my patience today. There is one member on a warning but it looks like I will be warning the whole front bench if this does not calm down. I would like to hear the Treasurer in silence - briefly.

Mr Bacon - Yes, briefly.

Mr GUTWEIN - That didn't sound like in silence to me, Mr Bacon.

Madam SPEAKER - He is not going to do it again. Please proceed.

Mr GUTWEIN - I thank the member for his question and his interest in this very important matter. Wages growth in Tasmania is strong. Last year the Wage Price Index indicated that across the country we had one of the strongest levels of wages growth. Our public sector grew by 2.6 per cent - very solid growth, off the base of our very sensible and affordable 2 per cent wages policy. In terms of Tasmania and its confidence levels, we have a wages policy that the Government can afford, that is fair and reasonable and, importantly, the business sector and the broader community understands and accepts. Across the state, we now have the highest levels of confidence of any jurisdiction in the country because of the sensible approach to management we are taking in respect of our finances.

Yesterday, Labor confirmed that their wages policy is determined by the unions. On that side of the House they doubled down and are taking a higher wage rise than the Government Wages Policy. They will take 2.5 per cent on that side of the House, whereas this side of the House has taken a very sensible 2 per cent in line with the Government Wages Policy. It is fair, reasonable and affordable. This additional 0.5 per cent on top of public sector wages will lead to an increase of around \$14 million per annum, compounding over the course of a period of four years, and will cost the bottom line of the budget more than \$100 million. It is \$14 million this year, \$28 million

next year, \$42 million the year after that and more than \$56 million the year after that. That is what a 0.5 per cent wages increase leads us to.

I had a quick look at the state conference agenda for the ALP coming up -

Madam SPEAKER - Is this relevant, Treasurer?

Mr GUTWEIN - It is relevant to wages in the public sector, Madam Speaker.

Ms O'BYRNE - Point of order, Madam Speaker. I know they do not like answering the questions we ask but they cannot make up answers to questions they have not been asked. If the Treasurer has finished his answer, he should sit down.

Mr FERGUSON - On the point of order, Madam Speaker, it is within the conventions of this House for the minister to be able to address related issues, as he is now doing. It would be very unexpected if ministers were not able to reflect on contemporary issues in relation to the issue and the question they have been asked.

Madam SPEAKER - I am not confident in that advice, Leader of the House, so I will pretend I did not hear it and ask the Treasurer to be relevant - and brief.

Mr GUTWEIN - I will be relevant, Madam Speaker. I was asked about wages policy and whether I am aware of any alternatives. In here, they provide for an unfettered wages policy. That is what the Labor Party will be voted on.

Time expired.

National Firearms Agreement

Dr WOODRUFF question to PREMIER, Mr HODGMAN

[10.50 a.m.]

Your proposed firearms inquiry reeks of a government in lockstep with the interests of the gun lobby; totally out of touch with Tasmanians who want strengthen gun laws and not weaken them. Why are you proposing a phony guns inquiry that has terms of reference which would breach the National Firearms Agreement?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I thank the member for the question and reject the spurious suggestion that it contains. I do so on the basis of a very strong and ongoing commitment that we, the majority Liberal Government, will do nothing to compromise the National Firearms Agreement. That is our stated policy position. We have proven in the time that we have been here that we will not advance any legislation before the House or any policy change that will indeed do that. I reject that entirely.

I reject the assertion that what we are seeking to do is anything of that nature, other than to repeat our stated policy position; one which was similarly canvassed by the Labor Party during the election campaign, but which is conveniently forgotten now. It goes to what might be done to better support lawful firearms users and to contemplate possible legislative changes which contemporise

our firearms legislation, noting the fact that since the passing of the legislation back in 1996, I think it is around 14 times that the legislation has been changed.

You can strengthen and improve our firearms laws, as has happened through this parliament, as happened during our term, and during other terms of government. For once, we now have the Opposition saying that a parliamentary inquiry is some sort of bad process. It is exactly what the Greens would normally argue for: an opportunity to contribute in this sensitive area of public policy.

Dr BROAD - Point of order, Madam Speaker. I would like to point out that we are straying into the territory of pre-empting an order of the day.

Madam SPEAKER - Thank you, Dr Broad. You are correct and the Clerk has asked me to advise the Premier to wind up.

Mr HODGMAN - I believe I have made the pertinent points. It would be the expectation of Tasmanians that in the event of such a committee being established members of this place would want to contribute to its deliberations.

Madam SPEAKER - I would like to make a clarification. I apologise. I have given the Greens a third question without giving the Liberals and Labor one more opportunity. We are pressing for time. Could we please bear that in mind?

Wind Farms

Mr O'BYRNE question to MINISTER for ENERGY, Mr BARNETT

[10.53 a.m.]

The new Liberal federal Minister for Energy, Angus Taylor, has said that climate change debate has little basis in fact and everything to do with blind faith. He said to disgraced conservative shock jock, Alan Jones:

Large-scale wind, it's very clear that it's not economic on any grounds.

He also successfully argued for the end to the federal renewable energy target. In light of your federal counterpart's views, are future renewable energy projects, such as the UPC renewable wind farms in the north-west, doomed under federal and state Liberal governments?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I thank the member for his third question in six months, all on the one day. It is greatly appreciated because obviously things have been going very well in the energy portfolio for at least six months, until today according to the spokesman for the Opposition.

The answer to the last part of his question is 'no'. Let me make it clear that in terms of UPC you will hear more about their plans and their future. I am looking forward to hearing further from them later today. I will speak to the matter at a generators' forum organised by TasNetworks. If I get the opportunity I will be able to outline the good news and the hard work that has been undertaken to deliver these important projects in terms of Battery of the Nation, further interconnection which will unlock millions and hopefully billions of dollars, thousands of jobs

across Tasmania and double our energy capacity. That is our plan over the next 10-15 years. This is long-term planning.

The member opposite asked me about my counterpart in Canberra. I have gladly communicated with my counterpart, Angus Taylor. I have the utmost confidence in his ability to focus on low energy prices, a reliable energy system across the country and a special interest in Tasmania. He has reassured me and the Hodgman Liberal Government of ongoing work and cooperation with the Tasmanian Hodgman Liberal Government in the same way that we had that cooperation with the now Treasurer and Deputy Leader, Josh Frydenberg, when he was minister for energy. Let me make it very clear in terms of the leadership at the federal and state levels we will still work together. We will still invest our millions of dollars in these projects.

The question for the Opposition is what will happen next week in terms of the leadership of the Labor Party? What is the position of David O'Byrne? He should spend more time working on policy rather than politicking and plotting behind the scenes.

Renewable Energy Developments - Update

Mr BROOKS question to MINISTER for ENERGY, Mr BARNETT

[10.56 a.m.]

Mr Ferguson - It is interesting that wind is on that side. They do not want to hear about good news.

Mr Brooks - I wanted to hear from the minister of an update -

Mr O'Byrne - Do not go off script, mate. It always goes bad.

Madam SPEAKER - Excuse me, Mr O'Byrne. This is your second warning.

Mr BROOKS - Out of control as usual. Could the minister update the House on the progress with Tasmania's major renewable energy developments, which include pumped hydro, wind farms and further interconnection with the national electricity market?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I thank the member for Braddon for his question and his interest in this matter, particularly the north-west coast, which is a key part of our future in terms of jobs and investment and growth in the energy space.

It is good to be speaking about our Tasmania-First energy policy which is delivering. Not only do we have plans for billions of dollars of investment in energy projects on the agenda through renewable energy developments, but we have delivered the lowest energy prices in Australia for residential customers and businesses. There is still more work to do. We have a target to have the lowest regulated power prices in Australia by 2022. We are delivering our Tasmania-First energy policy. We have capped the prices at CPI for the past two years. We have plans to do that and then delink in due course in 2021.

Today I can advise that a range of electricity generators and generation businesses including the wind developers at Cattle Hill, Granville Harbour, Robbins Island and UPC will all be together, at a special forum with generators to help plan the future of Tasmania's electricity system, hosted by TasNetworks.

This is because it is all consistent with our Tasmania-First energy policy and we are delivering. TasNetworks is working hand-in-hand with these generators to map out our future demand and supply of renewable energy for Tasmanians. This will help unlock the three primary renewable energy zones in the north-west coast, the far north-east coast and the Central Highlands going through to the Midlands.

This is a vote of confidence for all those areas across Tasmania and for the State of Tasmania. The companies coming today are expressing confidence, which is encouraging. There is confidence to invest for and on behalf of Tasmania. It will deliver benefits in terms of downward pressure on prices, delivering reliable renewable energy and, as I said, billions of investment in jobs if we can pull this off. I want everybody behind it, including the Labor Party. What is their position? We still do not know.

We have a key trigger. One of the key triggers is further interconnection. We support that.

Mr Bacon - Who is going to pay for it? Who is going to pay for the second interconnector?

Madam SPEAKER - Order, Mr Bacon.

Mr BARNETT - Madam Speaker, the question by interjection from the member for Denison is, who is paying? The federal government and the state government are paying for the study that is being done, \$20 million, with a further report at the end of this year. That is the answer to that question.

Regarding further interconnection, we hope that by 2022, once this comes on board and if we can get these projects up, we can export our excess energy. We will be 100 per cent fully self-sufficient, fully renewable, and 100 per cent clean. We are light years ahead of the other states and territories. They are nowhere near 50 per cent, and we are targeting on 100 per cent.

TasNetworks has identified Burnie and Port Latta as the preferred sites for the interconnector. They are working closely with all the generators on their transmission requirements, whether that is windfarms or pumped hydro sites into our electricity network. The positive response from the generators is very encouraging and we will hear more about that at lunchtime today. We are working closely, as the Hodgman Liberal Government, with wind developers and Hydro Tasmania and TasNetworks, to coordinate planning, from our generation to our transmission and distribution systems. Coordination of these important developments is key, not just for their importance to Tasmania, but the nation. As I said earlier, we are working shoulder to shoulder with the federal government in that regard.

Infrastructure Australia has identified further interconnection as a major priority project for Infrastructure Australia. The Australian Energy Market Operator, in its integrated system plan, has identified both further interconnection and Battery of the Nation to come on in the mid-2020s. This is very encouraging. This is an independent report and it has identified both those projects.

In addition, Tasmania had a win at the recent meeting of the COAG Energy Council. We had the Energy Security Board and the chief of the Energy Security Board, Kerry Schott AO, is coming to Tasmania in the coming weeks. The instruction to the Energy Security Board is to assess further interconnection, Battery of the Nation, to see how that can proceed and be expedited as soon as possible. Kerry Schott is the chair of the board and we have a lot of time and a lot of respect for her. I look forward to meeting with her to advance Tasmania's interests so that these developments can proceed as soon as possible, subject to the business case stacking up.

The question is: does Labor support these projects? They have been silent, and we do not know. We also know that our pumped hydro projects have been identified -

Madam SPEAKER - Minister, you have managed to take us to time. Thank you very much.

Mr BARNETT - I was going to say, 20 per cent cheaper, and comparable energy projects across the country.

Madam SPEAKER - I thank the House for another robust but relatively respectful question time.

MATTER OF PUBLIC IMPORTANCE

Access to Health Services

[11.04 a.m.]

Ms O'BYRNE (Bass) - Madam Speaker, I move -

That the House takes note of the following matter: access to health services.

I am pleased to have the opportunity to again raise in this House some significant concerns about access to health services and we have been talking about a number of blockages and decisions of this Government that have impacted on access through this contribution. My contribution, in particular, will be about the fact that we are still requiring women to board a plane and fly to Melbourne in order to access termination, or pay thousands of dollars to have them here.

The minister was asked in this House yesterday if he could detail the terms of reference or the agreement that he has apparently signed with a private fly-in fly-out provider. The minister says, 'Yes, we have signed an agreement, it is a five-year agreement, that is all fine and the only thing that is left to be resolved is the licensing issue of the premises. What the minister was not able to tell us is exactly what that service will be. Will it be weekly? Will women be able to access terminations weekly? You do not fall pregnant on any basis that allows you to access anything less than that kind of primacy, that routine procedure. How much will it cost? The minister says that it is low cost but the minister also referred to people flying to Melbourne as 'their choice' so we know he has a dodgy view about people's choices. What is low cost to this minister? Will this be affordable for women?

The most important thing is location. As a member who represents an electorate that is not in Hobart, I can say it is not easy to get to Hobart all the time. It is not easy if you are 17 or 18 years old and you live at Gladstone. It is not easy if you have four children and you live in Smithton. These are still significant barriers to accessing the service. The minister in the House yesterday said, 'I am offering patient travel assistance and aren't I wonderful because you guys never offered

PTAS'. We had a statewide service. Offering PTAS goes nowhere to addressing the costs women are experiencing. It is not a badge of honour to say, 'I am offering PTAS to fly women out of the state'. It is not a badge of honour to say we will help women get to Hobart. The reality is that it is the cost and it is the time and it is the stress.

We need the minister to detail what is in the agreement that he has signed so we can be confident that when this service starts in October that it will be affordable, that it will be weekly so women can access it in a time that is appropriate to them. Most importantly, that it will not be a barrier to access because of where you live. That is a significant thing.

This minister, when he was shadow education minister, one of the reasons he pursued years 11 and 12 was that he said, 'It is really hard for people access education so we should make it available everywhere. We should go to grade 12 everywhere because distance should not be a barrier to participation.' Distance should not be a barrier to participation. It should not be a barrier to accessing health services. It should not be a barrier to accessing termination services in Tasmania.

I am going to keep calling her Bianca because that is how we talked about her in this House. We were not the ones who rang this woman's boss and outed her. She detailed the cost when she had to go to Melbourne: the first visit to the GP, where the GP had no idea what to do, was \$82.50. She received a \$37 rebate from Medicare. Her blood tests were bulk-billed. The ultrasound cost \$265 and she received \$102 back on the Medicare rebate. Her second visit to the GP, when they still did not know what they should do, was another \$82.50 with a \$37 Medicare rebate. The specialist consultation, the only person who was providing them in Tasmania at a reasonably high rate with the local provider, was \$190 with a Medicare rebate of \$72.75. It was too late to access that service so the flights to Melbourne cost \$411.50, the accommodation was \$507.45. She has many other costs incidental to that. The procedure itself cost \$2750. PTAS is not going to cover that. It is never going to cover those kinds of costs.

Do not forget some of those costs were picked up by Medicare but the minister's colleagues in Canberra are regularly petitioning to remove termination services from Medicare rebate. This is the attitude they have and we know this attitude because even in the debate the minister said that we need to respect the range of individuals and their good motivations in this area. We also respect them for taking a different view, that the pregnancy they are carrying is a pregnancy with a potency for human life. That is the prism through which this minister views access to terminations. He is not treating it as a health service. He is not treating it as a routine and regular provision of a health service. He is treating it as something that is personal to him and his belief structure. We know he did not support decriminalisation and he supported the declaration of the Tasmanian churches in 2013. We know he described making RU486 - which is the medical termination provision we made available when we decriminalised it in 2013, making it available to Australian women - as akin to the Singapore execution of Australian, Van Tuong Nguyen. Accessing a termination is akin to an execution of someone. That is the prism this minister is dealing. That is the problem and that is why we have had such a significant struggle to get access to service.

If this was being treated as any other service that could not be provided we would not be having this kind of response. We would be having a response that says, okay, a private provider who is providing hips or a private provider who is providing vasectomies is leaving. As a state we have an obligation to provide access to that and we will provide that service. To do that equitably and fairly would be to have the safety net that public hospitals across the state could provide access to terminations.

I like the idea of a stand-alone facility and think that would be a wonderful outcome, but unless you provide statewide access you are still limiting women's ability to access it. We have no right to deny women access to a service. Simply by making it hard to get to because of distance, cost or time, we are acting to prevent their access. That is what we are doing in this House. We need to know from the minister exactly what is in the agreement. The agreement he signed needs to provide a weekly service that is affordable and can be accessed statewide.

Perhaps he has arranged - and this may be in the contract - for this fly-in fly-out provider to do outreach work in some of the public hospitals up north. If that is the case, that is a great outcome, but we do not know because for some reason this minister will not tell us what he has secured. If this minister has successfully secured an opportunity for women across the state to access terminations, then he should tell us what he has done and we will be pleased. This is not just about the politics, as the minister would say. We are fighting this because we genuinely want women to be able to access these services.

We know there were economic issues that fed into the closure of the clinics with the introduction of medical terminations. We know this minister does not agree with medical terminations because in his mind they are akin to an execution, but we know that at the time those services were closing he took no action to save those facilities and maintain those services.

Time expired.

[11.12 a.m.]

Mr FERGUSON (Bass - Minister for Health) - Madam Speaker, I invite you and other members not to believe a word of Ms O'Byrne's political and quite nasty rhetoric at times. If a reasonable person took the broad view of the things I have said and represented this Government on this subject in the period I have been Health minister, they will find that Ms O'Byrne is exactly as I have previously described her. It is very political. We understand different points of view on this matter but the Government has been handling this with great care and professionalism.

I will make some points in relation to terminations. The new private provider to deliver low-cost surgical abortions in Tasmania is on track to commence in October this year. The provider and the Tasmanian Government have reached an agreement through the department and a contract is in the final stages of drafting. The provider is currently working to finalise licensing and accreditation requirements and the arrangement with the local licensed surgical facility. The service is in line with the findings of the secretary of the Department of Health's report on the provision of surgical terminations in Tasmania.

The Patient Transport and Travel Assistance Scheme will be made available for intrastate travel to the service and the department will also provide increased funding to prescribed health services and Pregnancy Counselling and Support Tasmania to ensure longstanding arrangements to support women continue.

I do not like to see, and the House should not enjoy seeing, the continual attempts to try to play this through an ideological prism. I am the first to say that I recognise the diversity of opinion on this that exists in the Tasmanian community. Every time the Deputy Leader of the Labor Party raises this as an attack point she discredits her own party, because you cannot then go on to say you are only interested in the issue.

That is what the Government has been doing. It has not been easy. It has been an important discussion between the department of Health and the interstate provider. As soon as more details can be provided they will be. There is no hiding on this and I do not respect the point of view that is being asserted that anything other than that is the case.

Mr Bacon - Will you provide that information?

Mr FERGUSON - I have already provided an undertaking that that information will be provided.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER - Order. It is an MPI and there is normally some cross-debate.

Mr FERGUSON - Ms O'Byrne was listened to in silence.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER - My understanding is she was not interjected on at all. I ask you to give that respect, given this is a very sensitive matter to many people. I ask that the minister be afforded the opportunity to respond without interruption, as Ms O'Byrne was.

Mr FERGUSON - Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker. It is always ironic to me when the former health minister wants to raise issues of access to health services, which is what this MPI is actually about. I cannot think of another former health minister who has done more to destroy access to health services than Ms O'Byrne. We are talking about an individual in the former Labor government who oversaw \$500 million of funding reductions to our health system.

Members opposite may well want to argue their case around the financials at the time and they can do that, but there has been no previous health minister in this state who has overseen a bigger downgrade of access to health services. In my own electorate at the Launceston General Hospital we famously saw the end of the Hospital in the Home program. This Government has restored it. We saw the sacking of 289 nurses across the state - a nurse a day for nine months - and this Government has reversed those cuts. In the case of ward 4D, a functioning medical ward, the previous Labor government are on the record saying it was easier to make a decision to close a ward because they knew they could bank the savings. So they closed 4D, overseen by Michelle O'Byrne, the member for Bass, and the door was not just locked, they took the beds to Coats Patons and locked them up in a warehouse so that they could not be used even if they were needed.

Ms O'Byrne - So dishonest.

Mr FERGUSON - It is not dishonest. I hear Ms O'Byrne chipping away but it is just a rendering of the history. It is your history. I know you might be embarrassed by it but this MPI is about access to health services and you deprived access to health services in Tasmania. You famously closed the Nell Williams Unit at the Royal Hobart Hospital. You reduced access to health services. You may want to explain that one day but they are the facts. That is the record. That is what you did.

Everybody understands the Health portfolio is a difficult one. It is difficult now and it was difficult for the former minister. It has been difficult for every minister and anybody who presents simple solutions are usually shown that they are not that simple at all, but this Government is delivering the funding and the health policy leadership hand in hand with clinicians to deliver improved health services. We have provided access for Tasmanians to more health services and more surgeries than ever before. We understand the needs through our emergency departments and

the biggest problem, by the way, with our EDs is not the EDs themselves; it is access to medical and surgical beds within the hospital. People in this room know that, but whenever there is a crunch on demand and pressure, obviously we need to look to solutions, and I am for that. I am very humble about my abilities in this area. We work together.

The Government never has all the answers but when we see bed pressures, for example, we need to work together and not present them as just personal attacks. We have to work on solutions and that is what we have done. We have opened 4D. We have reopened the former Nell Williams Unit and made it available for ambulance off-load delay. We have put an extra 24/7 crew in every region and we have a \$757 million plan currently being rolled out over six years which is the most historic increase in health service funding and which points to increased access to health services.

Time expired.

[11.19 a.m.]

Ms O'CONNOR (Denison - Leader of the Greens) - Mr Deputy Speaker, I thank the Deputy Leader of the Opposition for bringing on this matter of public importance today. Although I am not the Greens health spokesperson I am the spokesperson for women, which is why I will make a contribution on this debate.

It has been interesting listening to the cross-flow of information because we talk about equity of access to health services and it is not just specific to access to reproductive health services for women. Any one of us who represents our constituencies and our shadow portfolios will know that there are equity of access issues right around Tasmania. It is an issue often of distance, of your relative wealth, socio-economic circumstances, your level of education and whether or not you have a disability, or are struggling from a mental health problem. For example, there are people who live in St Helens who wish to access the National Disability Insurance Scheme supports who find it very difficult to do so because that level of service provision is not available in St Helens.

If you live in Bothwell, accessing mental health supports is difficult. This is part of a much broader debate we need to be having about equitable and efficient access to health services in Tasmania. We need to take a holistic view of this because we live in a widely dispersed state that is not rolling in income, whether it be from Commonwealth or state funding sources. Therefore, we need to use the resources we have as efficiently and equitably as possible.

I listened carefully to what the minister said about this issue. More detail has been placed on the record about the nature of the agreement with the private provider. My understanding, from what the Premier said, is that the contract is being finalised for the provision of surgical terminations by a private provider from interstate, and that service will be available in October this year.

Ms O'Byrne, we have to wait and see. We have an assurance now from the secretary of the agency as well as the minister that the service will be available. We do not know what it will look like; we do not know what level of equity it will provide for women who find themselves dealing with an unwanted pregnancy.

There are other bigger issues here. We need to be sure that young people are receiving comprehensive sexual education in the public, private and independent school systems in Tasmania.

The north-west of Tasmania still has one of the nation's highest teenage pregnancy rates. We have known this as a state and as a parliament for many years, going back almost 20 years. Yet

these teenage pregnancy rates in the north-west of Tasmania still remain unacceptably high. When I say 'unacceptable', I mean that fundamentally. Young women who have a whole world of possibilities and opportunities in front of them, for a range of reasons, are winding up pregnant at a very young age, which limits the choices they can make. I encourage all members to continue to advocate the comprehensive sexual education in our school system. My understanding is that it has been applied in a very ad hoc way, particularly across the public system. While some schools are rolling out quite rigorous sexual education and respectful relationships education, for other schools it has been deprioritised. That goes to a question of direction from the minister, but also what resourcing is being made available to schools to provide this education. It is education that is as valid and valuable to young women as it is to young boys.

We should keep having a conversation about equitable access to health services in Tasmania, but let us now make it unnecessarily narrow. Let us look at the suite of health and community supports that are available in Tasmania, regional and rural inequities, and what we can do as a parliament to correct that and make sure that no matter where you live in Tasmania, there will be a service that is available to you. It might not be around the corner but it will not be that far away and the Government will support you in accessing that service.

On a personal note, I say a big thank you to the people who work in the emergency department of the Royal Hobart Hospital. Quite recently I had cause to be in the ED with a family member. The capacity and the professionalism of the staff when we walked in struck me, as it does every time I find myself in the emergency department. There were 22 people waiting and the triaging process was the best that it could possibly be. The staff understood that they had people with a range of urgencies and people highly stressed and, in some instances, in great pain. The staff at the emergency department were outstanding. I do not think any person in this place understands the stresses that people who work in the public system are under. Some of them were bravely expressed in public yesterday. We should be very thankful for the quality of the people who work in our public health system in Tasmania. I have said to my family a number of times that if you are going to be sick anywhere in Australia, let it be in Hobart and make your way to the Royal Hobart Hospital because the level of personal care at that hospital is second to none.

Time expired.

[11.25 a.m.]

Ms WHITE (Lyons - Leader of the Opposition) - Mr Deputy Speaker, it is really important because the inequity of access right across the state to a number of different services remains a stubborn problem. It is not just access to reproductive health services; it is access to a number of different health services for a number of different reasons.

I find it galling when the Minister for Health comes in and lectures us about the history here, given he has been the Health minister for nearly five years. There must come a point in his career where he takes responsibility for what is happening in his portfolio and stops placing blame elsewhere. We can expect him to be in that portfolio for a number of years, unfortunately, unless the minister is replaced by somebody who cares more. He needs to stop laying the blame at the feet of other people and take responsibility for decisions that he himself has made. Look at the data that is available for everyone to access on the health stats website, which is the Department of Health and Human Services, and see the decline in access to services under this Government, particularly in the emergency department.

If anyone cares to look you can see that the number of departures within four hours statewide for emergency departments in March this year was 63 per cent. That is well below what is clinically recommended. What we know from clinicians is that when people stay in emergency departments for greater than four hours the risk of adverse outcomes increase.

When just 63 per cent of Tasmanians presenting to the emergency departments right across the state are seen within four hours that is a problem the minister has to acknowledge, address and take responsibility for. It is going in the wrong direction. You just have to look at the data from April last year when 66 per cent of patients were seen within the four-hour time frame and it is now 63 per cent. Fewer people are being seen within the clinically recommended time frame. That has happened under this minister in the last year. He cannot blame any other governments for that fact. He has to take responsibility for that himself.

If you look at it on a hospital by hospital basis the Royal Hobart Hospital, just 55 per cent of patients within in the emergency department depart within four hours. We know that at the emergency department at the Royal Hobart Hospital there are regularly patients waiting. The member for Denison, Ms O'Connor, said that there were 22 people waiting in the emergency department when she presented there.

We now regularly see ambulances queued up by the front of the Royal Hobart Hospital; indeed, across the other side of the street because there are not enough beds in the hospital. Patients are waiting not just four hours but in some cases days in the emergency department at the Royal Hobart Hospital. That is completely unacceptable. It increases the risk of adverse outcomes. It is placing enormous pressure on staff who are doing the very best that they can.

It is why we have nurses protesting out the front of the Launceston General Hospital. Nurses from that emergency department are extremely concerned about their ability to care for patients and provide services to them that they desire. They have not been properly supported by this minister. If you look at the data at LGH in March this year, only 59 per cent of patients in the emergency department left within four hours. It is getting worse. If you compare that to the same time in the previous year, more people were leaving the emergency department within four hours. In both of those hospitals I mentioned, fewer people are leaving within that four-hour window. That is a big problem and it is something the minister has to take responsibility for. He cannot blame somebody else for that issue.

Is the minister going to attend the rally this Friday at the Launceston General Hospital? On the news last night we saw two brave nurses who stood before the cameras and made comments about the stress they are placed under because this minister has failed to listen. I quote them directly.

Tristan and Kath very bravely faced the cameras and said, and I quote:

We are saying what is wrong. We know what is wrong and we know what needs to be done but we are not being listened to. It gets pretty frustrating after a while when over and over again you are going back to the Health Minister and nothing is being done. It feels like the Government is really not listening to us.

At the Royal Hobart Hospital, we saw Dr O'Keeffe approach the minister and speak to him directly, raising concerns, feeling he is not being listened to. The concerns that are being raised by clinicians have not been acknowledged by this minister.

Nurses have been protesting out the front of the LGH now for 57 days and the minister has not been to see them, not once. On Friday I challenge the minister to go to the rally at the Launceston General Hospital, in his own electorate of Bass, speak to and listen to those nurses. Take on board the ideas they have to make improvements at that hospital so that patients do not have to wait as long as they are waiting to access the services they need.

The times that people are being forced to wait is appalling because this government has chronically under-funded the health system. The Commonwealth Grants Commission demonstrates that more clearly than anything else. Despite increasing GST receipts to this Government, despite increasing revenues from stamp duty, the Government has failed to adequately invest in health.

When the Labor Party was in government, greater than 70 per cent of GST receipts were spent on health. Under this Government, about 60 per cent of GST receipts are spent on health. He is spending less money on health and that is according to the Commonwealth Grants Commission. That is a shame, given the rhetoric that they regularly spout in this place and in the media, saying they are investing record amounts in health. It is not true.

The fact is, if you did not increase funding to health every year, then you would be doing a great disservice, but health inflation is increasing at a much greater rate than the funding increases this Government is providing and they need to acknowledge that and speak to their staff.

Time expired.

[11.32 a.m.]

Ms ARCHER (Denison - Minister for Justice) - Mr Deputy Speaker, I am happy to make a contribution on this MPI today, not only in relation to the health system generally but to talk about some advancements and things happening in my own electorate as well. The debate on matters of public importance always gives us that unique opportunity to talk about a lot of things that are going on in our local communities and constituency.

I note the member for Denison Ms O'Connor's comments in relation to the broader issue of access to services, particularly in relation to many members in the community finding it difficult to access services. One advancement in that area, I am pleased to reiterate to the House, is the opening of the \$21 million Glenorchy Health Centre. It is a key piece of social and health infrastructure for our southern region. It does bring together a number of services including allied health services, physiotherapy, oral health dental services, occupational therapy, renal self-dialysis, pathology, child health and parenting services, podiatry, youth health and social work. It also caters for a mix of visiting services and has a community space that can be booked by members of the community as well. It not only serves Glenorchy; it is intended to be a southern regional service directly accessible by those living in the Glenorchy municipality. Being in the south, it caters for the broader region including Brighton, Derwent Valley, Southern Midlands and the Central Highland communities.

A health centre in Glenorchy has been talked about for many years, and I am very pleased our Government has listened. The Government has been able to deliver on that commitment with this substantial infrastructure spend of \$21 million. Together with the Clarence Integrated Care Centre and the future planned Kingston Health Centre, it will allow for the delivery of more health services in our southern regional community.

It was a personal issue of mine, having been a local member since the 2010 election, lobbying for a health centre. It is wonderful to see this come to fruition and provide these essential services

to my community and I am sure other members for Denison feel the same way in relation to access to services to our local community.

This Government is investing in dental health because it is an important part of our health service but so many Tasmanians miss out on adequate oral health care. The state Government is expanding the public dental service to ensure the 10 000 plus Tasmanians on the oral care waiting list are seen promptly by a dentist. One of the biggest investments is the Glenorchy Dental Centre which is expanding from two surgeries to six as part of the clinic facilities.

We will also be upgrading the Southern Dental Centre in New Town which provided more than 28 000 appointments in the 2017 year alone, which is a significant number. Three additional surgeries were put into service earlier this year with a redevelopment, including eight fully-renovated surgeries and larger reception and waiting areas. In total there are now 27 surgeries available for patient care at the Southern Dental Centre.

With the completion of the Kingston Health Centre by early next year, there will also be an increased capacity for public dental patients south of Hobart. The snapshot in July this year was that the state's health system shows 10 836 adult Tasmanians were waiting for general care to be provided by oral health services. This will go a significant way to providing the oral health services Tasmanians deserve and need.

I thank the Minister for Health for demonstrating his ongoing commitment, a significant commitment in building a better health system for this state and in doing so, he regularly acknowledges there are challenges in the health system. There have been for a number of years. There probably always will continue to be challenges but that is why we have made a significant investment across our state, across our regions, utilising all our services as best as possible with that significant \$757 million investment over the coming years.

We have already made great gains since coming into government in 2014, opening over 120 new beds, recruiting over 600 full-time equivalent frontline health staff to support our health system and providing over \$100 million of additional funding for elective surgery. This is all about delivering better health care for Tasmanians. In doing so, we acknowledge the challenges posed by increasing demand and acuity on our health system which are being experienced by jurisdictions nationally and internationally. It is not an issue that is unique to Tasmania. We are determined to make the necessary investments to ensure the Tasmanian community can continue to access a world-class health centre.

Time expired.

Matter noted.

MOTION

Appointment of Select Committee - Firearm Laws Inquiry

[11.40 a.m.]

Mr FERGUSON (Bass - Minister for Police, Fire and Emergency Management - Motion) - Mr Deputy Speaker, I move -

That -

- (1) A select committee be appointed with power to send for persons and papers to inquire into and report upon current firearms laws and alternative policy proposals, with the following terms of reference:
 - (a) current and future firearms licensing regimes, including training and testing, licence renewal, licence infringements and licence categories;
 - (b) compliance with the provisions of the National Firearms Agreement;
 - (c) the roles of Tasmania Police, Firearms Services (FAS) and the proposed Tasmanian Firearms Owners Council (TFOC);
 - (d) the role of the proposed Memorandum of Understanding between the Government, Tasmania Police and the Tasmanian Farmers and Graziers Association (TFGA);
 - (e) the ownership and use of sound suppressors by category C licence holders;
 - (f) consideration of public submissions to the Legislative Council firearms laws inquiry; and
 - (g) any other matters incidental thereto.
- (2) That the following members of this House be appointed to serve on the committee:
 - (a) Mr Shelton (Chair),
 - (b) Mr Brooks (Deputy Chair),
 - (c) one member nominated by the Leader of the Opposition, and
 - (d) one member nominated by the Leader of the Greens.
- (3) Members who are not members of the committees may participate in non-deliberative proceedings of the committee by asking questions of witnesses at the discretion of the Chair, but may not vote, move any motion or be counted for the purposes of a quorum.
- (4) The Chair of the committee has a deliberative and a casting vote.
- (5) A quorum for any meeting of a committee shall be three (of whom one is the Chair of the committee or Deputy Chair)
- (6) That the committee report by 14 March 2019.

- (7) That should the House not be sitting, a report may be presented to the Speaker of the House, or in their absence, the Clerk of the House, and any report so presented is taken to have been published by order of the House of Assembly.

Mr Deputy Speaker, today I move to establish a select committee of the House to be appointed with power to send for persons and papers to inquire into and report upon current firearms laws and alternative proposals. In the spirit of bipartisanship, even tripartisanship, I can foreshadow that I will be offering an amendment at the end of my contribution which attempts to gather up the contributions made by other members of this House. I accept there may be other amendments moved as well, which we will consider and discuss, but this is the Government's demonstration of our best endeavours to bring us together, at least insofar as how the conduct of the inquiry should move forward.

In establishing a House of Assembly inquiry, this is an approach which was supported by a wide cross-section of stakeholders from across the community when it was announced last week and it is only sensible to continue with a committee inquiry to ensure everyone who wants to have their say on Tasmania's firearms laws, which are and should remain the strongest, can do so. I will now provide some background and bring the debate to the specifics of where we want the inquiry to go.

The Firearms Act 1996 and the Firearms Regulations 2016 establish the legislative framework for the regulation, registration and control of firearms in Tasmania. The Firearms Act was introduced after the tragic Port Arthur massacre, replacing the Guns Act 1991. The new legislative framework implemented the agreed minimum standards of the National Firearms Agreement, signed by the Australian Government and all state and territory governments.

To possess and use a firearm, a person is required to hold a firearms licence. To be granted a licence a person must satisfy the eligibility criteria, which includes that they:

- be over 18 years of age;
- be a fit and proper person;
- have a genuine reason for wanting a firearm;
- have satisfactorily completed an approved firearms safety course; and
- comply with certain safety and storage requirements.

A person must also register every firearm in their possession.

The Firearms Act also provides the current requirements for the renewal of licences. The process requires a licence holder to apply to the Commissioner of Police for renewal of the licence, before the expiration of a licence or within the period of 14 days after that expiration. The term of a licence ranges from 12 months up to five years depending on the licence category, as prescribed in section 15 of the Regulations. The Regulations also prescribe the storage requirements for firearms, firearm parts and ammunition. The requirements include storing firearms and ammunition separately when not in use.

In relation to the provision of training, Tasmania Police has a formal agreement with TasTAFE to provide firearms safety training courses to firearms licence applicants. Upon being granted approval to obtain a firearms licence, the applicant receives written approval from Tasmania Police to enrol and attend an approved training course. Once the applicant has received written approval,

they must complete the course within six months in order to be granted a licence. The firearms safety training course is a two-part course covering a theoretical knowledge of the Firearms Act, requirements that are imposed on firearms owners and a practical component giving the applicant an opportunity to learn about safe handling practices, loading and unloading a firearm and shooting a firearm on an approved range under the supervision of an instructor.

The Firearms Act and Regulations also provide for a series of firearms-related offences in Tasmania. The offences include selling, acquiring, possessing or using unregistered firearms; possessing or using firearms without a licence; shortening or altering a firearm; and failing to comply with storage requirements.

The Firearms Act has been amended 14 times since it commenced in 1996. The most significant of these amendments was via the Firearms (Miscellaneous Amendments) Act 2015. The amendments were in response to a review commenced in 2009 by the then Labor government and brought to completion in the previous term of the Hodgman Liberal Government. Both governments were assisted during the review by the then Firearms Consultative Committee.

The amendments created a number of new firearms offences including possession of a stolen firearm and clarified key terms, as well as licensing, storage, search, seizure and disposal requirements. The Tasmanian Government implemented the amendments in three tranches, including the proclamation of various sections and development of the new Firearms Regulations 2016. These reforms were informed by extensive public consultation, including advice from the then Firearms Consultative Committee and over 150 submissions from the public.

Tasmania Police is responsible for enforcing and regulating the use of firearms in Tasmania. Tasmania Police undertakes a range of measures to address firearms crime and enforce the rules surrounding the possession and use of weapons. Tasmania Police investigates incidents involving firearms crime, which consists of offences involving firearms, including weapons used in the commission of an offence or being the target of a burglary, robbery or theft. There are also specific offences relating to firearm discharge and possession, as well as offences relating to firearms licensing and storage.

Tasmania Police works in collaboration with state and territory police services, the Australian Federal Police, Australian Criminal Intelligence Commission, Australian Border Force, and Australian Tax Office to intercept and disrupt organised crime activity, including firearms crime. Tasmania Police is also an active participant in the National Task Force, Operation Athena, an advisory group formed under the auspices of the National Law Enforcement Illicit Firearms Strategy, targeting the illicit use of and trade in firearms by serious and organised crime groups.

Tasmania Police runs permanent and mobile firearms amnesties, encouraging individuals to surrender unwanted, unregistered and illegal firearms, and ammunition for destruction. The firearms can be handed in at any police station in Tasmania without fear of prosecution. Tasmania Police then manage the safe destruction of the firearms. During 2017, an excess of 3000 firearms were handed into Tasmania Police for destruction as part of a national amnesty, an increase from an average of 2000 a year.

Firearms Services (FAS) is an administrative division within Tasmania Police's Operational Support District. Located in Hobart, the division is responsible for the administration of the Firearms Act, including the following important roles:

- determining the suitability of applicants wishing to hold firearms licences;
- determining permits to acquire firearms;
- registering firearms;
- disposing of seized firearms, ammunition and related articles;
- registering firearms dealers;
- investigating serious firearms offences such as firearms trafficking;
- maintaining a record of registered firearms and their location;
- approving firing ranges and galleries;
- coordinating police inspections of firearms storage;
- monitoring firearms-related risks to public safety and responding to these risks through the suspension or cancellation of licences or the seizure of firearms in high-risk situations. Some examples would be domestic violence situations, reckless or erratic behaviour, threats of suicide, et cetera;
- providing advice on Firearms Act-related matters (including requirements for ownership, storage and dealing in firearms) to licence holders, Tasmania Police staff (including officers with active investigations), ministerial staff and other state and Commonwealth Government staff; and
- contributing to firearms policy development through the National Firearms Policy Framework Working Group which contributes advice on any revision of the National Firearms Agreement and other related policy working groups, both locally and nationally.

FAS has experienced an increase in the number of renewal applications for licence and permits every five years following the commencement of the Firearms Act in 1996. In response to these pressures, a range of measures have been introduced in recent years.

In 2017, a civilian manager of FAS was appointed, extra staff were employed to handle the increase in activity and a new FAS website was launched with a large increase in information available for firearms owners. FAS continues to undertake steps to enhance its service delivery to firearms owners and users.

The Firearms Services Policy Enhancement Project is underway to develop a high-level guidance document for FAS to support a contemporary, consistent approach to the administration of the Firearms Act, including practical information to the community, operational frontline police and other stakeholders. FAS recently introduced SMS and email reminders to expired licence holders to provide time to lodge renewal documentation before the legislation requires a reapplication - that 14-day rule.

FAS continues to maintain the new website to provide licence holders, dealers and interested people updated and current information on the legislative requirements, applications and renewals processes and other services. As of 30 July 2018, there are 37 019 firearms licences managed by FAS. This includes active, on-hold and suspended licences. There are 137 712 firearms registered in Tasmania. From 1 July 2013 to 30 June 2018, there have been 16 569 new registrations of firearms and 6101 dealer acquisitions from interstate or overseas processed.

The agricultural sector is a key pillar of the Tasmanian economy. In undertaking their work, primary producers and farmers need to use a range of tools, and this includes firearms. Primary producers and farmers use a variety of tools to control wildlife and meet animal welfare obligations including the use of firearms, captive bolts and permitted poisons, and are required to comply with a range of legislative requirements in addition to the Firearms Act. Primary producers and farmers require access to effective devices such as firearms and captive bolts in order to comply with animal welfare obligations as provided under the Animal Welfare Act 1993.

Tasmanian animal welfare legislation and departmental guidelines are outcome focused rather than prescribing particular euthanasia methods. Euthanasia must be performed such that there is an immediate loss of consciousness followed by death. This may be delivered by a free-bullet firearm, captive bolt or other means, singly or combined, that ensures consciousness is not regained. Euthanasia via exsanguination without prior stunning must only be used in extenuating circumstances. Farmers should have access to effective devices that render the animal unconscious immediately, such as firearms and captive bolts.

As I have outlined, the Firearms Act regulates the use of firearms for primary producers. Obtaining ammunition for captive bolts still requires a firearms licence unless Firearms Services grants an exemption. The captive bolt devices themselves do not require a licence. Tasmania is the only jurisdiction that requires a licence for the ammunition, not the captive bolt device itself.

Farmers and hunters also need to comply with the provisions of the Nature Conservation Act 2002 and the Wildlife (General) Regulations 2010. The Nature Conservation Act makes provision with respect to the conservation and protection of the fauna, flora and geological diversity of the state, to provide for the declaration of national parks and other reserved land and for related purposes.

If a person is convicted of an offence against the Nature Conservation Act and the behaviour constituting the offence involved the use of a firearm, the court may, in addition to imposing any other penalty, make an order cancelling or suspending a firearms licence and/or prohibiting the person from applying for or being granted or issued a firearms licence during the period specified in the order. In addition, the provisions provide for the forfeiting of hunting materials to the Crown if used in connection of an offence under the Nature Conservation Act.

Further, the Wildlife (General) Regulations 2010 provide for regulatory controls for the taking and trading of wildlife and wildlife products. In relation to firearms, the regulations prohibit methods of hunting wildlife, discharging a firearm for taking any partly protected wildlife, organised shooting without permission, as well as special provisions as to deer. Farmers and hunters can access game licences and wildlife permits for the purpose of crop protection, commercial, cultural and recreational purposes.

Prior to the state election in March 2018, the former Police minister developed a Firearms Policy after much consultation through the Tasmanian Firearms Consultative Committee. The

Firearms Policy reflected strong input from farmers and other primary producers, as well as sporting shooters, hunters and collectors. Firearms are legal tools of the trade for farmers and hunters, and equipment for sporting shooters, like those who competed this year at the Commonwealth Games.

The policy we took to the election was about practical improvements to the law to support the work of legitimate firearms users including farmers, who produce the food we eat. The changes are intended to strike a contemporary middle-ground that balances public safety and the changing needs of firearms users. This intent, I note, was the same as the Tasmanian Labor Party, which committed to take immediate action to consult with the TFGA and other stakeholders regarding regulatory issues encountered by farmers and others. They committed to addressing the legitimate concerns that have been highlighted. Labor also committed to a range of other changes that were the same as, or similar, to elements of the Government's policy.

Whilst we believe the policy we took to the election would provide practical improvements for firearms users while having no impact on the safety of Tasmanians, we accept that there are deeply held concerns about making any change to firearms laws, and we respect the views of Tasmanians on this issue.

It is for that reason, the Government announced it would not progress the previously announced firearms law proposals and would review firearms policy after consideration of recommendations from the parliamentary committee that had already commenced in the Legislative Council.

As we all know, the Legislative Council members concerned have decided not to proceed, and while disappointed with that we respect that, so it was a question then of how to progress. The Government indicated that, in keeping faith with those many Tasmanians - I think more than 100 Tasmanians and organisations - who had made submissions to that inquiry, we would move in this House to establish an equivalent committee of the House of Assembly to inquire into firearms laws and inform future policy.

It is intended that this parliamentary committee will have the same ability to consider all of the submissions made to the inquiry in the other place, with the exception of confidential submissions we do not have access to. I am hopeful and the Government hopes the proposed committee of this House will explore each individual element of the policy we released earlier this year, as well as the policies of other political parties or other stakeholder groups.

We believe that inquiring into these issues and providing considered analysis will only serve to better inform public discussion and guide future policy. We remain committed as a government to making practical improvements to firearms laws, as has occurred more than a dozen times since 1996, but we do agree that there needs to be widespread community understanding and support for any change. The Government's overriding principle in relation to any proposed changes to the law continues to be that we will not do anything to undermine the National Firearms Agreement.

I draw the attention of the House to the actual motion and the good discussions and conversations that have been had around the Chamber which have been intended to bring us to a sense of unity, not around the final conclusions of the report because we do not know what the committee will uncover or identify. It may be that there are elements of the Liberal policy that the committee is unable to support. It may be that many elements of that policy can be supported.

It may be that the committee will find that the Labor Party's pre-election policy could be supported. I do not know. What I want to get is a sense of agreement about how this House can

proceed ensuring that members of this House and the respective political parties are able to proceed. I will table these papers so that other people can read them. With regard to the proposed terms of reference, the Government is more than happy and wanting to make some small amendments to the motion that is currently on the notice paper. I have spoken with other parties. I acknowledge that those conversations have been held up until as recently as 20 minutes ago and I acknowledge that members will want to have some time to look at them.

I am going to continue my remarks to ensure that those members around the Chamber, in particular the Labor Party, can have a good look at them. It is my proposal to make an amendment that includes Dr Broad as the deputy chair of the committee. The membership of the committees of this House largely reflects the composition of the House. My best endeavours in reaching this structure were to replicate the Estimates committee structure.

This does replicate the arrangements made for Estimates committee this year, whereby other members may participate in proceedings of the committee; for example, ask a question at a hearing but nonetheless retain the structural integrity of the actual membership of the committee. This would mean that if, for example, Dr Woodruff was to be the member nominated by the Leader of the Greens, nonetheless O'Connor would be able to participate in a hearing session and ask questions even though she is not a member of the committee.

Dr Woodruff - Minister, sorry I do not have a copy of those amendments.

Mr FERGUSON - A copy is on its way. The Labor Party has your copy but it is on its way.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER - To clarify, are you moving an amendment yet? Or are you about to?

Mr FERGUSON - I am moving. I move the amendment which has been circulated.

Ms White - As a whole?

Mr FERGUSON - Yes, as a whole.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER - As you know, minister, you need to read it out.

Mr FERGUSON - Mr Deputy Speaker, may I suggest that I do not read it out, unless you ask me to? It is a refresh of the motion.

Dr Woodruff - Minister, since I do not have a copy perhaps you would not mind reading it out.

Mr FERGUSON - I will read it out. Mr Deputy Speaker, I move the following amendments to this motion.

Leave out all words after 'that' and replace with:

- (1) A select committee be appointed with power to send for persons and papers to inquire into and report upon current firearms laws, and alternative policy proposals, with the following terms of reference:

- (a) current and future firearms licensing regimes, including training and testing, licence renewal, licence infringements and licence categories;
 - (b) compliance with the provisions of the National Firearms Agreement;
 - (c) the roles of Tasmania Police, Firearms Services (FAS) and the proposed Tasmanian Firearms Owners Council (TFOC);
 - (d) consideration of public submissions to the Legislative Council firearms laws inquiry in relation to (a), (b), and (c) above; and
 - (e) any other matters incidental thereto.
- (2) That the following Members of this House be appointed to serve on the committee:
- (a) Mr Shelton (Chair);
 - (b) Mr Brooks;
 - (c) Dr Broad (Deputy Chair);
 - (d) one member nominated by the Leader of the Greens.
- (3) Members who are not members of the committee may participate in non-deliberative proceedings of the Committee by asking questions of witnesses at the discretion of the Chair, but may not vote, move any motion or be counted for the purposes of a quorum.
- (4) The Chair of a Committee has a deliberative and a casting vote.
- (5) A quorum for any meeting of a committee shall be three (of whom one is the Chair of the Committee or Deputy Chair).
- (6) That the committee report by 14 March 2019.
- (7) That should the House not be sitting, a report may be presented to the Speaker of the House, or in their absence, the Clerk of the House, and any report so presented is taken to have been published by order of the House of Assembly.

I appreciate that Ms White and Dr Broad and perhaps others may wish otherwise. What I have attempted to do is to gather up the 'best of' on the way we could agree. The Government is not precious about the terms of reference. However, it was important to replicate the terms of reference from the Legislative Council and as much as possible to keep faith with Tasmanians and organisations that have made submissions. That was the point. We are quite comfortable reducing those terms of reference, noting that they are still very broad. We are also noting the Greens question in question time which hinted at a concern about one of the terms of reference, which they feel would have been in breach of the NFA. We have respected that point of view for the purposes of attempting to gather consensus.

Additionally, Dr Woodruff had said to me that public submissions are relevant to these terms of reference so I have hardwired that into (d), noting again that we want all Tasmanians who have

made submissions to be heard. Whether they are for or against changes to the law we want them all to be heard. We want the committee to be able to examine what they have to say.

Furthermore, in relation to any suggestion that this not be a House of Assembly committee, the Government believes that this House has the wherewithal to deal with this inquiry. The Legislative Council, our respected colleagues in the other place, have made a decision for their own good reasons to not continue with their inquiry.

This is our best endeavour to keep faith with Tasmanians so that Tasmanians can participate. It is an opportunity for the committee which is really a product of this House to consider the law, to consider an act that is 22 years old, which has served Tasmania extremely well but does suffer from some issues in places where it is difficult for legitimate firearms users to be able to use firearms practically as tools of their trade. I want the inquiry to be able to look at various policy options; to consider and weigh them up, provide a report back to this House and the Government will very closely consider any and all of its recommendations.

I commend this amended motion, which I will now give to you, Clerk. I am more than happy to debate the amended motion with colleagues around the Chamber as the Government seeks to be bipartisan with the Labor Party in allowing legitimate firearms users in our state, to help members of this House grapple with this issue, but also to take the Tasmanian community with us as we consider these important issues going forward.

I conclude as I started: the Government is solid on ensuring that we protect the best of our firearms laws so that they are the strongest in the country; that they are the safest that we want them to be while also making sure that they keep pace with the modern environment in which farmers and sporting shooters are living; and that ensure that the firearms laws keep Tasmanians safe but allow legitimate users to be able to use them practically.

I commend the amendment.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER - For clarification, you are speaking on the amendment. If there are subsequent amendments or not we will deal with that then. If the amendment is debated and there is some time we will go back to the original motion if it is not amended.

[12.09 p.m.]

Dr BROAD (Braddon) - Mr Deputy Speaker, that is as clear as mud.

I foreshadow that we will be amending the amendment.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER - Dr Broad, do you want to move an amendment to the amendment now?

Dr BROAD - Not yet. I will move that shortly. I will make some opening comments.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER - That is fine. It is so we know.

Dr BROAD - Given the history of Tasmania and, in particular the Port Arthur massacre, I agree with the minister's comments that this is a very sensitive area. There is no doubt that it brings back memories and feelings that are best left in the past. What we have seen in the past has generally been an agreement across party lines on firearms policy. It is unfortunate the whole issue has become politicised and a political football. We have had the debate in the upper House and out in

the public with the media. It is not good to be discussing such a sensitive issue in the manner it has been discussed up to this point.

This issue came about because of the policy released just prior to an election, which has created some concern in the community and that concern has been expressed in a number of different ways. The minister is correct in that the Labor Party took a policy to the last election that we reflected in our submission to the upper House inquiry that was recently concluded. That policy was about having a discussion about some sensible minor amendments to firearms laws. We took the opportunity to make a submission to the select committee in the upper House. We recognise firearms law is a sensitive topic, and rightfully so, how it is the fundamental responsibility of governments and lawmakers to keep people safe and that any changes to firearms laws need to be evidence based, well consulted and widely supported by the community.

The problem we have is that the policy the Government took to the election had not been widely consulted and there was significant backlash amongst members of the community, interest groups and indeed firearms holders. I thank the minister, Mr Ferguson, for contacting me on Monday night to have a discussion. That has led to some fruitful discussions. However, when I started consulting by ringing around various stakeholders I was surprised that the motion being brought on today had not been discussed with stakeholders. I contacted the TFGA, firearms owners, Gun Control Australia and the Sporting Shooters Association and none of them knew this motion was coming. As a result, we have been scrambling to try to do those consultations - in effect, the Government's job - in making sure we had a motion today that was acceptable across the wider community.

As a result, we have seen in the amendment just moved by Mr Ferguson that we have come some way to address the issues highlighted with the original motion as it stood. The problem with the original motion was that it was very similar to the original motion that established the Legislative Council committee, referencing the Liberal policy that was problematic for the Government and caused significant concern amongst the community. Because the Government withdrew their policy from consideration, that meant the upper House inquiry was then cancelled because the original reference was no longer valid. Yet we saw in the original motion, as put today, that it still referenced alternative policy proposals and things that were not supported, such as a proposed Tasmanian Firearms Owners Council and a proposed memorandum of understanding between the Government, Tasmania Police and the Tasmanian Farmers and Graziers Association.

We want there to be a process where instead of trying to tick off a certain policy, we want to go through a proper policy process where the community can have their say about what sorts of sensible changes to gun laws can be made because, in order for those changes to have acceptance across the community, they have to be involved. It should not be a process of simply ticking off existing policies and it becoming politicised. The last thing we need in this debate is to have a politicised issue where we have entrenched views and almost a predetermined outcome.

The amendments we are proposing are about having a process where there is community input and it does not reference specific proposals. In proposing the amendment the minister has gone some way to agreeing with that by eliminating in the first point references to alternative policy proposals and changing that to 'a select committee be appointed with power to send for persons or papers to inquire into a report on current firearms laws with the following terms of reference'. That removes things like 'alternative policy proposals', et cetera. That is a good move, that was something we proposed and I thank the minister for taking that on board.

I thank the minister for taking on board the other amendments. We are going on the hop here because we are trying to match up previous documents. He took out paragraph (e), which was ownership and use of sound suppressors. He also took out the memorandum of understanding which I have just discussed, so that was good, but there still remain some issues. One is that there still remains a reference to a Tasmanian Firearm Owners Council.

Going along with the theme that we need broad community support for there to be community acceptance of firearm laws changes, when we have a group established that wholly consists of just one side of the debate in that this is proposed to be a council of firearms owners, there is no place in the firearms owners committee for those who have a differing view from firearms owners. I am referring to gun control lobbyists and medical professionals, and that is why we propose that instead of the text referring to a Tasmanian firearms owners council we talk about the establishment of a broad-based consultative group which has all sides of the debate to help discuss, in an ongoing manner, changes to firearms laws. Rather than having predetermined outcomes, or having one side of the debate represented, we want a broad-based consultative group, and that is an amendment I will be moving in a moment.

The other thing about the significant change is that we are talking about instituting a joint House inquiry rather than simply a House of Assembly inquiry. This gets back to the need for broad-based community support. To that end we believe we should have input from independents in the upper House and for there to be a joint House inquiry.

The Government has indicated they have issues with this particular proposal. If the Government wants to control the numbers and wants this to be an inquiry where they can control the outcomes because they have more members and more votes, the way it is currently structured in the current amendment is that the chair of the committee has a deliberate and casting vote. That means we have a structure where the Government is controlling the vote of the committee.

If the Government wants control of the outcome and the ability to move the committee one way or another, then perhaps having this committee is not the best idea. The Government should instead go out and do the consultations and control their own consultations and not seek to have a committee do it.

We are arguing that there needs to be agreement across the broad political spectrum, instead of having one where the outcome can be determined by one political party or another. That is why we are proposing a joint House committee be established. Given the history, that can be problematic but we are confident we can have fruitful discussions with the upper House and get a workable joint House committee that will work in the best interests of Tasmania to get that broad-based support across the community. Whatever we do in this place, when we are dealing with firearms and firearms law changes, we need broad community support. Otherwise we will get into more trouble and it will become politicised again and we will have entrenched positions.

The minister referenced our policy position from the election without being specific; however we understand and we are committed to having a look at sensible amendments. There are things that do need to change to make it more practical. Some things impose unreasonable burdens and have the impact of making it very difficult for there to be competitions for firearm owners in Tasmania: longstanding competitions. The way the current laws are structured makes that difficult.

There are issues with in-use provisions. For example, when firearm owners are using their weapons and if a farmer has a property that has a road going through it, to actually cross that road

and abide by the law is quite a difficult process and that should not be the case. We are more than willing to discuss these sorts of issues. We definitely do not want to breach the National Firearms Agreement. What kicked off this whole situation is that the Government's policy did breach National Firearms Agreement, and there was a prima facie case that it did. We do not have all the answers either and that is why we need this broad-based inquiry without predetermined outcomes.

We agree with the Government that we should consider the submissions made to the upper House inquiry. I know the members of the Greens would like those in consideration to be restricted to the terms of reference that we are proposing in the amended motion and the amendment of the amendment which I will pass in a moment.

The catch-all phrase which is 'all matters hereto' which is section 1(e) would give the committee the ability to discuss and look into those submissions, irrespective of whether we make changes to section 1(d) 'consideration of public submissions to the Legislative Council Firearms Laws'.

Actually, you did change that I have noticed. In reference to (a)(b)(c), you have agreed to that amendment?

Mr Ferguson - Yes.

Dr BROAD - I do not have a problem with that. There is the catch-all in (e)

Mr Ferguson - And (a) as well, which was your point to me earlier.

Dr BROAD - Yes. That is good. The main point I make is that we need agreement across the Chamber and the Houses. We need the public to have the ability to make submissions, to make recommendations to a joint House committee so we can have wide community support for any changes, rather than having a predetermined policy outcome and getting into the trenches and arguing about our respective policies.

As I have said, having that debate and having it politicised is not good for the Tasmanian people given the history. If we are going to change we need to bring everybody along with us and it is just a shame that the politics that have got us to this point have not been pretty. There is an opportunity now to change that and to have potentially a really good outcome, not only for firearms owners but also for the community and this could be a process that brings us together across the chamber and indeed across Houses.

I will have to beg the Clerk's indulgence because we are on the hop and I am hoping that these line up because we have had a series of amendments to move and some of those amendments have been adopted in the amended motion.

Madam Speaker, I move -

- (1) By inserting in paragraph (1) the word 'Joint' before the word 'Select';
- (2) In paragraph (1)(c), by leaving out the words 'proposed Tasmanian Firearms Council (TFOC)' and insert instead 'creation of a broad-based consultative group'.
- (3) Paragraph (2), delete the paragraph and insert the following new paragraph -

'That the number of Members to be appointed to serve on the said Committee on the part of the House of Assembly be 3 comprising:

- (a) one member nominated by the Leader of Government Business;
 - (b) one member nominated by the Leader of the Opposition; and
 - (c) one member nominated by the Leader of the Tasmanian Greens.'
- (4) Insert a new paragraph after paragraph (2) - '(3) That three members of the Legislative Council be appointed'.
- (5) Leave out paragraph (3).

That is reference to members who are not members of the committee may participate in non-deliberative proceedings of the committee by asking questions of witnesses at the discretion of the Chair but may not vote, move a motion or be counted.

We would like that paragraph removed. That is the limit of our amendments. That is what I have given to the Greens. Minister, do you have a copy of those amendments?

Mr FERGUSON - With your indulgence, Madam Speaker, I am going to invite Dr Broad to move his amendment to remove members who are not members of the committee may participate, et cetera. I invite him to move that separately because we would support that.

Dr BROAD - You would support that part of it? What about the rest of it? Do you want us to deal with that first?

Mr Ferguson - Separately. I am offering compromise but not the other. I am trying to be helpful.

Dr BROAD - With indulgence, what about removing the reference to the Tasmanian firearms owners council?

Mr FERGUSON - I am just letting you know that I would be willing to treaty with you on removing (3). It is up to you what you would remove.

Ms White - Madam Speaker, can I just seek advice from the Clerk? Given that the motion is drafted in such a way that it is numbered (1) through to whatever it may be, is it possible to move amendments to, say, paragraph (4) and then come back to paragraph (1) at a later date, or is that impossible?

Dr BROAD - With the indulgence of the House I seek to withdraw my amended amendment and instead propose the first amendment. I move -

That the motion be amended in paragraph (1) after the word 'A' by adding the word 'joint'.

As I have discussed, this is because we believe the best way to take this forward is for there to be a joint House inquiry so that we get broad-spectrum agreement across both Houses of parliament with the input of not only the politically aligned members of parliament but also the independents in the upper House. That would also mean that there is no political party with the numbers to direct

the committee one way or another. We believe that is the best way to go forward because, as I have said, we need general agreement. We need broad-based support to consider all the issues and the best way to do that would be through a joint House inquiry where there are no political numbers to establish a predetermined outcome.

[12.34 p.m.]

Ms WHITE (Lyons - Leader of the Opposition) - Madam Speaker, I support the amendment moved by the member for Braddon, Dr Broad. I understand the intent of the Government in terms of the make-up of the committee membership proposed in the original motion however the arguments made by Dr Broad warrant consideration by the Government. I also urge you to consider the fact that there is no urgency to establish this committee today. I am highlighting that we do not need to establish the committee today. Further discussions need to take place between members of the House so we can find a resolution that serves the best interests of the community. I would encourage the Government to consider doing that.

I firmly believe the best way for us to achieve cross-party and community support for any proposed changes to firearms laws in this state is for there to be a joint House committee established. There can be no doubt that with the make-up of the committee as proposed by the Government at this stage, it will be heavily weighted in the Government's favour. With two members of the Government, one member from the Greens and one from the Labor Party, it will depend upon the Government deliberative vote if there is any tie in a vote taken on a motion or a matter before that committee, which effectively means the Government have three votes, the Labor Party one vote and the Greens one vote. I do not think the Government wants to make this a partisan issue. I do not think anybody wants firearms changes to be a partisan issue. We want there to be cross-party support for any proposed changes and for there to be broad community support. What we are offering here is a solution to the Government's issue they faced and it has been one that has dogged them since about February this year, for there to be broad-based community and political support for any changes proposed to the legislation in Tasmania. This is a highly emotive issue that draws intense debate within the community.

I understand the Government wants to have the ability to manage the committee process and control recommendations that come from that process but the Government has the power to do consultation and policy development as a government. If they want to control policy or amendments that come to legislation in this parliament, they can do that as a government. The minister can progress that work in his department.

If they truly want the parliament to participate in considering the community's views on proposed changes to firearms laws that may or may not be necessary, I strongly encourage them to support this amendment. It would mean we take away the partisan politics that has plagued this debate for the last five or six months which has been to the detriment of many people who are keenly interested to see this matter resolved. This is a way for the Government to proceed without having any accusations levelled at them that outcomes of this committee are partisan.

We want to work constructively with the Government to ensure debates taken on this issue or any issues that are dealt with by this committee can be managed in a way that reflects the community and has the best chance of a good outcome. The Government would understand that if you have a joint House committee and you get a majority report recommendation that is supported by members of both parties in the Legislative Council, it means any proposed changes to the legislation are more likely to succeed. It is in the Government's best interests to make sure there is as broad a line as

possible for this committee of inquiry and that the community has confidence it is not being influenced by partisan politics.

We are not mischief making in proposing this amendment. We are trying to assist the Government and assist a good outcome here for the community. I remind members there is no urgency to deal with motion today. If members need to take more time to consider it, perhaps there is a way forward so we can speak about this outside the confines of this Chamber and come back with something that will work. The current make-up of the committee is detrimental for good outcomes and that concerns me.

[12.38 p.m.]

Dr WOODRUFF (Franklin) - Madam Speaker, gun laws are a very serious topic of conversation. The proposed inquiry we are speaking to today has come on a long tail of conversations in the Tasmanian community that started some 22 years ago now in 1996. Following the terrible violence that occurred at Port Arthur and the strong representations not only of survivors of the shootings there but of a widespread uprising of concern in the Tasmanian and wider Australian communities, a tripartite agreement was struck by the federal government, strongly supported by the Greens, the Labor Party and the Liberal Party in Tasmania and at the federal level.

It was that agreement that created the National Firearms Agreement, a historic agreement that was led by then Liberal prime minister, John Howard. It ushered in following that common legislation across all of the states. There was a gun buyback scheme that followed and, as a result, at that point in time 660 959 rapid fire weapons were taken out of the community.

I am aware that in the 22 years since that national agreement was made there have been no public mass shootings where firearms have been used. The use of firearms as a murder weapon has declined by nearly half across Australia. That runs starkly against the trend of what is happening in other countries, where gun ownership has been unrestricted and gun-related violence, including mass shootings, is increasing.

Within that context I make a contribution about the very point of having this inquiry in the first place. This inquiry has come on the back of recent events that started just prior to the state election. The Liberals made a secret policy commitment to firearms stakeholders, which we now know parts of their policy contravene the National Firearms Agreement. It is quite clear that the policy commitment they made of extending firearms licences to operate for 10 years contravenes clause 34(d) of the National Firearms Agreement. That clearly states, in no uncertain terms, that a licence must be issued for a period of no more than five years.

The policy commitments made also includes 'no longer confiscating firearms for some unspecified storage offences', but clause 44(b) of the National Firearms Agreement requires that a storage offence must result in the confiscation of firearms.

The policy also proposes the creation of a category E for firearms that are currently prohibited. The creation of new categories is in violation of the National Firearms Agreement. Parts of these policies unambiguously contravene the National Firearms Agreement. This was repeatedly denied by the Premier. People concluded that either the Premier was willfully and strategically lying to the public or that there was some other unexplained reason - but there was none. It is a matter of fact that they contravened the firearms agreement.

Into this space we are talking about having a firearms inquiry in this House. We have to ask of what purpose that inquiry will be and we have to make sure that the terms of reference for that inquiry in no way gives succor to those pre-election Liberal policy commitments that were made. In no way should an inquiry be predicated on an investigation of those policy commitments because some of them do breach the National Firearms Agreement.

Speaking to the amendment, to move it from a lower House inquiry to a joint inquiry, it is also relevant to say that the upper House proposed to hold a firearms inquiry themselves after the state election. Thank you to the Greens for making this apparent to the media one day before the election. After Tasmanians found out about this policy commitment to weaken gun laws, widespread outrage was generated in the community. Very strong public statements were made immediately by survivors of Port Arthur, survivors of that violence, and by gun control advocates and medical professionals who could not believe that these changes were being proposed.

As a result of that, an upper House inquiry was proposed - probably to take some heat off the situation and to park it. The Premier then committed subsequently, after he was repeatedly challenged to provide the advice he had been given to the police minister from Tasmania Police, to the Tasmanian people, that he will show that the police have ticked off the Liberal's policy commitments to firearms stakeholders and said that they do not contravene the National Firearms Agreement.

The Premier could not provide that advice and has not provided that advice. Despite the fact that he said there has been advice and they do not breach it, he will not provide that advice. This matter is so serious that the Premier is being taken to court for refusing to provide the RTI chain of evidence that will show that advice exists. We have a situation where the Premier of Tasmania is still, as I understand it, in proceedings in the Supreme Court to review the decision that the Premier made to refuse to release information under the Right to Information Act.

In this toxic public conversation about why the Liberal Party is trying to weaken gun laws in Tasmania, the Upper House decided to abandon an inquiry. This amendment to the Government's amendment to their motion to introduce a gun inquiry into the Lower House, seeks to make a joint inquiry. We will not vote against that. We can see a range of pitfalls and potential concerns. It may be that members in the other place might seek to make changes to the terms of reference. It is not within the control of this place to be certain about the membership of the committee and how it may proceed. We accept the Labor Party is trying to have a genuine and open conversation on this topic. For that reason, we support that move but we flag that it comes with risks.

The Greens are here to speak for people who want to keep strong gun laws in Tasmania, and for survivors of gun violence. We make the point that this is not only about Liberal Party policies; this is about Labor Party policies.

The Labor Party brought a Liberal-like policy on firearms to the last election as well. They kept theirs very quiet, especially after the stink came out about the Liberals' commitments. The Labor Party has also made an attempt to court the shooting lobby and the firearms owners lobby. In government, the Labor Party's policy said, for example, that they will consult with firearms organisations and clubs to establish an agreed, formal, expert-based structure that is able to provide timely advice to government on firearm policy and issues. That sounds much too concerningly close to the Tasmanian Firearm Owners Council that has been proposed and funded by the Liberals.

There is also a move to introduce 'the use of infringement notices in lieu of a summons for very minor breaches of firearm storage regulations'. The term 'very minor breaches' is very wide and very open and that is a serious concern. The Labor Party is also interested in working with the TFGA regarding regulatory issues that frustrate and impede the legitimate day-to-day use of firearms. These areas have been well covered by the National Firearms Agreement and these so-called annoying and frustrating regulations are the bread and butter of what keeps Australians safe.

Owning a firearm is not a right. It is granted with rules that the state imposes to ensure that we are kept safe. The Greens will always make sure those rules are upheld and there is no weakening or eroding of the National Firearms Agreement. The Labor Party should not walk away from the fact that they are prepared to put the interests of firearms owners and organisations at the forefront in this discussion. We want the interests of survivors of gun violence, medical professionals and gun control advocates to be right in this conversation. We will continue to speak on the other aspects of the amendments the Labor Party have proposed, but I think we have made our position on this particular one clear.

[12.52 p.m.]

Mr FERGUSON (Bass - Minister for Police, Fire and Emergency Management) - The Government will not be supporting this amendment at all and I will give very robust and good reasons for why. I want to begin by making the point that the amendment moved is an amendment to the Government's refreshing of this motion. I have taken into account in good faith the desire from Dr Broad to be bipartisan on this. The motion I moved that should replace the original one bears little resemblance, in an attempt to try to bring the parties together on this. I know that members will have different views on one of the lines, and we can come to that perhaps, but I have made significant changes in order to bring the groups together.

The original motion, by the way, was to try to make is as consistent as possible with the Legislative Council. That was the motivation there. It was not a particular case of being wedded to each and every word as they were but to try to keep faith with those more than 100 people and organisations who had made submissions. The Government felt and still feels it is important to have terms of reference that still accommodate the objects to which those people and organisations made submissions.

We have a job to do here today, colleagues, which is to deal with this matter as members of the House of Assembly. That is what we have committed to do. That is what stakeholders expect of us and attempting to move to a joint select inquiry is a completely different beast. I will set aside the argument of members opposite, the Labor members, who said there was a predetermined outcome. Nothing could be further from the truth. That is not what is behind this and we have made it very clear that the inquiry should be good people working together within that realm of what a select inquiry can do - confidential discussions considering submissions, taking evidence, probing evidence, and even having information provided to it from the Government and relevant agencies. We as a government will support this inquiry with information as it sees fit, but to suggest that there is a predetermined outcome undersells what this House and its members are capable of doing.

Dr Woodruff made a very good point in her contribution just now. Rewriting this to try to lasso in another House of parliament introduces significant risk as to where this can next go - and why is that? Well, it is self-evident. The Legislative Council has decided not be involved in the inquiry. They scrapped it. They said 'no more'. To suggest that somehow they are now suddenly going to want to be part of the inquiry again will smell of political games on their part.

Mr Hidding - Was Labor involved in the decision up there?

Madam SPEAKER - Order. Through the Chair, please.

Mr FERGUSON - It is a good question Mr Hidding asks. There was a Labor member on that committee -

Ms White - One member.

Mr FERGUSON - One member? In this place, one member counts.

Ms White - One member has a majority vote? Why do you do this?

Mr FERGUSON - That is an interesting interjection. The committee of that House made a decision to no longer be involved in the inquiry.

Ms White - Because you scrapped the policy. Why do you do this? We are trying to work with you.

Madam SPEAKER - Order.

Mr FERGUSON - When you say you are trying to work with us, I have worked very hard to take into account your terms of reference. It is now virtually exactly what you asked for. With what you are attempting, whatever the motive, the outcome is uncertainty. You are adding a lot of risk here to what happens next.

Ms White - You are risking accusations of a partisan outcome.

Mr FERGUSON - The Legislative Council could say, 'No, we're not going to agree to this'. They could and I would not be surprised if they did; after all, they have just resolved to not continue with their own inquiry. Ladies and gentlemen, we are here today because the Government wants the House of Assembly to pick up where the Legislative Council left off.

To be clear, it is a big thing for the House of Assembly to set up an inquiry with these significant powers to send for persons, summon them before us, to send for papers -

Ms White - It is standard.

Mr FERGUSON - Standard, but it is a big deal. What else is standard? While the Leader of the Opposition continues to play politics -

Mr O'Byrne - Come on. Why do you say that all we do is play politics? You are the worst in this House at playing politics.

Mr FERGUSON - No, do not get all victimised. It is standard for the House of Assembly, when it sets up an inquiry, for government numbers to be represented as a majority government. That is standard. Why would you try to up-end that? We are talking about hundreds of years of Westminster tradition. This is standard for our House. That is an insult.

Ms White - I thought you would see the risks associated with that. I am trying to be helpful.

Mr FERGUSON - The Government has the majority on the Floor but we also recognise it is important for all political parties to be part of these committees. We have accommodated the wishes of the Labor Party.

Mr O'Byrne -Let's play politics, shall we?

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER - Order.

Mr FERGUSON - We were going all right until you walked in.

Mr O'Byrne - No, you were accommodating -

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER - Order.

Mr FERGUSON - Anybody who says this House does not have the capability and the members to be able to consider this in a professional and proper way is joking - seriously.

Ms White - You are exposed. I was trying to be helpful.

Mr FERGUSON - Ms White, what you are doing is not helpful at all. The Legislative Council has said no to an inquiry. They have drawn a line and said that is not going to happen.

Ms White - Have a chat to them. We can adjourn the debate at 1 p.m. and you can speak to them.

Mr FERGUSON - I will tell you something else, and you ought to know this; if you do not, I am surprised. Members of the other House have been saying in conversation that it is not their job to do policy. It may even be on their *Hansard*.

The Government has come forward in good faith. We have moved for a House of Assembly inquiry. It has been welcomed by the stakeholders that Dr Broad refers to. I have completely changed our motion to take into account the wishes of the Labor Party and the Greens in an attempt to try to not have this silly squabble on the Floor of our House. Just because I have drawn a line and said I do not agree with that amendment, we should not be trying to make it hostile. That is not what is behind this.

As to the argument on lack of urgency, I do not agree with that because parties are looking for us to move forward on this. They have been told that there will be an inquiry and I do not want to see this debate holding it up unnecessarily. Introducing the risk is a problem so I would ask that we deal with the amendment now.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER - Mr O'Byrne, on the amendment as moved by Dr Broad to the amendment to the original motion.

[12.59 p.m.]

Mr O'BYRNE (Franklin) - Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise to respond to the contribution from the member who resumed his seat in context of the amendment to the amendment.

It is a little bit rich for us to be lectured by this Government and particularly this minister and Leader of Government Business about playing politics. It is a bit rich for him to accuse us of playing politics when in virtually every step and utterance from this minister, he goes to the politics

first. He goes down into the gutter, plays the game, tries to wedge and diminish not only members of the Opposition and Greens and in the other House, clearly by his reference in the debate today, but also those who seek to criticise him.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER - Order, Mr O'Byrne. I need you to be relevant to the actual amendment.

Mr O'BYRNE - This is a very important matter of public policy.

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

WAIVER OF GOVERNMENT PRIVATE MEMBERS TIME

[2.31 p.m.]

Mr BROOKS (Braddon) - Madam Speaker, I indicate that in accordance with standing order 42(d), Government private members will waive their private members time today.

MOTION

Appointment of Select Committee - Firearms Laws Inquiry

Resumed from above.

Mr O'BYRNE (Franklin) - Madam Speaker, it is amazing that Mr Brooks in moving the waiving of Government private members time has talked about the priorities of the Government, hailing your economic record, which is wafer thin and threadbare at best. Results on the Australian dollar and the economic conditions broadly across the economy, and when you bring it on to debate it -

Mr BROOKS - Point of order, Madam Speaker. I believe this is debate on an amendment, not whatever he is going on about.

Madam SPEAKER - That is a fairly wishy-washy point. I ask Mr O'Byrne to continue speaking, and please stick to relevance.

Mr O'BYRNE - Thank you, Madam Speaker. It is not surprising he is a little bit sensitive given he claims to be the hard man on the backbench wanting to argue about the Tasmanian economy and when he gets a chance he squibs it. He does not actually want to talk about the economy. We were prepared to talk about the Tasmanian economy and how, over many years, the Tasmanian Labor Party built the economy that we are enjoying today with irrigation, infrastructure investment and diversification and responding to the global financial crisis. The steady hand of Labor ensured that when the global economic conditions improved, the Tasmanian economy could benefit from that.

If Mr Brooks wants to squib it and run away from that, that is a matter for him. That is yet another example of him being a bit of a hard man on the blower but when he is tested on the floor of the parliament he literally goes to water. No substance or sizzle. All sizzle, no sausage. It is not the first time you have been accused of that either, Mr Brooks.

Madam Speaker, in my contribution prior to the luncheon break I saw, and no doubt other members on this side of the House and any clear minded Tasmanian watching, the minister, Mr Ferguson, who had resumed his seat, his terrible politicking and the hypocrisy of accusing the Labor Party of playing politics on such a serious matter. Every time he gets to his feet in this House, he makes a choice to answer questions honestly and openly and deal with the matter before the House, or does he play politics? He plays politics.

We know with the debate on this matter, there is a whole lot of politics being played. It is not just to the detriment of the people of Tasmania, but it reflects very poorly on the Government. Those people in Tasmania, on both sides of this debate, want a proper, open and transparent debate on gun laws in Tasmania. Those people who are lobbying for changes to gun regulations are just as angry at the way this Government has dealt with this matter as those people who are against changes. They feel they have been used as a political football because of the way this Government chose politics over substance. Every time this member and this Government engages in serious debates impacting on the future of Tasmania, be it health policy, be it education policy, be it infrastructure investment, be it gun policy, the politics that are played particularly by the Minister for Health, the member for Bass, Mr Ferguson, compromises any proper, open even-handed debate.

The Leader of the Opposition, Rebecca White, made a contribution in an attempt to help the Government get out of the hole that dug itself, trying to have a proper debate and moving amendments that would take this matter forward in an even-handed way. He got up, and maybe because she is a woman, I do not know, but maybe -

Mr Ferguson - Get out of it.

Mr O'BYRNE - No, there is a pattern of behaviour that we saw writ large in that media conference. When someone had the temerity to ask you a direct question about a matter of absolute importance not only to his role but the people that he cares for day in, day out, you tried to belittle him in front of his supervisor by asking him, 'What about the gentleman to your left'. Of course he knew who that person was. Of course he knew and then you waved him away. I will not be lectured and we will not be lectured by this person on politics.

The only reason I am up here and giving this kind of contribution is a direct result of the contribution of the member who resumed his seat just before lunch. It is a direct result of that. Do not accuse us of playing politics when we are attacked by this minister at every opportunity he gets, selectively using information, and selectively making comments about various people's motivations in terms of how we seek to resolve matters. We could quite easily have dismissed this and saw it for politics and walked away from it but we have made a series of sensible amendments to try to make this workable, not only for this House but for the people of Tasmania. As you know this is a very serious topic.

Mr Ferguson - The Government has agreed to most of them. You were not here.

Mr O'BYRNE - I was not in the House so it is not on the squawk box; it is not on television in each office and we do not follow the debates.

Madam SPEAKER - Order. Mr Ferguson that is not very helpful.

Mr O'BYRNE - The hypocrisy of the member for Bass, Mr Ferguson, to say that we are playing politics and you are not, you are above it all - I have lost count of the number of times he has got up, or put in a press release, that the Labor Party and the O'Byrnes are resorting to

personality politics. Yet you go after the O'Byrnes and individual Labor Party members, having a go at them personally. Hypocrisy writ large every time you get on your feet.

We want to deal with this matter. We want to deal with it appropriately to resolve these issues, very important issues that are in the minds of the Tasmanian community. It is not helped by the petty politics and the personality politics played by the member over there.

Members interjecting.

Madam SPEAKER - Order. There is guilt on both sides of the House at the moment. Please remember who you are and what you are here for.

Mr O'BYRNE - In summary, Madam Speaker, I thank you for the opportunity to provide a contribution on this important matter.

The House divided -

AYES 11

NOES 11

Mr Bacon
Dr Broad
Ms Butler
Ms Dow
Ms Haddad (Teller)
Mr O'Byrne
Ms O'Byrne
Ms O'Connor
Ms Standen
Ms White
Dr Woodruff

Ms Archer
Mr Barnett
Mr Brooks
Ms Courtney
Mr Ferguson
Mr Gutwein
Mr Hidding (Teller)
Mr Hodgman
Mr Jaensch
Mrs Petrusma
Mr Rockliff

PAIR

Ms Houston

Mr Shelton

Madam SPEAKER - The result of the division is 11 Ayes and 11 Noes. I therefore have to use a casting vote. In accordance with standing order 167 I cast my vote with the Noes for the reason that the Legislative Council has already concluded their committee on gun laws and also advice that the TFGA believes the Legislative Council inquiry is the most appropriate forum to review issues in relation to the state's firearms.

Amendment to amendment negatived.

[2.46 p.m.]

Dr BROAD (Braddon) - Madam Speaker, I move the second of our amendments, which is actually amendment (3) -

That in paragraph (1)(c) remove the words 'proposed Tasmanian Firearms Council (TFOC) and insert instead 'creation of broad-based consultative group'.

As I have already described, there is a requirement to have consensus in this issue, to remove the politics from it. At the moment putting together a Tasmanian firearms council would not be a broad-based representative group because it does not have the other side of the debate represented. That was the argument I put earlier. The minister and the member for Franklin, Dr Woodruff, talked about Labor's policy, although Dr Woodruff made comments along the lines that our policy was Liberal-like. I wholeheartedly disagree with that because we know Gun Control Australia recognises that our policy did not breach the National Firearms Agreement, whereas the Liberal policy did, so the idea that we had a Liberal policy is definitely incorrect.

We have been consulting with firearms owner groups and Gun Control Australia. Basically we have been doing the job the Government should have been doing in developing these sorts of policies and discussing these sorts of issues. We have moved from establishing, as was taken to the election from our policy, a firearms group to having a more broad-based group. That way we can get both sides of this debate. As I keep reiterating, we need to have broad-based consensus so the community can support any changes down the track for firearms regulations.

The minister misquoted that the reason for including other members in having a joint committee was that there was a perception that if the Government had the numbers it would be a pre-determined outcome. I was not alleging that there would be a pre-determined outcome but that there would definitely be the perception of a pre-determined outcome if the Government had the numbers. The last thing we want is to have a series of dissenting reports. What we want is consensus across the political divide so that we can take this issue and put it to bed.

This is a problem that the Government has created and we are trying to help them solve their own problem. I thought it was not very generous when the minister, Mr Ferguson, accused us of playing politics with this. We have taken a genuine approach to try to rectify the issue that they have been facing since their policy was dropped pre-election. Sincerely, my entire aim today has been to come up with a policy so that we can have a working platform for a sensible debate around changes to gun laws that can have broad-based community support. That is why we are proposing to put this amendment so that we can have a broad-based consultative group. That way, they can have input not just in the development of any changes that might come as a result of a committee process, but any issues down the track, so that gun control and gun laws are not a political issue, and all the way down the track and off into the future there can be broad-based consensus and we can have sensible discussions about things as issues arise. The best way to do that is to have a broad-based consultative group rather than have a group put together that is only one side of the argument, because that is not what we need. We need broad-based consensus and that is why I am putting that amendment.

[2.50 p.m.]

Mr FERGUSON (Bass - Minister for Police, Fire and Emergency Management) - Madam Speaker, I make it clear that the last 40 minutes has been a very unfortunate period during this debate. This accusation of politicking started with one side of this Chamber and was responded to, and blow me down if then the originating side did not get all upset about it.

The Government has been working very carefully to try to accommodate the demands of members opposite to the point that I have moved an amendment to the Government's motion to more or less accede to those requests. I wrote down what Dr Broad and Ms White had to say during their contributions and it was very political. Comments regarding predetermined outcomes - that was a political statement that was made and I responded to that. Then we had the wasting of time by Mr O'Byrne with more politicking, which was unnecessary. It has served no purpose. I cannot help notice the glass jaw, where the Government was being accused of being political, you got a

little bit back and you did not like it so you played the victim card. It is unhelpful in this debate and has not served any purpose for the community at all.

I want this House to come to some consensus on this. That is how we have acted and I do not appreciate the thin-skinned nature of members opposite. We have dealt with the question of whether there should be a joint or a single House inquiry; that matter is behind us now. Because it has come up, I remind members that when this issue was contemplated in the Legislative Council some months ago, the Labor Party, on *Hansard* and during the debate, made it clear they were not going to support the establishment of a select inquiry in the Legislative Council, and then they changed their mind at the last minute. This is the double-dealing that has been going on and it has to stop. Whether they are for or against any changes to the law, stakeholders are going to be very unimpressed with this. This task today is to establish a House of Assembly inquiry.

I am not enamoured with Dr Broad's amendment on this and I will explain why. He has moved an amendment that replaces the use of the words in the terms of reference, and for people listening and our stakeholders who will be reading this, what Dr Broad and the Labor Party are seeking to do is to obliterate any reference to the proposed Tasmanian firearms owners council and have it replaced with the words 'the creation of a broad-based consultative group'.

Mr Hidding - That is exactly what it is.

Mr FERGUSON - Thank you, Mr Hidding, that is more or less what it is. What Dr Broad is doing is saying there is no role for the firearms owners council.

Ms O'Byrne - It doesn't even exist.

Mr FERGUSON - I will come to that. More interjections, more politicking. You are saying there is no place for that. In the motion I have in front of the House at the moment it is proposed that the committee look into the proposed TFOC.

Ms White - I thought you threw your policy out.

Mr FERGUSON - You do not understand. Members who are injecting again -

Madam SPEAKER - Order. Let us hear what the meaning is.

Mr FERGUSON - Some people might have forgotten a key fact from the quizzical looks over here. The TFOC is in our Budget that has been passed by this House and the other House. The Budget contains \$400 000 over four years and it is listed as the 'Tasmanian Firearms Owners Council'.

Members interjecting.

Madam SPEAKER - Order. This is most unparliamentary. I am looking everywhere. Please resume.

Mr FERGUSON - I do not appreciate the claims and interjections about dishonesty. It is honest. You may need to check the budget papers, but the Tasmanian firearms owners council is in our Budget. It is budgeted for. Dr Broad asked me questions about this at Estimates and I gave him a commitment at that table that it would be subject to the inquiry. I do not know if that satisfied

you at the time, Dr Broad, but that was my answer and it would be my answer here today as well if you had asked me again.

The fact is that the Budget right now provides funding in this financial year of \$100 000 ongoing to set up the Tasmanian firearms owners council. It was the Government's proposition and Mr Dean's proposition that Labor voted for in the upper House when that inquiry was being set up, that TFOC be looked into. You are now saying it should not be looked into and instead a broad-based consultative group should be looked into. As to these terms of reference that you are now trying to change again, you have practically written all of them now and we have agreed to that because we are trying to be accommodating.

Reflect on the conduct of this debate. This has not been a helpful debate at all, when you have seen this point-scoring continually being made to try to take pain off the Government, when what we are trying to do here is get this inquiry up and running. I ask, respectfully, that members of this House deal with the various amendment questions and decide which of them we will agree to and which ones we will not and get on and do it, instead of wasting time and arguing over petty point-scoring which serves no purpose.

I express a concern here that Dr Broad is moving to replace something that is only proposed. That is the first point. Second, it is something which is actually in the Budget and is a listed budget item. Third, he is moving to replace that with a broad-based consultative group. I am not sure how broad that would be referring to.

Dr Broad - That would be the committee. I am trying to signal what the intent is, through interjection. Rather than saying let's have a firearms owners group, let us have a broad-based one where we can have agreement with not only owners groups but also the other side.

Mr FERGUSON - Okay. I am not sure if you are aware, but there is a bit of history to this. Rather than the Government having a predetermined outcome in mind, it sounds like Dr Broad might have a predetermined outcome in mind. You may want to reflect on how workable a group you are going to have that has non-firearms owners on the same group as firearms owners with a view to trying to provide advice to government. I do not understand that. My hands are empty on this. It sounds like you have a predetermined outcome, whereas we did not. There is the irony.

Because of these moves by the Labor Party we are at risk of wasting another lot of time for no good purpose. We will agree to this amendment. We will get on and do it because we are sick of the time wasting.

Ms O'Byrne - Sit down, then.

Mr FERGUSON - I will not be sat down. I am speaking in response to a serious amendment from your party. This is not wasting time. I am explaining an important point. The Labor Party has not thought through what they are trying to do here, but in the interests only of getting this job done, getting it through our House, putting an end to this silly point-scoring and getting on with the inquiry, we will wave this through. But I make it very clear that the Government does not have the same predetermined outcome in mind.

Ms White - Explain what you think ours is, then.

Mr FERGUSON - This should not be happening. Members have forgotten that a budget has passed through this House that refers to the 'Tasmanian Firearms Owners Council' and I assert that that particular initiative should be considered by the committee. Rather than dismissing people and being rude, we should be willing to listen to each other and take these points of view in mind without this continual wasting of time.

[2.59 p.m.]

Dr WOODRUFF (Franklin) - Madam Speaker, this is a very important amendment to the amendment that the Government has moved on their motion. We very much support it. I am pleased to hear that the Government will also be supporting this amendment because the Greens would not have been able to support a motion that had this amendment in it. We are very pleased that, that is the case.

We are also very pleased that the minister has listened and understood that the inclusion of a broad base of people's voices on any advice or any committee to government is essential on this matter. The minister wondered what sort of stakeholders might be included in this group. We could suggest a few: for example, the Hobart Women's Shelter, the Women's Legal Service, or perhaps someone who has been outspoken from the Alannah and Madeline Foundation that was set up after the Port Arthur mass shooting occurred, and representatives of Gun Control Australia. They are the sorts of bodies and other voices that should be included in any firearms advisory council, should such a body ever be established. This is an essential amendment to the amendment of the Government's motion.

With regard to the minister's comments about the fact there is a budget line item for the fire owners council, ipso facto, it must exist. If only it were the case that other advisory councils that this Government funds had a voice. If only it were the case that they were listened to. The Animal Welfare Advisory Committee is a body for which there is a line item in the Budget and it is never listened to. From that very committee, we had such a well-credentialed and respected principal solicitor for the Melbourne-based Animal Law Institute, Malcolm Caulfield, who quit the Animal Welfare Advisory Committee because he felt that the Government was not listening and that there are deep-seated problems in the way that it handles investigations.

There you have it. You can fund these things and not listen to them; you can put them in the budget and not continue with rolling out the funding. All of this is possible. Clearly, what we want to see is that there an evidence base for establishing an advisory council of any type and that when it is funded, that the work of that council is respected and the voices on that council are listened to. They must have the support of the community.

The terms of reference of the firearm owners council as reported in Mr Hidding's letter to stakeholder groups, which was on his website when he was the previous minister for police, said that the council would be a nine-member statutory body with the chair and members to be paid positions and nominations open to major stakeholder bodies. It was a body intended to provide advice on all matters to do with the regulation and use of firearms in Tasmania. Given that none of the organisations I referred to previously, the Gun Control Australia advocate, none of them had any correspondence or heard anything about the proposal to establish this committee, I think it is something which ought not to be acted on until that has been a full investigation into whether it is required in the first place.

This particular amendment seeks to remove the words 'proposed Tasmanian Firearms Owners Council'. We do not want to labour this issue but there is a question in the amendment which the

Government has moved about why we would be having an inquiry into the roles of Tasmania Police and the roles of the firearms services. It is not clear what is meant by that in the terms of reference for the committee. What is the basis for needing to investigate the roles of the police? Which roles of the Tasmania Police?

Dr Broad - By interjection, if I may: if there are purely administrative functions it might be a better use of time if an administrator instead of a police officer did that.

Dr WOODRUFF - Yes, all things are possible, Dr Broad. It leaves it very open for a whole number of investigations that may or may not be appropriate or reasonable within the remit of such a committee. That stands and this amendment to amendment 6 to change the part in relation to the proposed Tasmanian firearm owners council and replace it with the creation of a broad-based consultative group. We do support that.

Amendment to amendment agreed to.

Recognition of Visitors

Madam SPEAKER - Honourable members, I acknowledge that we have students from grades 11 and 12 from Scotch Oakburn College. Welcome to parliament.

Members - Hear, hear.

[3.07 p.m.]

Dr BROAD (Braddon) - Madam Speaker, I move a final amendment. It is one that the Government has already signalled that they are amenable to. That is:

Amendment 8, paragraph 3, delete paragraph 3 and insert -

Members who are not members of the committee may participate in non-deliberative proceedings of the committee by asking questions of witnesses at the discretion of the Chair but may not vote, move any motion or be counted for the purposes of a quorum.

This is rather an unusual addition to a committee. It could be disruptive. We should stick to the normal process and we would move that that be struck out.

I thank the Police minister, Mr Ferguson, for supporting the previous amendment. As he says, we do not want to get bogged into the weeds but try to move on with a sense of goodwill.

I will not speak for very much longer on this but just to recognise that the Government has already indicated they are supportive of this amendment. I thank them for that and hopefully move this amendment and then consider the amendment in its entirety and then get on with the process to have a very good outcome for Tasmanian firearms owners, and the rest of the community.

[3.09 p.m.]

Mr FERGUSON (Bass - Minister for Police, Fire and Emergency Management) - Madam Speaker, I am more than comfortable supporting the House's wish on this. It was the Government's

wish that it stay there but it was added more as convenience to members of this House who are not going to be members of the committee to be able to participate in the inquiry. If that is the wish of the House I will support that because we do not have any concern.

I point out that this is a reflection of the structure of the Estimates committee. It was important that the Government have that clause for the Estimates committee process so that members of this House, particularly shadow ministers, who were not formal members of the Estimates committees, could participate. I remember the debate very clearly. It was very important to the Opposition and it was as important to the Government for best process that we have that for the Estimates. If the House does not feel that it is quite as relevant for this inquiry I have no quarrel with that and support Dr Broad's amendment on that basis.

Amended amendment agreed to.

[3.10 p.m.]

Mr BROOKS (Braddon) - Madam Speaker, I believe I am now speaking to the substantive amended motion. Just so I am clear, the amendment that was moved by Mr Ferguson has now been amended, and two of the three have been through, so I will talk about that.

It is no secret that I am a keen sporting and competition shooter. The importance of this committee that appears we have support for from all sides of this House is so that people can have their say. They can put in context some of the reasons as to why there should or should not be amendments to the legislation. In my opinion there are some fairly important changes that are required to the legislation because there are some potentially unintended consequences in some areas, there are some shortfalls in some areas, and that is not about putting the public in more danger or anything like that; it is about the practical requirements and the implications of the impact of the current firearms legislation.

I supported our original policy position prior to the election but I also have no problem with people being afforded the opportunity through this committee process. I will not speak for very long because it would be a positive outcome for us to get this motion dealt with before the end of the waiving of private members' time, if you could call it that, which is now the Government's time. That is very important. It allows people to have their say without the effective headlines. They can make a submission. Those who put a significant amount of effort into making a submission to the inquiry in the other House are not necessarily wasted; they can be taken into account. They can attend the committee and explain how it impacts them and why. They can explain why they are for or against certain matters or suggested changes, the committee can take that on advisement and then bring back a report and some recommendations to the House, hopefully supported by all members of the committee, that are sensible and practical changes to the firearms legislation that does not put in place a worse aspect for some around firearms safety and things like that.

I support the intention of the Government with the original policy. I support what the Government was doing with the proposed legislation that we would have put, but I also support the recognition and feedback we have had that people want to have more of a say on this. As a Government that listens we have maintained our position that we think there are some very valid points on behalf of organisations such as the TFGA and recreational shooters and firearms owners, but also acknowledge there are concerns from others that will be heard.

This is a process of the parliament that shows a government that is willing to listen and work with others to ensure people who want to have a say can do so. There are some real practical

concerns and issues with the current Firearms Act and in my opinion and in others' opinions who have told me, that in no way will impact public safety. The committee will look at that and that is the thing we will get to the bottom of.

I support the amended motion. As a member appointed to the committee, I look forward to hearing the views of the people and I encourage all people and organisations that are concerned, whichever way or whichever issue they have, to have their say or make a submission because it is important the committee considers them. We want to get it right but there are some practical issues with the legislation.

[3.17 p.m.]

Dr WOODRUFF (Franklin) - Madam Speaker, are we on the amended motion now?

Madam SPEAKER - We are on the amendment as amended.

Dr WOODRUFF - I believed we have reached a position where we have a substantially amended motion from the motion that was initially brought into the House. It brings us to a place where we are able to have a formal conversation and inquiry into issues of serious concern to all Tasmanians and have a formal conversation and investigation into the concerns of many stakeholders about Tasmania's gun laws.

The Greens will be very keen to focus on the legislative changes needed to bring Tasmania's Firearms Act into compliance with the National Firearms Agreement, because we are not in compliance with the National Firearms Agreement. The extensive report and investigation that was done by Her Excellency Kate Warner, before she was in her current role, has demonstrated many ways in which Tasmania, along with some other states, no longer comply with the National Firearms Agreement. Those are matters that need to be addressed in such an inquiry.

The Greens will very strongly represent and seek to hear stories and concerns from people who want reforms to minimise and, if possible, prevent domestic violence and abuse involving firearms, as well as a better understanding about what we can do to reduce the violence that still occurs, sadly, to people in the family violence space regarding firearms. We will also continue to promote the absolute requirement for a ban on semi-automatic handguns.

There are many other matters the inquiry will and must consider and, with goodwill and tripartite support, the Greens will work hard to make sure Tasmania is a bulwark against the push by national firearms associations and some shooting lobby groups to erode firearms legislation for convenience.

As a firearm owner myself, yes the regulations are sometimes frustrating. Yes, there are onerous things that need to be attended to. Yes, there is care that needs to be taken in storage and yes, there is a level of detail that needs to be attended to, to make sure that all of the paperwork is up-to-date and all of the licence requirements are fulfilled. That is as it should be. That is a small price to pay for keeping Tasmania one of the safest places to live in the world.

With that, we thank the minister and the Labor Party for the conversations we have had where we have reached this position.

Mr Ferguson - If I may, on a point, offer that we get through the amendment and come back to the substantive to give Dr Broad another opportunity to sum up.

Madam SPEAKER - Are you happy with that Dr Broad?

Dr Broad - Yes.

Amended amendment agreed to.

[3.21 p.m.]

Dr BROAD (Braddon) - Madam Speaker, we are now talking on the amended substantive motion. We had a motion today that was not workable and it has been amended to one that is. It was unfortunate that when I was alerted that this would be coming on this week - and I have thanked the minister for giving me the heads up, that was graciously received - when I rang around the stakeholder groups, nobody knew this was coming this week. The TFGA, the Firearm Owners and Gun Control Australia did not know so we have been doing things on the hop. We have come to a position where we have not got everything we want, there is no doubt about that but the Government has not got their preferred position either. The Greens have also made concessions.

What we have is something that could be workable. The only issue that remains from our point of view is the potential for the Government to use numbers to direct the committee to go one way or another. Everyone here has shown some goodwill: maybe not complete goodwill during the debate however, if we can do that in a way where there is goodwill from all three sides we can get a good outcome for the people. If the numbers are used in a way that results in partisan lines, that would not be a good reflection on the Government.

We want a good outcome for Tasmania. We do not want lines to be drawn and for this to be politicised. We want a good outcome for firearm owners. Otherwise, if the Government wanted to control or manage the process, this could have been done through the department. The department could have called for submissions which we would have participated in, as we participated in good faith with the upper House inquiry by putting in a submission. That is publicly available and still remains publicly available, putting our position forward.

Today, we have seen democracy in action. We have all had to compromise and let us hope that this committee can go forward with goodwill and we have a good outcome for this state.

[3.24 p.m.]

Mr FERGUSON (Bass - Minister for Police, Fire and Emergency Management) - Madam Speaker, summing up on the amended substantive motion, I also join those comments from Dr Broad. I will make some other observations of my own and wrap this up and hope we can finalise this matter by 3.30 p.m.

First of all, I assert and make it very clear there was nothing wrong with the original motion that was tabled. The Government has made a number of compromises; in fact, we have made all of the compromises here. The Labor Party did not make any compromises because you took your amendments to a vote. We have made a range of compromises in the spirit of trying to get this job done. I will remind members that the original motion was workable, but in the interests of taking off the rough edges that were causing issues for others, I am happy to do that.

In very good faith, the Government has adopted an approach to attempt to help set up this inquiry today on the right start, the right footing. I want Mr Shelton as chair to have our full support to get in and do that inquiry and do a great job, which I know he will do. I want Dr Broad who will be its deputy chair supporting Mr Shelton, as deputies do, to also get in there and do a great job. I

know that Mr Brooks will be a great contributor and I know that Dr Woodruff will be a real contributor on that committee as well. She may even be a thorn in the side at times from the constituency she represents.

What matters to this Government is that the committee is empowered and that there is the spirit of tripartisanship. That is the message this House is sending today to that committee; that is what we expect. We expect that committee to come up with the goods. It does not have to be perfect; nobody expects perfection as it is probably unobtainable. We look forward to a report in March next year that has considered all of those ranges of issues, that does consider the Liberal Party's pre-election policy document, that does consider the Labor Party's pre-election policy document, that considers all of those more than one hundred submissions as well.

Dr Broad - Ours is a submission so it will get considered.

Dr Woodruff - And all the other new submissions that people will make.

Mr FERGUSON - Excellent, you already have a head start. And to Dr Woodruff's point, exactly right, and we expect that the committee will reopen and there will be a further opportunity for more submissions. You do not have to, but we expect you to because there will be some submissions made to the other inquiry that were confidential for very good reasons, and those parties should be provided with another opportunity.

We want our firearms laws to protect Tasmanians and keep them safe. That is what they are there for. We also want them to be practically workable for our farmers who produce the food that we eat and are under immense pressure in some cases from pest species that are attacking their productivity. We want it to be practicably workable for sporting shooters who have their legitimate place as well in a highly-regulated environment.

The other task of this House today in setting up this inquiry, we expect a genuine bipartisan spirit as the committee members go about their work, to help each other to find a way through this that achieves what I think, 90 or close to all of us will want: that is a firearms act that achieves the objectives that it was originally set up for, in post Port Arthur tragedy. The post Port Arthur tragedy, nationally consistent firearms laws that were led by John Howard as Prime Minister, were all about taking dangerous weapons out of the hands of people who did not need or have a reason to have them and ensuring that for those people who did have a need for them, that they could be done in a regulated and carefully managed way.

The balance for us as policy makers always is to make sure that the red tape is there but the right amount of red tape, applied in the right way and making sure that it is workable and not overbearing where it can be improved.

The National Firearms Agreement is an important reference point for the committee and I close my remarks today in saying that I look forward to that report as police minister and the Government absolutely, without being able to sign a blank cheque - we are not doing that today - but we will very closely and carefully consider any findings and recommendations that are made. I say that, and I believe I can say through you to Ms White and Dr Broad, that we understand that you want to be contributors to solutions here and it is on that basis that I make those closing remarks. I commend the motion to the House.

Motion, as amended, agreed to.

MOTION

Emergency Accommodation Requirements

[3.30 p.m.]

Ms STANDEN (Franklin - Motion) - Madam Speaker, I move -

That the House -

- (1) Notes that from early September 2018 people living at the Hobart Showground will be asked to move on as a result of preparations for the Royal Hobart Show.
- (2) Calls on the Minister for Housing, Hon. Roger Jaensch MP, to detail what measures he has put in place to ensure emergency accommodation is made available to people leaving the showground.
- (3) Further calls on the Minister for Housing to reaffirm his promise to deliver on the resolution of this House on 13 June 2018 to 'commit to the delivery of 900 homes by the end of June 2019, with over half of that supply to be delivered in the Greater Hobart region.'

I indicate from the outset, Madam Speaker, that a vote will be required on this important notice of motion that relates to the ongoing and deepening crisis around housing and homelessness that is particularly acute within the Greater Hobart area but the tendrils of this issue are spreading throughout the state and is symptomatic of a population growth strategy that is unfettered and ill-considered. The housing strategy cannot keep pace with population growth of this sort and the Affordable Housing Strategy in particular is not encompassing enough in order to address these ongoing needs.

There are several components to this and I will be making some remarks in relation to the broader aspects.

Focusing on the immediate for now, in slightly less than two weeks, having spoken today with Mr Scott Gadd, CEO of the Royal Hobart Show, to confirm the current situation, the results of that conversation earlier today were disturbing indeed. Mr Gadd confirmed that the park will need to start closing in two weeks from the end of this week. There are currently two tents at the moment in the Hobart showground. One may or may not relate to a homeless individual, according to Mr Gadd, but the other is a family or an individual with an ongoing underlying mental health issue. It is a complicated case, I understand, one in which there continues to be a cycle of assistance from the Royal Hobart Hospital, but upon release this individual continues to re-present at the showground. There are also some 10 people in caravans or Kombi vans and the like.

Mr Hidding - We're not going to explore his health situation in the House, are we? You have essentially named him up already.

Ms STANDEN - I have not named anybody.

Mr Hidding - You said there is one person.

Madam SPEAKER - Mr Hidding, I do not believe she has and I ask you to obey the laws.

Ms STANDEN - Mr Hidding, I am trying to outline this for the House and for the benefit of the minister, who has not appeared at the showground for some months now. He does not know exactly what the situation is and I am trying to explain in objective terms the current situation at the Hobart showground. It is an ongoing concerning situation that has achieved prominence within Hobart and all of the Tasmanian community through front-page pictures and like. I am not attempting to provide a personal expose of people's circumstances here. I am merely trying, for the benefit of the minister - and his department, I might add, that seems to be entirely disengaged from this important issue - the nature of the circumstances of the people that are being confronted with the situation.

I will continue, Madam Speaker. There are some 10 people, all of whom I understand are homeless, in caravans and Kombi vans at the Hobart showground. Despite a temporary housing measure arising from the summit held earlier this year, there was a particular individual who was promoted by the department and the minister for having been found some housing, but because of the particular circumstances of that individual just yesterday - I will not go into the details - but they have returned to the showground. I understand and completely accept the complexity of these people and their circumstances, and I believe that the minister and his department have endeavoured to deliver temporary measures, but it goes to show that despite best efforts some of these circumstances can be undone.

The net effect is that the number of people temporarily housed at the Hobart showground is as bad as it has ever been. I believe there was \$500 000 of additional funding announced by the Government as a temporary measure for emergency housing to provide for people to go into hotels, if appropriate, before transitioning to public housing or other outcomes, but despite trying to relocate and provide homes for these people, the situation today, some two or three months since the Government sought to provide a solution to this situation, is as bad as it has ever been.

All the people there are asked to pay rent of some \$25 per night. Quirkily enough, I think the seventh night is provided free, so \$150 per week is the rental required for people who are either in tents or caravans at the showground. The CEO has made it very clear to me, as he has to these people, that all they need to do is have a chat with him to come to some arrangement, and even if it is a partial contribution towards that amount he has been most flexible, understanding and compassionate as to the circumstances of these individuals. He is running a commercial operation and his focus increasingly is becoming the Royal Hobart Show. He has an obligation to close the park from mid-September or thereabouts and he began to talk with homeless people at the showground some time ago to ensure they had adequate notice of this.

If they were to transfer to other commercial parks in the near vicinity, the problem is that the clients and the CEO have been advised that he is required to write a reference for these poor, hapless people. These people are desperate, living complex lives with a range of circumstances, I am sure, leading to their homelessness. However, the clock is ticking and the CEO in good faith cannot write a positive reference for a client under these circumstances, all of whom so far have been in arrears in relation to the rental payments. Despite his compassion and understanding and not turfing these people further out into the cold - and I am not sure anyone in this House would choose to be housed at the showground this time of year. I know I am going off topic now but it is tomorrow night that I am to sleep out with Madam Speaker, and perhaps the good minister is going to don the attire. I am not sure what is *de rigueur*, having never slept out in such things.

Mr Hidding - He will be sleeping in his normal onesie.

Ms STANDEN - The onesie. I will have to raid my camping gear. Do you have a onesie, Mr Hidding?

Mr Hidding - Do I have?

Ms STANDEN - No, I do not want to see that. I withdraw.

Mr O'Byrne - We are bringing the House into disrepute now.

Madam SPEAKER - Thank you for that advice, Mr O'Byrne.

Ms STANDEN - I am not sure that I should be making light of a serious situation like this. Visions of onesies aside, the CEO Sleepout for the Salvation Army is tomorrow evening. I am sure it will bring a sharper edge to parliamentarians' and to the communities' minds who are involved in that circumstance. One night where we are equipped with the privilege of the best equipment, onesies, other bedding and so on - anything that can fend off the cold. It will not hurt us. We will survive. That is because every other night of the year we have a wonderful roof over our heads. Thank goodness for that. Not all people in our society, as we will be reminded very keenly I am sure, have the benefit of that shelter.

Back to the Hobart showground and the situation this week. Temperatures plummeted below 10 degrees overnight and probably much closer to freezing with our snow-capped kunanyi framing the showgrounds.

What do we have? Would you not think with less than a couple of weeks to go that the minister would be interested in this situation? Would you not think that he would have phoned the CEO at the showground? Do you not think that he would go to talk with the clients about what options might be before them? Would you not think that he would be talking with his department about what funding options might be available to turn this situation around, given that more than three months have gone by with no action? The situation is as bad as it has ever been. Would you not think that Housing Connect would have turned up to have a chat with the CEO or with the clients?

Mr Jaensch - Check your facts. You are embarrassing yourself right now.

Madam SPEAKER - Order, Minister for Housing.

Ms STANDEN - Would you not think that his department representatives would have been out there? Would you not think that decision-makers, policy-makers in this space who are focused on the long-term objectives of Housing would also have in mind the very acute situation confronting these people now?

It is months since the minister met with the CEO at the Hobart showground. It will be interesting to see whether he bothers to jump in his limousine to have a chat in the coming days. Would you not think that the least thing that these poor people deserve is the attention of their minister to try to once again address the very urgent need of how to put a roof over their heads?

The minister ridicules me and says that I should check my figures. Just this morning I spoke with the CEO, Mr Scott Gadd. I am reliably informed that he has no understanding of what

additional measures are in place. The motion asks the minister to detail what measures he has put in place to ensure emergency accommodation is available to people leaving the showground. I would be very pleased to be disabused of the notion that nothing has occurred. If there are measures in place, that is very good, and I see no need for ridicule in this place. I want to see an outcome for these individuals at the showground. You would think he would be more focused on that than on ridiculing me.

Mr Jaensch - I just said check your facts.

Madam SPEAKER - Order, Mr Jaensch.

Ms STANDEN - 'Check your facts' says Mr Jaensch. I will be very pleased to get to the matter of facts. The third part of the motion goes to exactly that point.

It is to the broader issue around affordable housing supply where I am very keen for the minister to address the House and check his facts. It was a debate about a motion before the House on 13 June on affordable housing. He inserted an amendment to motion 28:

- (e) Commit to the delivery of 900 new homes by the end of June 2019 with over half that supplied to be delivered in the greater Hobart region.

Some two and half months ago, the figure of 900 new homes by the end of June 2019 was very firmly on *Hansard*. Madam Speaker, you will recall it was a difficult debate, one in which you were called to cast your vote. One of the difficulties at the time was that we were considering Airbnb and other short-stay accommodation: the question of whether, in the current regulatory environment, it was plausible to legislate on short-stay accommodation as a measure to arrest the reduced supply of affordable rental properties across the state and whether, in Hobart in particular, that was a key matter impacting supply. The following day, in reply to a question from Ms White who said 'Yesterday, you committed 900 social housing dwellings by the end of 2019' and so the question went on. Mr Jaensch said:

We will deliver 900 new homes to Tasmanians before the end of June 2019.

There was a media release from Mr Jaensch on 17 July, talking about new units being online across the state. He said:

The units are among 114 new dwellings completed and 29 homes refurbished in the last three months as part of our first Affordable Housing Action Plan which will deliver over 900 homes ...

Note the language, 'homes' -

... for low-income Tasmanians by this time next year.

I recall being in the House of Assembly Estimates Committee A meeting in which the Labor Party carefully sought to deconstruct figures in this space because it is a very confusing area. A question from Ms White was:

Minister, can I clarify, of those 900 new homes, before a breakdown is provided about how you would meet that target, is that new social housing stock?

The minister deferred to the head of Housing Tasmania, Mr White, who talked about the initial target being 941. If the Government is able to over-achieve on its target, that is fine. But he introduced terminology, including land release. That ought to have raised a question for the future.

Last week, on 21 August, Mr Jaensch provided an update to the House about the Affordable Housing Strategy to deliver more homes for Tasmanians in need, and I was on the edge of my seat waiting for him to confirm there would be 900 or perhaps 941 new homes. Instead, he said:

To date, our Affordable Housing Strategy, backed by the action plan, is on track to deliver on stage 1 outcomes to assist over 1600 households by June 2019, including new supply of 941 affordable lots and homes. We know there is more work to do.

There sure is, particularly if 941 is the figure and it comprises lots and homes, because I do not know about you, Madam Speaker, but I do not know that 'lots' meets the definition of 'homes'.

I know the community sector is expecting 900 new homes by 30 June 2019 and their definition of 'home' is a place where one lives permanently, especially as a member of a family or household. I would not have thought supported accommodation would come into that definition. Streets Ahead would not come into that definition.

Ms O'Connor - Or HomeShare.

Ms STANDEN - HomeShare, to be fair, if we were being generous, could be new or could be existing homes, but they are homes. Land lots are not new homes. Crisis and transitional accommodation are not new homes. People assisted in escaping family violence - that is not new homes.

I am pretty good at maths, if I do say so myself, and armed with the department's quarterly housing report April to June 2018, the one where we significantly highlighted the shortfall in social housing supply some months ago, there is an obvious hockey stick type of graph that showed 47 of 430 homes had been delivered at the end of the last quarter, leaving less than 10 per cent of the target, yet the minister claimed progress was on track.

Ms O'Connor - Apologies by way of interjection, Ms Standen, but what did your maths result in?

Ms STANDEN - I am getting to my maths. My maths was very hard and I did not get there, Ms O'Connor, because I looked at the progress figure of social housing and was digressing to that figure of 47 -

Ms O'Connor - Wasn't it 37 that were built?

Ms STANDEN - I thought it was 47 but we will allow 10 variation. Progress has improved to 190 apparently, but that is still against a target of 372, so 10 per cent progress at the end of last quarter and we are at about 50 per cent against target now. The House would forgive me for parking some cynicism as to progress to date and whether or not that target will be achieved.

I added in, generously, Streets Ahead and HomeShare figures of 262 progress against a target of 350 and I got a figure of 452 progressed against a target of 722. I have to say, despite trying a

number of different ways to add these figures up and asking a couple of my colleagues how we could make these figures add up to 941, we could not. I cannot see it, despite this report saying that we are on track to assist over 1600 households by June 2019, including new supply of 941 affordable lots and homes - any which way you cut it.

Getting back to the point, two and a half months ago this minister stood in this House and promised 900 new homes. How shall I be housed on a lot? Shall I pitch my tent; park my caravan if I can afford one? If I am a homeless person or a low-income Tasmanian that is not a roof over my head. I will be very interested to see how the minister can produce a figure that comes close to 941 affordable homes because 900 affordable homes was what the minister promised. He has changed his language and I do not know why.

In a motion some two and a half months ago on 13 June, the minister committed to this parliament the delivery of 900 new homes by the end of June 2019, with over half of that supply to be delivered in the Greater Hobart region. In fact, in their own report they are planning on delivering 598 new homes - a different number, Ms O'Connor - and that is 302 short. There are 86 supported accommodation places which, as I have already explained, should not count as new homes, and 401 land lots for sale on an open market. That is not new affordable homes for low-income Tasmanians.

The Government has very quickly changed its language here from 900 new homes to including new supply of 941 affordable lots and homes on 21 August. Tasmanians and this House deserve an explanation as to exactly what he and his department intend to deliver by 30 June 2019. We need to get these numbers straight. Is it 900 homes, as per the public record, or is it 900 homes and lots? I will be very pleased to hear the minister provide an explanation to the House as to which it is.

Let us think about the track record of this Government in relation to housing. A total of \$45.6 million less funding and 506 fewer houses have been available from 2013-17. The public housing waitlist has increased from 20.6 weeks wait to be housed in 2013-14, to 72 weeks now. It has been said to me that people who are not on the priority list might as well not bother because the waitlist has soared to over 3500 people from 2400 in 2013-14, an almost 50 per cent increase in the public housing waitlist; an abominable track record by any measure. This Government has been in place for five years now, and what has it done to arrest this situation and turn it around?

Between 2009 and 2015 Tasmania saw the completion of 2217 new affordable and social homes in Tasmania and this was achieved through Commonwealth and state funding; national partnership agreements. Although some were completed in 2014-15, this was the completion of Labor initiatives. Of these homes, 1116 were affordable in the private market, and the remaining were social and community housing stock.

The Government's Affordable Housing Strategy has promised 941 new homes between 2015 and 2019, and to date only 249 have been completed in the first three years. As I have already said, I remain doubtful that they will reach the remaining target. I will be very pleased to hear that I am wrong; I will be very pleased to see on 30 June 2019, that the Government has met or achieved, met or exceeded this target.

It is the Labor Party's job in this place to hold this Government to account and I doubt anyone would say that I was being overly cynical in pointing out that only 249 of 941 new homes was a serious lack of progress against a target.

Furthermore, it has been said that we require a minimum 656 affordable homes per year to 2031 to meet the current demand. This figure is climbing every day. In any case, if we are talking about very long-term strategies, then clearly there is a significant shortfall to that target.

With the Government population strategy which as I have already said is unfettered, an additional 3478 homes will be needed to be available in the next four years to accommodate the current growth. This is in addition to the current need.

Madam Speaker, I know that you are well educated in matters of housing supply, et cetera. However, without an encompassing housing strategy and with the existing demand in the housing market and the worrying situation in regard to short stay accommodation - rental prices increasing 15 per cent in southern Tasmania in less than 12 months - it is unlikely that on current trajectory an additional nearly 3500 homes will be available over the next four years to accommodate the projected population growth.

It is unacceptable that on any given night, Tasmania's homeless population has swelled to 1600 people with 38 per cent of those being aged below 25 years; 1600 Tasmanians homeless on any one night, 38 per cent below 25 years.

There are some 74 000 Tasmanians living below the poverty line in Tasmania. By any measure, Tasmania has persistent and serious social and economic indices around poverty, where around a third of the population is dependent upon welfare as the primary source of income - 74 000 people below the poverty line. Over 150 000 Tasmanians, right now, are in housing stress. Would you not think that in a climate like this that the minister would accept our bipartisan offer to sit with him to assist in this situation? Would you not think that the minister would be prepared to look at sensible measures that arrest the growth in demand and improve supply in the short term? Would you not think that in the current deregulated environment around short stay accommodation that a pause, which we have called for, would have been a good thing?

But no, the Government and the minister have dug in on this matter. There is a parliamentary inquiry underway in relation to the short stay accommodation situation and it has not delivered its full findings. Would you not think that a pause on short stay accommodation would be a good thing in the short term? It is not only me who says this.

There was a very interesting forum held by the Institute for the Study of Social Change in which it provided a Tasmanian housing update in August 2018. It shows in stark relief some of these worrying trends in our community.

In relation to population change and population growth, the graph shows that since 2012 there has been a significant climb in growth rate. In particular, net interstate migration is a picture of what has happened in the last 12 months. This report highlights that more young people, particularly those aged 15 to 24 years, continue to leave the state than to arrive and a greater number of older people continue to arrive in Tasmania than leave. The report points out, and I quote:

This has consequences for housing, given that the young Tasmanians leaving are much less likely to be 'freeing up' housing for older arrivals.

There is no indication with this unfettered growth of population, that the housing strategy from the Government can cope with the current situation, much less the projected situation in relation to population growth, let alone the acceleration of the ageing population.

I come now to the short stay accommodation sector. The report shows there has been steady growth since the February 2018 review by the Institute of the short stay accommodation sector although albeit, at a rate slower than the previous six months. In terms of growth, in percentage terms of entire properties, the previous report showed that the state-wide figure was 184 per cent but this current report shows that it is now at over 200 per cent - 205 per cent. In the greater Hobart area, what was 212 per cent in the last report is now 228 per cent. The number of properties available in the short stay accommodation sector has grown statewide by over 200 per cent, particularly in the greater Hobart area. Increasingly, this situation has been felt statewide. With more than 2000 listings in the greater Hobart area, a net housing shortage for 2016-2018 of nearly 600 entire properties highlights a very concerning situation.

The report moves on to social policy settings and key findings in relation to the Government's Affordable Housing Strategy for 2015-2025 and highlights the extension and investment of an additional \$125 million, which the minister will highlight for our edification.

The issue is the report highlights that with this tightening of the Tasmanian rental market over the past two years and the number of applicants on the Tasmanian housing register remaining high, the wait time for applicants has increased significantly since mid-2016, increasing from less than 40 weeks to more than 60 over the past two years. It says that despite the Government's investment in the Affordable Housing Strategy, the total number of social and community houses in Tasmania continues to decline and it is too early to assess the efficacy of recent policy responses to Tasmania's housing crisis. Based on the analysis, it suggests the Government considers a number of policy recommendations, the first being inclusionary rezoning.

This would be one of the parts of the policy platform Labor took to the election and has continued to suggest to the minister ought to be part of the longer-term planning environment. His response to that has been nothing. We made a request and an offer to work together and nothing has been the response from this minister. The report goes on to highlight the interest on Housing Tasmania's historical housing debt which we know eats up about half of the federal funding available for affordable housing in Tasmania, and suggests the Tasmanian Government should treat this debt as a whole-of-government issue. It ends by saying that the social and community housing supply should be central elements of any regional and urban planning initiatives, including prospective City Deals. I shall be very interested to learn of whether the Hobart City Deal has any mention of inclusionary zoning, because it seems to me the experts at the University of Tasmania are suggesting exactly that.

I come back to the main points. There are long-term challenges and the Labor Party has serious doubts on any measure of this minister's capability to handle this situation in the long term. Moreover, there is an immediate concern of people at the Hobart showground who will be asked to move on in a matter of weeks and we have no confidence, no indication and neither does the CEO of the showgrounds, of measures he has put in place to ensure there would be roofs over these people's head. Will they be evicted to homelessness? I think so, with the current settings.

Will this minister commit, as he has said on the public record, or will he recommit today to the delivery of 900 new homes by the end of June 2019, with over half of that supply to be delivered in the Greater Hobart region? Lots are very different to homes and it is homes the people of Tasmania desperately need. His action plan is now saying 941 affordable lots and homes. Is this a convenient use of weasel words? Has he changed his language to make the story look better? Is he manipulating these figures, because I cannot work them out?

It ought to be plain from the Government's own report how this 941 figure is derived. Can he point out to this House today how, when his social housing figures with progress of only 190 is seriously behind target and some of the other affordable housing measures could, only by a stretch, be called new housing? Many more would be considered existing housing and some would not even meet the definition of a home whatsoever.

This minister has proven himself and I know he has been given a very difficult portfolio, but I have no confidence in his capability to handle this portfolio and turn this situation around.

Time expired.

[4.15 p.m.]

Ms O'CONNOR (Denison - Leader of the Greens) - Mr Deputy Speaker, I thank Ms Standen for bringing this matter on for debate in private members' time today. It was an excellent presentation. Do not worry, when you get under the minister's skin to the extent that he is belittling you, you are going very well.

It is true that since Estimates, given that we have had a prolonged winter break, the Minister for Housing has not had to respond in any public sense to an unresolved housing crisis. Minister, you can belittle Ms Standen for the information she has laid out but we all know there are still people and families sleeping in tents at the showground. We need to hear from you what the plan is in order to not only provide them with emergency accommodation when they need to be moved off the showground because the show is coming, but also what steps are being put in place to provide secure, long-term affordable housing.

When you go back and have a look through the statements that have been made by this new minister in relation to the housing crisis, there are a series of questions that need to be answered. What happened to the process of seeking tenders for prefabricated housing solutions, for example? An announcement was made on 19 May this year, so could the minister update the House on whether or not that has been a successful tender process? How many homes will be delivered through this process and what is the governance for making sure that these are quality homes that will provide secure housing for people? What happened to the Landlord Incentive Scheme, one of the most half-baked, kneejerk responses to an underinvestment in increasing the supply of social and affordable housing we are ever likely to see, where the minister said that they would go to landlords and offer them \$13 000 in order to make their home, which might otherwise been on the short-stay accommodation market, available for rental for a year?

There has been bad policy and kneejerk responses to a crisis in housing, with the highest public housing waiting list in more than a decade now. According to the last census, housing went up 21 per cent between 2011 and 2016. Anyone who is across policy in this area will understand there is a range of reasons that there is so much pressure in the housing rental market and the housing supply market more broadly, but at the foundation of it is a failure to invest.

Mr Jaensch can deride the efforts of the previous government and in fact a Greens housing minister to deliver 2217 new homes, but the fact is that we made it a priority. We made sure that the funds available through the Nation Building Economic Stimulus money, which your federal colleagues voted against, through the National Rental Affordability Scheme, which your federal colleagues killed off, and through the state housing fund were allocated towards increasing the supply of social and affordable, secure, energy-efficient housing. The foundation of the crisis that

Tasmanians in housing distress are experiencing now is four years of neglect of the Housing portfolio at the federal and state level.

You cannot get past the fact, Mr Jaensch, that your federal colleagues walked away from every decent government's responsibility to invest in building homes for Australians, because that is what happened. We had an ex-prime minister, Tony Abbott, who in his 2014 budget delivered one of the most destructive, harsh, unempathetic, divisive budgets in the country's history, and a federal treasurer, Joe Hockey, who described the sort of people we are talking about who are in housing distress today as 'leaners'.

The foundational causes of the housing crisis was a shift in policy from the federal government, cuts to Housing Tasmania in 2014, a failure to top up the housing fund, a minister who completely took her eye off the ball and a government that is more interested in advertising to Sydneysiders to live here than it is in investing secure affordable housing. We have a government that let short-stay accommodation go feral before taking any half-baked steps to regulate the short-stay accommodation market.

You have a hide, Mr Jaensch, coming in here and belittling the relentless efforts of the previous government to increase the supply of good homes for Tasmanians that they can afford to live in, that they are not being evicted from because the owners of those properties want to convert them to short-stay accommodation. The owners of these properties are ramping up the rents to the extent that they become so unaffordable a family has to move out with the threat hanging over the heads of tenants that 'If you do not pay this ramped up rent we will convert to an Airbnb anyway'. That is happening. We have tenants living in poor quality, poorly maintained private rental accommodation now with sky high rents who are too afraid to get in touch with their landlord to say, 'You need to fix the hot water cylinder', or 'There is a hole in the roof which has been there for six months. My children are cold', or 'It is mouldy'. Tenants are too afraid to talk to their landlords because they are terrified of being evicted into homelessness.

It is happening right now in Tasmania. The minister might take this opportunity to tell us how many families and individuals have been housed through the Landlord Incentive Scheme. How many of those tenancies, those leases, are for more than 12 months? What is happening to those families, any of them if any have indeed been housed? When we asked these questions at Estimates none had. What happens to those families at the end of the 12 months that your half-baked scheme cooked up? How many of these pre-fabricated homes will be delivered by your self-imposed target on 1 July next year?

I have some questions here for the minister that have been formulated by people who are either homeless or experiencing housing distress. This is a good opportunity to ask some of those questions. Here is Gypsy. Some people will remember Gypsy from the lawns.

Remind the minister when he visited the showgrounds he said people would get supported. Having someone in a service to be in contact with is not support. We want vans and we want them before the first snow on the hill. That was two weeks ago. Vans instead of tents. We have a suggestion here - accommodation for singles built in the city as part of Housing Tasmania and as a step towards housing the 3000 on the list.

For the purposes of *Hansard's* accurate record, the list is now nudging 3500 last time I looked.

For those who are single, no need for a car or longer public transport trips for older women. We need clever design in Housing Tasmania homes that maximise heating, insulation options to lower heating costs and incorporate good design for green spaces such as play areas and gardens that may be shared also.

This is a comment that is made by Katherine. I point out again that when we were building homes for Tasmanians who need housing we made sure that they had the highest standard of energy efficiency; that they were thermally efficient. We also delivered a nation-leading energy efficiency program which was scrapped when the Liberals came to office in 2014. It delivered 9500 free energy efficiency upgrades to low income households, community groups and small businesses, lowering annual power bills by between \$300 and \$800 a year. That is good policy. No-one has a mandate on good policy although I would argue the Greens have the strongest policy set.

Mr O'Byrne - Come on, come on.

Ms O'CONNOR - It took you guys a little while to come round on climate change. You have not come all the way on fish farms. You still think the public commons, the marine environment, should prioritise the needs of industry over every day Tasmanians and people who live in coastal communities.

Katherine also said:

We need to push to have the housing debt struck. It gives us all of our funding then in each budget rather than handing back half of it to the federal coffers to only pay interest on our debt. This is dead money, it needs to be fixed. It is simple.

Nat suggests bond money for single working parents. Lisa wants the minister to consider putting some kind of cap of what is considered reasonable rent and having a set percentage increase allowed per annum. This is Greens' policy. It is policy that is in place in the ACT where increases in rents are restricted to CPI, other than in exceptional circumstances that can be argued via the landlord. We have gouging happening right now in the rental market in greater Hobart and across Tasmania because we know that the housing crisis is reaching into rural and regional areas and into places like St Helens and Launceston and the north-west coast.

Danny says:

My two picks are based on my own experiences: regulation of the short term letting market and a cap on rental increases. If I felt like pushing my luck, stronger rights for renters such as being able to expect some kind of heating or insulation in a home.

This goes to the issue of minimum standards in the Residential Tenancy Act, a suite of reforms that the previous government sought to have delivered through the act under a Greens minister for consumer protection. As it is right now there is no minimum standard, for example, that says if you are letting out a house to tenants that there needs to be reasonable heating.

Sarah says:

There needs to be a government loans scheme for low income or Centrelink recipients to build new homes, either on their own land or as a land package as a

longer term method of avoiding more homelessness in the future among many of those now currently renting. Also, free up private rentals. The Streets Ahead program gives priority to the lucky current clients of Housing Tasmania, accepting their bids over higher bids made by non-clients such as those in private rentals, the homeless or those on the waiting list.

Mel says:

If a Department of Housing property does not sell to the target groups within the time frame, then maintenance is to be done and it is to be returned back to the public rental system.

Linda wants:

Stronger tenancy laws to allow tenants long-term leases, more than 12 months, control on rent increases and a code of conduct for agents and landlords to be compliant with before taking on the role of agent or landlord to ensure they behave consistently and also bonds to be transferrable for tenants to help with securing new homes.

As it stands the Residential Tenancy Act provides inadequate protections for tenants. I note that in the not too distant future this House will debate amendments to the Residential Tenancy Act. I received a briefing in relation to that legislation today. It is fair to say that this amendment bill which is before the House has some specific purposes that relate to specialist disability accommodation provided under the National Disability Insurance Scheme and also to the lease arrangements for victims of domestic and family violence who find themselves before a judge. There is a suite of reforms that needs to be made to the Residential Tenancy Act in order to reset the balance in favour of tenants. At the moment, the act heavily favours landlords and real estate managers.

If you talk to people who apply for a rental, they will tell you that the questions that are now being asked of tenants are downright intrusive and I would argue there is no lawful basis for this. The information that is being gathered on tenants is unjustified and intrusive.

There is a very casual 'how's your father' approach to lease arrangements, inspection arrangements for tenants in Tasmania. There are different forms that different agencies use for applications, asking questions that are none of the business of either the real estate management company or of the landlord themselves.

I understand that further amendments to the Residential Tenancy Act are being consulted on by the Government and we are likely to see another amendment bill come through the House next year. We will take that opportunity to introduce amendments that better protect the rights of tenants in line with a series of recommendations made by the Tenants Union of Tasmania. We want to make the leases and the rents fair.

We want to implement indefinite lease options for tenants and we want to make sure that people who have pets are not discriminated against in the rental market. My understanding is that pet owners often make better tenants. They certainly are happier tenants. I am sure other members of this House have had conversations with people who are sleeping rough, living on the streets, who have their dog with them. Part of the reason they are on the streets is because they love their dog

and they cannot get a rental property because they are a pet owner. Such is their love for that animal they made that difficult choice to hang onto their dog rather than give their dog up in order to secure housing. It should not have to be a choice that people make.

I am flagging with the House that when the next set of amendments to the Residential Tenancy Act come through we will have a suite of amendments which we will consult on. We will be prioritising stakeholder communications with organisations that are there for tenants and therefore people who are experiencing homelessness or housing distress.

The whole House should support this Notice of Motion. There is nothing controversial in it. The Minister for Housing must detail what measures he has put in place to ensure emergency accommodation is made available to people leaving the showground. He must acknowledge that from early next month, only a few days away, people who are currently living in insecure accommodation - tents, vans, a small shed - at the showground will be moved on.

The minister needs to give the House an up-date on the promise to deliver from the 13 June Notice of Motion, 900 homes by the end of June 2019, with over half of that supply to be delivered in the greater Hobart region. That is a critical question that the minister needs to answer. It was interesting to hear Ms Standen, who I know has a good maths brain, unlike some people in this House, including me, try to get to bottom of the actual delivery on supply.

When you go to the Estimates for Mr Jaensch from this year, we first of all have the question from Ms White: of the 430 new social housing dwellings you committed to deliver by 2018-19 you have progressed just 37 of them and that was for the quarter, January to March 2018, which is just 8.6 per cent over the three-year period. That was when the target was 430 social housing dwellings by the end of this financial year.

Mr Deputy Speaker, there are legitimate questions to be asked about the Government's commitment to delivering; its capacity to deliver and what, in fact, it is delivering. If this becomes a free for all for private developers, it will not deliver the desired and necessary outcome for people who are looking for housing. If the rezoning provisions for declaring land to be emergency supply land - and this is public land we are talking about here too - if that just becomes a private developer's free for all, it will not deliver long term, secure and affordable housing.

Mr Jaensch interjecting.

Ms O'CONNOR - Were you chirping away over there, minister?

Mr Jaensch - Yes, and I will keep chirping too. You are trying to walk two sides of the street.

Ms O'CONNOR - Pardon me, minister, if I do not get in here and rah-rah your government for having delivered only 37 houses to Estimates this year. Pardon me, because you had the gall to sneer at Ms Standen when she gave you the numbers for the supply that was delivered in the last term.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER - Order, through the Chair, Ms O'Connor. Minister, you will have your opportunity to make your contribution.

Ms O'CONNOR - Perhaps the minister could lay out what has happened with some of these initiatives and the actual numbers. Before the minister made a strange sound - I am not sure if it

was an interjection or a harrumph - I talked about the public housing waiting list being at its highest level in more than a decade and that it was sitting at around 3500. If the minister could provide the exact number of suffering Tasmanian individuals and families who are languishing on that list, that would be helpful for the understanding of the House too.

It would be terrific if the minister had the weight in Cabinet and the courage in parliament to walk the Liberals away from this insane plan to market Tasmania as a place to live for people who are in Sydney right now, when we have people sleeping at the showground. Talk about contradictory, mutually exclusive policy approaches. Why on earth would any responsible government, knowing it has people sleeping at the showground in tents, spend public money and public resources advertising Tasmania to Sydneysiders as a place to live? Is it because this Government would rather have wealthy Sydneysiders come and live on this beautiful island than provide homes for everyday Tasmanians?

It is important to remember that demographic or the housing and homelessness crisis has shifted under this Government. This was the profile of the public housing waiting list before. It has gone from people at the pointiest end of socio-demographic disadvantage and poverty to now include middle income families. There has been a profound and confronting shift in people who are experiencing housing distress in Tasmania right now, and that has happened on the Liberal's watch. You cannot come in here anymore as a government and say, 'Oh, it is all Labor-Greens experiment fault', because we actually delivered a significant increase in the supply of social and affordable housing in the four years we were in government, and there was a Greens housing minister.

Minister, when you inevitably get up and have a crack about assertions that have been made or data that has been set out that you disagree with or believe is not true, I remind you - and I think this happened to Ms Standen as well - that we repeatedly sought briefings on the Affordable Housing Strategy, measures that were being taken, targets that had been set and how progress was going, and we did that because we are intimately concerned with this issue and committed to being part of, if it is possible, a tripartite response to the housing crisis in Tasmania.

We sought a briefing from Housing Tasmania on these issues. The first briefing request was on 10 May. It was earlier than that but this correspondence I have goes back to 10 May, seeking a briefing on the Government's responses to the housing crisis. Finally, in the middle of July, two full months later, the minister's office said, 'You won't be having a briefing.' The only conclusion to draw from that is the minister's office did not want to arm opposition parties with the facts because the facts were damning.

Ms Standen, thank you for bringing this debate on. It is a very important debate and we will be supporting the motion. I warn the minister: please do not get up and try to amend this motion into oblivion.

Mr Hidding - Don't you dare.

Ms O'CONNOR - Why would you?

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER - Order. I ask that Ms O'Connor be heard without interjection.

Ms O'CONNOR - Kick him out, Mr Deputy Speaker.

Mr Hidding - Don't you dare.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER - Order. I do not need advice, thank you.

Ms O'CONNOR - Not on these things. You probably do need a bit on other things.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER - I take that as a reflection on the Chair so I will caution you. If I am going to be kicking anyone out, it will you, Ms O'Connor. I suggest you get on with your contribution.

Ms O'CONNOR - Thanks, Mr Deputy Speaker. I say that, Mr Hidding, not because I am making any threats but because this is a motion which should be supported by the House, including the minister and we will certainly be supporting it.

[4.42 p.m.]

Mr JAENSCH (Braddon - Minister for Housing) - Mr Deputy Speaker, I will not be proposing any amendments. I am happy to note that the Royal Hobart Show will be held as usual. I am happy to detail what measures are in place to assist people and I am happy to reaffirm the commitment given on 13 June, no problem whatsoever.

I have not belittled Ms Standen or people speaking on behalf of the previous government. All I have asked for in this debate, from two people who know a lot more about this situation and its complexity and texture, is lift it and check your facts, please. Do not misrepresent previous state investment which was largely Commonwealth investment or relabel it. All I am asking for, in mutual recognition of the complexity of this issue and the policy responses to it, is not to come in here and tell fibs. That is all.

I want to touch on a few issues. Ms Standen advised us that the number of people temporarily housed at the showgrounds is as bad as it has ever been but at the same time told us there were maybe two tents on the site. There was a statement made that Housing Connect has not been in touch with the showground operators, which I am advised is patently untrue. There has been a statement that the minister -

Ms Standen - Are you accusing the CEO of lying?

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER - Order.

Mr JAENSCH - I am saying I do not believe what you have said tallies with what I have been told about how often Housing Connect is in contact with tenants on that site. She also said that the minister should visit the site more often. The last time I visited the showground site, unannounced for the purposes of making my own assessment of what was going on there, within 15 minutes of arriving the media came and followed me around taking photographs of the people I was talking to, who became very agitated because they did not want to be photographed and put in the paper. That is the reason I went unannounced and do not make a habit of turning up to places where there are vulnerable people in difficult circumstances where I am in their space and drawing attention to them, through which other people might make judgments about their lives and circumstances.

I also note that Ms Standen was very clear that she did not recognise the certain categories of supply of housing accommodation, shelter and assistance to people as legitimate parts of targets for us to be delivering under our Affordable Housing Action Plan and strategy. She is saying that if I am a homeless person, that is not a roof over my head, but she does not recognise that supported accommodation is a legitimate aspect of housing supply. For many people with complex needs

who find themselves homeless, supported accommodation with a range of complex support services laid on is exactly what they need. It is these broadbrush slapping statements I was reacting to when I interjected earlier. I believe Ms Standen actually understands this stuff better.

Ms STANDEN - Point of order, Mr Deputy Speaker. The minister is trying to put words in my mouth. I very clearly stated -

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER - That is not a point of order. The minister has the call. While he did interject on you, on occasion I will allow some discussion across the Chamber. I will remind you, because I could not see the clock, that you had an extra three minutes. The minister has the call.

Mr JAENSCH - Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker. There was a statement made that the Government has no overarching strategy or plan for housing supply but members have quoted from that very plan and have been invited to participate in the revision of that plan for the next four years. There were references to the need for inclusionary zoning but not the supply of other than social housing dwellings. Inclusionary zoning, by its definition, requires an integrated supply model where there are different tenancy types and dwelling types mixed in together. Labor has been very selective in what they recognise as being deliverables in this context.

I want to be clear again that housing is an issue and a huge challenge for Tasmania right now. We are grappling with it like we never have before. We have a \$200 million, eight-year strategy underway which will deliver these 2400 homes assisting 3600 Tasmanians over its entirety. We are reporting on this quarterly and that is on the record. People can read the numbers and projections; we have added more detail because we know people are interested in that. We go back to the foundations of the work that was undertaken in 2014 and 2015 and reflect that this Affordable Housing Strategy looks at the whole spectrum of housing need in Tasmania. It is not just a certain type of house for a certain type of person in need; it extends from crisis accommodation right through to home ownership. Therefore the projections, targets and numbers that are provided -

Ms O'Connor - Thank you for mansplaining.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER - Order.

Mr JAENSCH - I am being as simplistic in my answers as you were in your questions, Ms O'Connor. I need to call out the very selective, cherry picking reporting and questioning and, no doubt by now, media releasing on aspects of these plans, which are blind to other than what you might count as a home.

Ms Standen - It was not my commitment it was yours; 900 new homes. Now you are backtracking.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER - Order.

Mr JAENSCH - Whereas the strategy reflects supported accommodation, crisis accommodation, assistance for people to build their own homes in part as well, which are all part of the spectrum of dealing with Tasmania's current housing needs. It has been that way since 2015. It will be over the next four years and we have invited you to contribute to the process of getting that right.

At the moment, Tasmania provides around 12 000 houses and assists around 300 families every month with private rental on top of that. The numbers that we are talking about here are strategies to grow supply across that whole spectrum of need.

Our system is set up through the Housing Connect structure and its Front Door service, which is operated by different organisations in different regions of Tasmania. They do a very good job. References to the minister and the minister's department having not done this or having not visited directly are wrong. This Government and this minister have increased the resourcing to trained people who are on the ground every day, visiting people in need and connecting them to the services. That is the way the Front Door system works. The Housing Connect Front Door service providers identify and prioritise people's housing needs and provide information about the options and choices available to them. They connect eligible Tasmanians to appropriate housing assistance and services every day. They include private rental assistance, supported accommodation -

Ms Standen - Now you are giving a lecture on Housing Connect. We know about that.

Madam SPEAKER - Order.

Mr JAENSCH - I am filling in a lot of the white space between the very simplistic questions that were asked because I need to put this through.

Ms Standen - I just want to know - 900 new homes.

Madam SPEAKER - Order.

Mr JAENSCH - This is not Estimates. This is my opportunity to speak on this motion.

Every day Housing Connect staff and the network of community organisations they work with are tirelessly working with Tasmanians in need who are experiencing, or at risk of homelessness and housing stress. This includes regularly visiting, daily sometimes, the showground and other sites around greater Hobart where there are people in need. Particularly, when we know that there is an extreme weather event emerging, there is an alert. People are visited so that they can be offered shelter and appropriate support.

Ms O'Connor - Minister, you say this is not question time but you were asked legitimate questions.

Madam SPEAKER - Order. Ms O'Connor, through the Chair please.

Mr JAENSCH - Back in March I announced a winter package providing \$500 000 in additional funding for immediate emergency accommodation and support for Tasmanians in urgent need.

Ms Standen - How much is left over for these poor people at the showground?

Madam SPEAKER - Order, Ms Standen.

Mr JAENSCH - It is just one of the steps that we are taking. Since March, Housing Connect has been working with clients staying at the showground and other sites to apply that assistance. The funding has been used to secure a mix of cabins and hotel and motel style accommodation with

an emphasis on providing safe and secure accommodation for those in greatest need, in addition to the established shelters and existing homelessness services that are in greater Hobart.

The funding also included \$150 000 for additional people on the ground to find and work with people in housing stress and deal with their complex individual needs. I am advised that there has been a total of 88 households experiencing homelessness that have been made contact with to date: 41 of which have been housed; 17 of which have chosen not to engage with the service; and 30 of which are currently continuing to work with Housing Connect to have their needs met, noting that the circumstances some of these people find themselves in, their needs are complex and fluid. That will require an ongoing period of engagement, sometimes in multiple service providers. Housing Connect is working closely with the Royal Agricultural Society to ensure that clients who are in need of safe, secure accommodation are able to connect with it.

I am advised that as of yesterday, and again today in an update, that there were still three people in tents at the showground, two of whom are not seeking assistance and one with highly complex needs who is working with Housing Connect right now. At any given time, there are between 40 and 60 rooms available in the greater Hobart area for secure accommodation, options for people experiencing homelessness, in addition to established shelters.

In terms of Housing Connect's work, on average they provide a home to around 320 families a month or 80 families a week through social housing and other assistance. Urgent assistance is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week. I urge anybody in need of housing or who knows anybody who is, to contact Housing Connect on their 1800 number. It is available 24 hours a day.

Ms O'Connor - A legitimate question: how many people have you housed through the landlord incentive scheme?

Mr JAENSCH - Twenty-two at this stage. In terms of the broader affordable housing strategy and the commitments to deliver houses and housing solutions, we already have underway, this four-year \$73.5 million strategy which will deliver assistance to around 1600 households.

We recognise in that plan the entire spectrum of housing need. I do not for a minute walk back from the commitment given in that strategy and on 13 June to be delivering those 900 homes. I am very glad to have seen the progress made in the quarterly housing report, which shows that it is possible to deliver in excess of 100 homes a quarter. We are well on track. That is in social housing alone, let alone supported accommodation facilities and the range of other supports that are projected through our strategy.

I take particular issue with whether affordable housing lots are legitimate supply in this context. We know we have a time at the moment where there are not enough houses for all the people who need them in a market that has driven rent well up. I am hearing from a number of commentators that there is a new group of people who are now on the social housing register and in housing stress. They are people with reliable incomes and good jobs, who are low income earners who are finding they are no longer able to meet their weekly housing costs. There are a number of such people in a position where they may not be able to afford the rent but they could afford to service a modest mortgage.

Ms Standen - But it is not a roof over their heads. That is beside the point.

Madam SPEAKER - Order, Ms Standen.

Mr JAENSCH - For people who have been added to the Housing Register waiting list, we are now offering new solutions in terms of serviced lots of land at very affordable prices in places that are suitable to their needs at a time of competitive housing finance and potentially with the assistance of a recalibrated home-share scheme which can offer eligible applicants over \$80 000 off their mortgage through a share arrangement with the state Government and \$20 000 to help them through the First Home Builders Grant Program, which together is \$100 000 off a house and land package that might only be just over \$300 000.

For a significant slice of the market that we are being told are entering housing stress and appearing on our social Housing Register, which is now down to around 3100, not 3500. That is a significant solution that was not there before but which has to count. It has to count in terms of this integrated, mosaic, inclusive roll out of new housing supply to meet the demand. That is what is in our quarterly housing report: the achievements so far and the projections to the next stage, and for anyone in here to single out a certain category of supply in that and say that you are going to do 900 of them and it is impossible and you are lying to us is disingenuous and runs contrary to the whole debate being had about what is needed across the whole spectrum.

Madam SPEAKER - Minister, I ask you to you wind up.

Mr JAENSCH - Ms O'Connor quoted Ms White, who accurately pointed to a number of about 430 social housing dwellings that were to be delivered by June 2019. You would have us believe that number should be 900, but 900 is the overall quantum of housing solutions provided. Between you, you are telling different parts of this story, being quite selective and looking to try to get a couple of points off me. I believe you will find all the numbers you need in this report. I ask you to look at the whole spectrum of need and supply that is being worked on.

I encourage Labor and the Greens, as they have been invited to, to please participate in the planning for the Affordable Housing Action Plan stage 2.

Motion agreed to.

MOTION

Finfish Farming - Norfolk Bay - Motion Negatived

[5.01 p.m.]

Dr WOODRUFF (Franklin - Motion) - Madam Speaker, I move -

That the House calls on the Minister for Primary Industries and Water, Hon. Sarah Courtney MP, to act immediately to cancel any lease or licence associated with finfish farming in zone 13 of the Tasman Peninsula and Norfolk Bay Marine Farming Development Plan.

The Greens bring on this motion today as a matter that requires urgent action and are calling on the minister to act immediately in her role as responsible minister for finfish farming in this state to cancel the licence for Huon Aquaculture to farm finfish in their Green Head offshore bay reserve in Norfolk Bay.

If ever there was an example of an industry acting in a way that damages the interests of the local community, will irreparably damage the local marine environment, damages the financial interests of other businesses, threatens people who are boating or sailing on the water and damages the clean, green brand that is the backbone of the Tasmanian tourism and food industries, including of course the salmon industry itself, the Norfolk Bay expansion is it. If ever there was an example of an industry that is acting utterly with its own self-interest first and foremost regardless of the impact it has on the communities, other businesses and on the public commons, then this is it.

That is why we have to have a focus not on the company or the industry itself but firmly on the Government, firmly on the role and the responsibility of the minister to take control and to establish strong rules of fairness, independence, a right to have a say for all parties, and a right to appeal unfair, unjust or incorrect decisions. That is what this motion seeks to achieve in the instance of Norfolk Bay. This is operating within the whole larger move by the three salmon companies into Storm Bay and I acknowledge upfront that the context of this discussion has been a call by a wide and increasing range of bodies in the community for a moratorium on the expansion of salmon farm companies in Tasmanian waters, especially in Storm Bay, in the north-west and on the east coast. That is the context.

This is a specific example which shows more clearly than anything else what has happened in the now long history of damaging and poor regulation of this Government and previous Labor governments to take control and demand that the industry operates by the same rules. No-one is asking for more than the same rules that other companies are required to operate by, the same requirement for procedural fairness for the opportunity to have formal submissions made, the opportunity to appeal unjust decisions, and to have independent assessments of impacts.

The first time that locals heard about the prospect of finfish farming in Norfolk Bay was only weeks ago, and let us not forget, Norfolk Bay has never had finfish farmed in it before. It is home to a range of mussel and other shellfish leases, many of which are still sitting there dormant and have never had farming within them. This was one such lease which we understand has been owned by Huon Aquaculture for 15 years, but it was previously a mussel lease. The first time people heard about this was the proposed move by Huon Aquaculture to put, as was reported to me by members of the community, diseased fish in Norfolk Bay.

As it turns out, Huon Aquaculture, by its own question and answer sheet, makes it clear that these are potentially POMV-infected fish that are being placed in the Norfolk Bay lease to satisfy a problem they have with being able to operate biosecurity properly and to manage their volume and flow of operations in Storm Bay.

As a result of that, people did not believe that it was going to happen. They thought it was an idea being floated around, but when people rang me two weeks ago from Primrose Sands, Connellys Marsh, Carlton River, Dodges Ferry, Koonya and other places on the Tasman Peninsula, telling me that there were pens being towed into Norfolk Bay and it was actually happening, they could not believe it. They could not believe that it would actually happen. They could not believe they did not even get to have a say about it.

This is an area that has never had finfish farming, an area that is home to the most incredible diversity of wild fish populations and recovering populations of fish which, thanks to the work of recreational fishers, the quota systems that have been operating and the changed fishing practices, there has now been a renewal of populations of a whole range of fish such as flathead, garfish, squid and gummy shark that swim and breed in the reef right below the pen that Huon Aquaculture will

be farming and harvesting their fish within. These fish populations are plentiful and wild. The environment, the benthic layers are underneath the pen, and the seagrass meadows around that pen, are beautiful. I spoke to somebody this afternoon who rang me about today's motion. He said he had dived down there and it is amazing. It is a beautiful, diverse area, and he could not believe that this is the same place Huon Aquaculture will be dropping massive concrete blocks as ballast and mooring for their lighting and signage around the outside of the lease. This is the same place where tonnes and tonnes of salmon will be putting their excreta out into the waterways.

What has followed is community outrage. Two public meetings occurred last weekend - one at Koonya and one at Dodges Ferry - with hundreds of people at each meeting. This was a spontaneous uprising of people who, with one week's notice, came to these public meetings and voiced their unanimous censure for the role of the EPA in signing off this development without their right to have a say, and censure of the minister for not providing them an opportunity to talk about the impacts on them: on their place; on their recreational fishing opportunities; their sailing routes; their safety on the water; on the debris and plastics which we know will end up in Norfolk Bay as a result of fish farming. Everywhere fish farming operates, there is marine debris.

When I attended the two meetings at the weekend, I heard from people who voiced their objections on a whole range of issues. Marine debris was right up there. Marine safety was right up there. This has been the straw that broke the camel's back. Many people have been hearing about this issue and it is a bit like the boiled frog syndrome - people in the Huon and Channel know this well: a slow increase in the industrial operations of fish farming in those waterways.

This is completely new territory. This is from a company which has prided itself on taking a different stand, on going forward and not going backwards to the old ways, of moving oceanic and not into inshore waters. Norfolk Bay is inshore. Norfolk Bay is a place which should never have industrial-scale finfish farming. It is a place for small-scale, thoughtful, mussel farming, oyster farming, recreational fishing in a way that has paid attention to the impacts on the environment, in a way that makes sure the population of fish that live there will continue to grow, not decline.

I want to talk about the process of approvals because that is what we are here about today. We know there was never any public consultation at all with any of those affected communities. There was never any consultation with other business owners, like Mr Flathead - a man called Mr Duncan who owns a business called Mr Flathead - and his business is recreational fishing, taking people out on the water. He will be directly affected. The season starts at the beginning of November. The fish he takes people out to see, to dive to look at, to catch, will be affected by this move.

There was no survey of residents to ask them their views about the noise impacts.

Ms O'Connor - Quite deliberate.

Dr WOODRUFF - Yes, very deliberate. When people rang up Huon Aquaculture to ask them to hold a public meeting, they said they do not do that. The company's policy now is to meet with individual members of the community, one on one. That is a great way to make sure you do not hear what your neighbour's concerns are. That is a great way to make sure you do not get up a head of steam amongst a group of people who might collectively form a view that the activities being proposed are outrageous and need to be resisted.

The community spoke with one voice. They were gobsmacked that the EPA director did not enforce a public consultation process when he went ahead and signed off the licence conditions for

Huon Aquaculture to operate on that lease. We know DPIPWE, the minister's marine farming branch, rushed through a licence for Huon Aquaculture to move pens into their lease only a couple of weeks after the idea was first floated. The minister can correct that information.

We know the EPA has draft regulations which came out in February this year. These draft regulations for how they should approve environmental licences for salmon farming, specifically require that in this instance, the director of the EPA should refer the matter to the full EPA board for a full assessment under the Environmental Management and Pollution and Control Act. That would require a public submission process and an independent assessment of the impacts. It would enable the right to appeal a decision of the board; it would put it into an essentially judicial process. Instead, what happened is that the director of the EPA invited Huon Aquaculture to provide their own stakeholder report including monitoring of impacts.

The directive stipulated a number of extremely narrow impacts that needed to be monitored and handed over that responsibility to the company. Huon Aquaculture has employed a consultant to do that work, a consultant who makes money from fish farming companies - that is their bread and butter business. They were tasked, amongst other things with looking for the existence of the critically endangered red handfish, that pesky, lovable little fish that we know only exists in two populations in the world, one of which is in Norfolk Bay. We know because seven divers went looking last January, they spent three-and-a-half hours in the water and just at the end of their investigations, searching under algae, they happened upon a red handfish. How fantastic is that? We now know there is another population of red handfish. They are very hard to find; extremely easy to miss if the only impact assessment you do is with a GoPro taking video transects in the water. You do not even know the clarity of the water. What a surprise they could not find the red handfish. Ipso facto it does not exist.

That is not good enough. The director of the EPA conceded that the habitat is suitable for the red handfish. The community group, Environment Tasmania, is standing up for beautiful animals like the red handfish. They have referred the matter to the federal Environment minister for an assessment under the Environment Protection, Biodiversity and Conservation Act. Thank goodness for conservation and community groups around Tasmania that are doing their best on the smell of an oily rag.

What should happen is that this assessment should be done first before Huon Aquaculture goes in. It should be done first. Blind Freddy would know that it should be done first. You do not start the work of harvesting hundreds of thousands of fish without having worked out if there is a handfish under the pens and the impacts your operations will have. The director of the EPA has waived through the licence. This is despite the fact that the draft regulations of the EPA say that it is a requirement when a lease has not had finfish in it for more than 10 years and three months, or when there is a referral under the EPBC act, that the matter should go to the board of the EPA, a full board, for proper assessment.

That is what should have happened and that is why we call this a corrupted process. That is why we are calling on the minister to listen to the community, to the other businesses, to listen to the evidence of the suspected damage that will occur, to the likely threats that will occur to the marine environment and the safety of mariners, to the residents whose lifestyle will be unutterably altered by having finfish farming on their beautiful tranquil waterways. That is why we are calling on the Labor Party and the Government to cancel that licence.

We know that this licence is a permit for operating until 31 December. Huon Aquaculture's own Q&A sheet online is the only information they have given the community. There is no other information to go on except the company's own information. That information says they are going to finish operating on 30 November.

The clear message from the community is they want them out. They did not want them there in the first place. They were not asked nor given a say. The minister may say that this is an urgent situation. The company was in a difficult situation and we have to understand that this is urgent, it is particular, and there is a biosecurity threat. I tell you what the community said about that. The community said, 'Sort your problems out first. Sort your own company continued growth model out first'.

The chair of Huon Aquaculture, Peter Bender, was in the newspaper last week talking up how fantastic it is that they made a \$35 million profit last financial year. Well, good on them, fantastic. No-one minds businesses making money. That is what businesses are there to do.

Ms O'Connor - But it is a public resource. Public waterways.

Dr WOODRUFF - Exactly. They happen to be operating on public waterways so there needs to be a higher bar for them to operate from. Peter Bender said they have the capacity and the infrastructure for continued growth. Their continued growth is happening on Storm Bay, in a place which has wild water, that is all known. They have been crowing about how prepared they are for this and how they will be a world-first leader in operating in Storm Bay. That may well prove to be the case, but the fact is they have the fish in the water in Storm Bay and they are telling the community they have to move into Norfolk Bay because they cannot operate in Storm Bay because it is too dangerous. They are telling the community, 'We have to take our diseased fish into your bay because we cannot take them to where we would normally process them because they might infect our other stock'.

You can see how all of this urgency is really confected. If it was a company that was regulated by a government that required them to look ahead and plan for these contingencies, that did not allow them to go into Storm Bay because they do not have the scientific assessment that says they should be there and they have never done an impact assessment of that either, if we had a strong government doing strong tough regulations, we would not be in this situation.

This is about stopping in Norfolk Bay and moving to the moratorium we have always had to have so we can stop this madness and have a government that puts tough regulations in place so there is a prospect of having a sustainable industry. At the moment, the wreckage it is doing to marine environments, other businesses and communities around the state, and to the water supply of Tasman Peninsula, the East Coast and so many other factors, is all on the head of the Liberal Party who have not only allowed it to happen but have enabled it to happen.

The Labor Party's member for Lyons, Jen Butler, was there on Saturday and she listened carefully. She heard the comments from the community and their concerns about a repeat of Macquarie Harbour in Norfolk Bay with algal blooms and dead zones and the visual pollution of their seascape. They are concerned about fresh water depletion from the aqua farm at Mt Koonya and Mt Clark that is important for the Tasman Peninsula, and about the impacts on their local fish populations of flathead and the newly returned bastard trumpeter, flounder, abalone, mussels, garfish, gummy shark, squid and rock lobster. Sea eagles and wedge-tail eagles, which are also endangered species, live above that pen site and have never been assessed for impacts on them. No

impacts on cetaceans were assessed by the director of the EPA in his sole responsibility of making that decision. It is all wrong.

There is a way to change and improve it. It can be done, and the first step is to talk to local communities about moves like this and to talk to independent scientists and undertake the assessments that we need to have.

Madam Speaker, I want to leave time for other people to make contributions before I return to wind up this debate.

[5.26 p.m.]

Ms COURTNEY (Bass - Minister for Primary Industries and Water) - Madam Speaker, I want to be clear that the Hodgman Liberal Government is committed to ensuring our \$730 000 world-class salmon industry continues to grow sustainably and is managed through strong, independent regulations supported by the community.

The sustainable industry growth plan for the salmon industry provides a blueprint for our single biggest primary industry sector, which is focused on maintaining public confidence, improved transparency and regulation and managed growth. Responsibility for environmental regulation and management has been transferred to the independent EPA. Penalties for breaches of regulation have been increased and the new statutory mechanism of no-grow zones for excluding finfish marine farming areas from the state's coastlines have happened.

As a government we are always interested in hearing the views of the community and I have indeed met with representatives about this issue as well as other aspects of the salmon industry. It is very important when we are discussing these types of issues that we look at the facts and I enjoy the opportunity this afternoon to be able to put some facts on the record because I felt that there were many things in Dr Woodruff's contribution that were inflammatory, emotive and conflating issues that, to be perfectly frank, manipulated the facts and the circumstances for their political gain.

Ms O'Connor - Take it apart truthfully line by line. Be honest.

Madam SPEAKER - Order, Ms O'Connor.

Ms COURTNEY - On 7 August, the Department of Primary Industries, Parks, Water and the Environment issued a permit issued under section 14 of the Living Marine Resources Management Act 1995 to Huon Aquaculture. The short-term permit has been provided at Norfolk Bay to facilitate safe harvesting practices of fish grown in Storm Bay and for improved biosecurity risk management. Huon Aquaculture has been issued a temporary permit. The permit issued to Huon Aquaculture will expire on 31 December and has been issued on the condition that all marine farming equipment and infrastructure must be removed from the site prior to the expiration of the permit.

A new environmental licence for the permit site was also issued by the director of the EPA on 17 August under the Environmental Management and Pollution Control Act 1994. The environmental licence is the only licence currently in place under EMPCA for this site. This environmental licence contains stringent water quality seabed and seagrass environmental monitoring and reporting conditions. I want to be clear that this is not long-term fish farming at this site and Huon Aquaculture has clearly stated that it does not intend to farm salmon permanently at Norfolk Bay.

Dr Woodruff - No, they will just go back time and again. That is what they say.

Madam SPEAKER - Order, Dr Woodruff.

Ms COURTNEY - The permit covers part of an existing finfish farming lease area. However, the existing marine farming lease itself has not been activated. Importantly, if there was any move to establish more permanent finfish marine farming operations in what is an existing marine farm licence area in Norfolk Bay, additional approvals must be obtained, including a marine farming license, authorise the farming of salmonoids in the Living Marine Resource Management Act.

Following legislative changes made last year, it would also be subject to an assessment by the Environmental Protection Authority under the provisions of the Environmental Management and Pollution Control Act. This would involve a public consultation process. The EPA required a baseline environmental survey to be conducted at the permit site. The baseline survey required underwater video filming of the seabed at 42 sites within the permit area, adjacent to the permit area and some distance from the permit area. As I have said in this place before, the licence contains stringent water quality, seabed and seagrass environmental monitoring and reporting conditions.

Environmental monitoring will be conducted by the environmental license holder during the permit period and for a time following expiration of the permit. The EPA is also conducting independent, monthly water quality monitoring at a number of sites within Norfolk Bay, during and following the expiration of the permit. Through the department and the independent EPA, steps have been taken to understand the environment and to ensure that the environment is monitored even past 31 December when the permit expires and all equipment is removed.

I want to reflect on the necessity for this; one of those areas is safe harvesting. This permit enables the company to transport fish from Storm Bay to safely conduct harvesting operations at the Norfolk Bay site whilst managing biosecurity across the south-east growing region. We know that the salmon industry employs many Tasmanians, around 1600 directly and over 5000 indirectly. People employed by the industry, like any other industry, have expectations of having a safe workplace. This permit will allow fish to be taken from Storm Bay, an area that is oceanic and a high growing area. I understand that the fish due to be harvested will be transferred to Storm Bay using a well boat. The fish will be transferred to two harvest cages at the permit site in Norfolk Bay in batches for harvesting.

Another reason for this permit has been for biosecurity. Despite the very inflammatory assertions made by Dr Woodruff about diseased fish -

Dr Woodruff - No, that is what the Huon Aquaculture Q&A sheet says.

Madam SPEAKER - Order, through the Chair please.

Ms COURTNEY - Madam Speaker, this is improved biosecurity practice. The fish due to be harvested may be carriers of orthomyxovirus, while not necessarily ill or diseased. To be cleared, POMV naturally occurs in pilchards and is already present in the wild. POMV is not a risk to humans and there is no record of it being detected in any other wild or managed fish species. Biosecurity Tasmania also actively monitors and works with the companies on any reports of animal health or husbandry issues. The Government mandated licence conditions require that companies must report mortality events that exceed a level of 0.25 per cent mortality for three or more days, as well as reporting the level and use of antimicrobial medication.

It is prudent biosecurity risk management to separate fish grown in Storm Bay from fish grown in other areas by isolating the harvest start operations at this temporary Norfolk Bay permit site. The alternative would be the company's designated harvest site in the lower reaches of the Huon. Transferring fish to that site would expose Huon Aquaculture and Tassal's fish in the Huon and Channel regions to a risk of POMV and hence the Norfolk bay temporary permits.

Many Australians enjoy eating salmon and enjoy supporting the industry. It is a big part of our brand and it is also a big part of employment across Tasmania. I agree that it is always important to be able to have information, conversation. This is why this afternoon has been a good opportunity to be able to get the facts, the data and the information on the record.

The Hodgman Government has significantly reformed regulation of this industry to ensure it adapts and is in step with changing community expectations. This includes, as I outlined earlier, increasing independence of regulation through handing responsibility to the EPA.

Dr Woodruff - It is not independent.

Madam SPEAKER - Order.

Dr Woodruff - Madam Speaker -

Madam SPEAKER - If this is a point of order, then you need to stand.

Dr WOODRUFF - Madam Speaker, the minister keeps saying that it is independent. The board of the EPA is independent but the minister would know that the director of the EPA is a public servant under her responsibility. You cannot mislead the House.

Madam SPEAKER - You cannot say that. It is reflecting on his ability to do his job. I do not think that is a point of order. Could the minister please resume?

Dr Woodruff - I am just reflecting on the structure. It is not an independent statutory body.

Ms O'Connor - We are reflecting on the act that establishes the EPA.

Madam SPEAKER - Order, please. He cannot defend himself in here.

Ms COURTNEY - We are increasing independence of regulation through handing responsibility to the EPA; establishing the finfish farming and compliance monitoring unit within the EPA with additional staff; increasing penalties for breaches and re-introducing demerit points in the Marine Farming Planning Amendment Act 2016; and undertaking an independent assessment of salmon farming in Okehampton Bay. Through the Finfish Farming Environmental Regulations Act we strengthened and consolidated the environmental regulations including a formal permanent transfer of power through statutory arrangements for environmental regulation of finfish farming from DPIPWE to the EPA, consolidating under the EPA the environmental regulations of inland hatcheries and marine finfish farming. Salmon companies will require a new environmental licence under Tasmania's Environmental Management and Pollution Act 1994 and powers for the declaration of finfish marine farming, no-grow or exclusions zones.

We are getting on with the job of delivering our plan for the salmon industry that will see the salmon industry grow in the future in a sustainable way. An independent information portal with a wider range of environmental information, including additional real time data, is in progress.

In response to one of the issues raised by Dr Woodruff, the Government has made it clear to industry that there will be a zero tolerance to marine debris. In addition to existing compliance staff within the department, authorised officers from MAST are working together to implement this approach. The department has collected information from all companies in relation to marine equipment they hold in order to create a marine farming equipment register. The register will facilitate the determination of the source of certain marine debris found outside marine farming areas. We have a strong focus on biosecurity, on growing our salmon industry and ensuring that we talk and communicate and listen to the community.

I am conscious of time. I know that Dr Broad also wants to make a contribution. I will reflect quickly on a couple of the other points made by Dr Woodruff. In her opening comments she talked about 'finfish farming damaging the interests of local communities'. It is worth pointing out the hypocrisy of this considering that it was only in our last session of parliament that Dr Woodruff was in here fighting for the communities within the Huon with regards to competing options for the use of the Dover facility. It clearly demonstrates that, rather than actually caring about this issue, the Greens will use communities in Tasmania as a means to be able to score political points. That is really disappointing.

Ms O'Connor - What a load of garbage.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER - Order. The minister has the call.

Ms COURTNEY - They will use communities for their own arguments and then dump those communities and stakeholders when they decide they have a different purpose to follow.

Dr Woodruff discussed the draft regulations in some detail. I point out that they are draft. In terms of complying with a draft regulation it is important to recognise that they are not in place. She also talked about poor regulation. I categorically refute that and have demonstrated through my contribution not only the regulation we have involved from both a licensing and environmental perspective, but this Government has strengthened those to ensure the community has the opportunity to have its say, to ensure that science is used and to ensure that there is due process with regard to salmon farming.

In closing, the action taken with regard to Huon Aquaculture is reasonable in the circumstances. To be clear, only a short-term permit has been provided at Norfolk Bay to facilitate safe harvesting practices of fish grown in Storm Bay and for improved fish health biosecurity risk management. The permit will expire on 31 December. All marine farming will be removed before the permit expires. The environmental licence requires monitoring while the permit is in place and once it has expired. I will not be overturning a permit that has been validly issued by the department, nor will the Minister for Environment overturn a valid licence which is a statutory decision provided by the director of the EPA.

The Government does not support the motion.

[5.42 p.m.]

Dr BROAD (Braddon) - Mr Deputy Speaker, this is a difficult issue. At times there are difficult choices to be made in government. There is no doubt that ministers have times when they need to weigh up the pros and cons when making a decision.

During the finfish farming debate we had last year, which was quite a long debate, Labor proposed an amendment that licences that had been in abeyance for more than 10 years would have to go through a full environmental process to be reactivated. That is reflected in the current legislation. When I heard that Huon Aquaculture was going into Norfolk Bay, from what I understood, that licence had been in abeyance for more than 10 years so I did not understand at that time how it was indeed possible in the law for that dormant license to be used. That was an amendment we proposed because we saw what happened with Okehampton Bay. They had a dormant licence that had been in place for more than 10 years which was suddenly reactivated.

We proposed that amendment. It was not supported by the Government in this place; however the Government adopted that amendment as their own in the upper House and that subsequently became part of the bill. The Government did not give credit directly to this side of the House but that became part of the bill, which we were pleased about. When it came to this particular decision, I was surprised.

I have had discussions with the industry and within the party about what this means. It is far from ideal having what was previously a dormant lease reactivated. However, I will draw comfort from the fact this is a temporary licence that is only valid from August through to 30 November and that all gear has to be removed by 31 December so there is no presence.

What we are talking about is two pens within a lease area of one hectare. This is not finfish farming as we know it. It is not small fish being grown, being fed time and time again and as the fish grow they are divided into pens and then as the fish get bigger, they need more pens, et cetera.

Ms O'Connor - It is all part of the farming process.

Dr BROAD - I am trying to explain to you. You can sledge me after hours if you like.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER - Order. Dr Broad will be heard without interruption.

Dr BROAD - This is a difficult decision. What we are talking about is fish being taken from one area, Storm Bay, and taken to Norfolk Bay in batches to be harvested. As the fish are harvested, the volumes of fish in the water will be reducing. It is not the same as having a large number of fish on a lease for years. The fish take anywhere between 18 to 20 months to grow out. Those fish are not going to be there for that time. This is just until 30 November. The question is whether that is a good idea on the balance of what we are talking about here.

This highlights what I have been arguing is the biggest issue facing the industry itself, which is biosecurity. I have been calling on the Government time and time again, as a matter of priority, to develop a biosecurity plan for the industry. That needs to involve some difficult decisions and it needs to involve getting the three salmon companies in the same room together and working out a more biosecure finfish farming operation statewide. That will no doubt involve forced trading on lease sites and some difficult decisions, but the reason the industry has to do this is because what destroys industries world-wide is disease.

Dr Woodruff - Lack of social licence, environmental degradation.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER - Order. Dr Woodruff, I caution you. You have had your opportunity. You have made your contribution. Dr Broad will be heard without your interjections.

Dr BROAD - The issues that drive the bankrupting of salmon companies for the areas being ruled out from salmon production are diseases, especially infectious salmonoid anaemia or ISA. Pilchard orthomyxovirus is in the same family as ISA. This is a serious disease and what we have seen overseas is that you go into an area and things go quite well for a time and then the disease pressure builds up over time and needs to be dealt with through implementing rigorous biosecurity practices, separating year classes of fish, et cetera, having companies operate not on top of each other, as we see in Tasmania, but seeing the industry having distinct areas which they can operate and maintain themselves. If those processes are not implemented then a disease pressure will build up over time and it will wipe the industry out or cause it significant issues, as we have seen in Scotland, Norway, Chile, Canada and places like the Faroe Islands, which I know a lot about. The same thing happens every time. If we do not deal with that by putting in place a biosecurity plan for the industry that is exactly what will happen.

Huon Aquaculture has come up with a far from ideal solution but the reason they have done that is to try to break the cycle of infection between fish that have been exposed to POMV and have recovered, but in that they may still express some low-level disease. If they towed or shifted those fish to Hideaway Bay, near a younger year class of fish, it is the youngest year classes of fish that are the most susceptible to POMV. What we are asking today is, do we want a situation where we have a temporary lease established in Norfolk Bay - and I have to take Huon Aquaculture's word on this - until they get their other lease well, which would solve this problem?

This is choice. Do we take those fish to Hideaway Bay and potentially, or more than likely, we can infect the whole bunch of young fish and perpetuate POMV, and potentially wipe out pens of fish. In Macquarie Harbour and also in south east Tasmania, we have seen this disease wipe out entire pens of fish. This motion is suggesting that we should put in place a temporary solution to a problem with the idea of breaking the infection from salmon to salmon, or are we going to insist that the industry takes these potentially virus-expressing fish and put them close to a whole bunch of smolt or small fish with a potential to wipe out these?

We have heard the Greens members for Denison and Franklin talk in the past about the death of fish, and it is horrendous: tonnages of fish that can potentially die from this disease. We saw that in question time a couple of sittings ago. We have seen it in Macquarie Harbour and in other parts of the industry. This is one way to try to break that cycle.

I am not convinced that this is enough to break the cycle of POMV because we know that this disease is in pilchards. Pilchards are not in cages and are free to swim wherever they like and come into contact with fish. If we have older fish continually infecting younger fish, this is going to perpetuate until the industry can come up with a solution.

This is far from ideal but the only comfort that I draw is that Norfolk Bay is a temporary solution. If the industry decides that they want to farm fish in Norfolk Bay instead of doing batch harvesting, if they want to establish finfish farming in this bay, which apparently they do not, but if they did, it would go through a full process which would open up the community consultation.

This also highlights that the policy we took to the election - and we still stand by it - was to create an independent body to review and to provide advice to the EPA in a transparent manner. We wanted to increase the scope of the Marine Farm Planning Review Panel by creating a new body which we would call the Independent Aquaculture Advisory Panel. This would be tasked with requesting and reviewing monitoring data, assessing compliance, providing independent expert advice to the EPA, et cetera. You would have an independent body dealing with these issues

and providing that information to the public so that you could have more faith. It is not this black box that suddenly we find out that, okay, salmon are going into Norfolk Bay, and everyone asks, 'What has happened?' This is valid. It is a valid concern. We want an independent review panel to be able to say, 'This is what the industry is planning', and then do it in a transparent way so they can say, 'is it good, is it not?'

Ms O'Connor - Do you not think there should be a policy set about this industry's growth? There is this paradigm that it just keeps growing.

Dr BROAD - The industry's growth is separate to this particular issue.

This reminds me of another issue I would like to raise. We need independent and transparent regulation of the industry. There is no doubt about that, and that is the centrepiece of our policy.

This also highlights a potential problem with expansion within the salmon industry because at Storm Bay - and their expansion plans are now focused on Storm Bay - in the short- to medium-term, Storm Bay is where the industry is going to expand. We currently have a number of applications on foot, and I am not sure when decisions are likely to be made, but Storm Bay is where the industry's expansion plans are now focused.

Storm Bay is a high energy site, as we have heard. During the storms earlier this year salmon gear ended up on beaches. This is quite a difficult area and this highlights that there are going to be problems down the track with harvesting because harvesting in high energy sites is difficult so they are going to have to come up with a solution. That is why they need this extra well boat so they can harvest windows when it is calm, take enough fish to be able to harvest and they have to solve that problem. Where are they actually going to harvest their fish? They take them in small batches. Are they going to continue to go down to Hideaway Bay in the future? I do not think so. They are coming up with a better solution to solve this problem.

This is a difficult decision. I feel for the residents at Norfolk Bay because this has come as a surprise but, in the balance, the two choices were to establish a temporary licence or to perpetuate the disease cycle by taking them to Hideaway Bay. In this difficult circumstance I imagine if I was the minister I would be contemplating similar decisions, although this was done via the EPA. Sometimes difficult decisions have to be made. It is a temporary permit. I have to take Huon on face value that they are not planning to do this again.

Dr Woodruff - They say they are going to. They have left the door open in their own question and answer sheet, Dr Broad.

Dr BROAD - I have to take it and say as this is a temporary measure, and the shock and devastation that a decision today to cancel the lease immediately would make, on the balance we cannot support this motion.

[5.56 p.m.]

Dr WOODRUFF (Franklin) - Madam Speaker, I am very disappointed and as will the community to hear that Labor will not be supporting this motion. It is unfortunate that the member for Lyons, Jen Butler, was not in the House.

Ms O'Connor - Or Ms White.

Dr WOODRUFF - Or the member for Lyons, Ms White, to hear the issues that their community is raising. This is a key issue for people living in the southern beaches and Tasman Peninsula right now.

Nothing that the minister said is surprising because the problem with the Liberals in government has been a failure to put in place the tough regulations that they say are needed. The minister started off talking about the \$730 million or \$740 million industry. That is clearly the only objective here: to open the door. Open the door for the industry to operate in whatever manner they so wish on publicly-owned waterways, affecting the communities and as we have seen from Macquarie Harbour totally damaging marine environments. They are not even staying to clean up the mess they have made. They are springboarding out of Macquarie Harbour and jumping to other sites around the state.

The point is that the whole approval of this so-called temporary permit has not been done in anything like an independent way. The minister has called the Greens to account for reflecting on the independence of the EPA. A motion was moved at the Dodges Ferry meeting to censure the Director of the EPA for the approvals that he has waived through on the basis of the material that Huon Aquaculture gave him for this development. The problem is that we do not have a truly independent EPA.

Truly independent authorities say in the establishing legislation that the Government cannot direct or interfere with them. What we have in the EPA's legislation stipulates the opposite: that they must comply with directions from the minister. Section 15 of the Environmental Management and Pollution Control Act 1994 sets out that the minister must provide the board with a statement of expectations, and section 15 stipulates the board must not act in a way that is inconsistent with the statement of expectations. The statement of expectations that has been issued to the EPA includes taking into account Tasmanian Government policies as well as policies advised by the minister in writing. That effectively leaves the door open for the minister to direct the EPA on any matter at any time through policy statements. An example of those policies is page 3 of the statement of expectations that says:

The minister expects the EPA to facilitate affluence and productivity.

There you go. The communities of southern beaches and Tasman Peninsula do not have the answer they want. There are desperate people and there are many people talking about this as being the straw that broke the camel's back. On the minister's head be it for any reputational damage that comes to this industry as a result of this outrageous, totally unassessed development into a completely new area for finfish farming, ostensibly for a short-term period to solve the problems of an industry that has never cared about the effects on the other environments or communities.

The House divided -

AYES 2

Ms O'Connor (Teller)
Dr Woodruff

NOES 20

Ms Archer
Mr Bacon
Mr Barnett
Dr Broad
Ms Butler
Ms Courtney
Ms Dow

Mr Ferguson
Mr Gutwein
Ms Haddad
Ms Hickey
Mr Hidding (Teller)
Mr Hodgman
Mr Jaensch
Mr O'Byrne
Ms O'Byrne
Mrs Petrusma
Mr Rockliff
Ms Standen
Ms White

Motion negatived.

ADJOURNMENT

Bruny Island - Ferry Service

[6.06 p.m.]

Mr O'BYRNE (Franklin) - Madam Speaker, I rise tonight to talk on the adjournment debate on the Bruny Island community and issues relating to the ferry.

First, we feel that the Government has ham-fistedly approached and created significant unnecessary angst and concern for the community in how they have dealt with the renewal of the Bruny Island ferry contract. It is a very important link to the island for locals that have been there for generations, residents, shack owners and tourism operators. It is an important link and the nature in which the contract was let has caused great angst and great concern in the community. Whilst we acknowledge that the Government department officials are sitting with the local community to try to work through a resolution to those issues, we believe the tender process and its outcome has caused unnecessary angst and concern.

We are keeping a razor sharp eye on the work of the Bruny Island Ferry Reference Group that is sitting down with SeaLink and the Government to try to improve and make as best as it possibly can of the mess that has been created by the state Government.

We know that people who live on the island, who holiday there, who have shacks there and go there regularly are very passionate about that island. There are a number of groups that have been established across the island to represent their disparate views. They are articulated in a whole range of forums.

We are very concerned. We are still worried about the booking system. We believe that has been foisted on people. They are not ready for it. A number of people do not think it is necessary if you get the service right. We are concerned about that.

We are concerned about infrastructure at Roberts Point and at Kettering to ensure there can be efficient and appropriate movement off and on the island from Kettering to Roberts Point and vice versa, particularly in emergencies and at key times - not only at the beginning and the end of the day but also during public holidays.

In the adjournment debate last night the Greens member, Dr Woodruff, made a contribution not only raising concerns around the ferry but made some completely inappropriate comments; some allegations about some of the Bruny Island residents and members. I did not hear it. I was not in the House at the time.

Ms O'Connor - Did you read it?

Mr O'BYRNE - I have read it. Whilst I believe there are legitimate concerns over the ferry service, making accusations around -

Ms O'Connor - About the stacking of a consultative group?

Mr O'BYRNE - You can get up if you want. Making accusations about inappropriate connections between key members of the community, particularly Mr Trevor Adams, SeaLink and the Government, is inappropriate. You can disagree with people. I can disagree with where they are landing. You can have your view forced, but it is unbecoming in this place to make serious allegations of impropriety about people such as Mr Trevor Adams and others. To be honest, I do not care about whether you agree with them or not. That is not the point, but making allegations in this House under parliamentary privilege about people such as Terry Adams, who is an islander and a highly respected member of the community is completely inappropriate.

I have known Trevor for many years and if you disagree with him he will accept a robust disagreement with your point of view. He is on that committee to play a role to try to fix the mess that the Government has put the community in. He is working hard and SeaLink has a lot of work to do to make sure they can have an acceptable service for the community. It is inappropriate to make individual allegations about members of the community.

I am in receipt of a letter to Dr Woodruff on behalf of the president of the Bruny Island Association, Jenny Boyer, offering to sit down and talk with Rosalie about her accusations and completely refuting them. It is incumbent on all members of parliament: we get a lot of emails and rumour and innuendo and it is important we act as a filter. There are legitimate concerns regarding the ferry service that are yet to be resolved by this Government, but it is inappropriate to make such serious allegations without substance about key members of the Bruny Island and we refute them.

Northern Hawks Netball Club

[6.11 p.m.]

Ms O'BYRNE (Bass) - Madam Speaker, I rise tonight to celebrate that the Northern Hawks Netball Club, in their third attempt over the last three grand finals, have finally broken their drought after 23 years, winning the state league grand final last Saturday. In what was a blockbusting last quarter the Hawks came home from five goals down at three-quarter time to win 66 to 57 over AYC Friends Arrows. It was a win 23 years in the making and not without its dramas.

I know the House joins with me in congratulating coach Ruth Tuohy, assistant coach Kellie Woolnough, manager Lynne Pickett, statistician Ann Pearce, and players Ashton Whiley, Jamie Symons, Zoe Claridge who was player of the match, Danni O'Byrne, Gemma Poke, Stephanie Groves, Danni Pickett, Ashlea Mawer, Chelsea Mawer, Kate Von Stieglitz and Clare McKimmie.

I have been patron of this club for a few years and tonight I pay credit and tribute to a woman who has put her heart and soul into this team and this competition. She has managed, coached, fundraised, cheered and lived and breathed this club, probably because she fought so very hard to save it. She is a diehard Hawks fan at every level of football and netball, although she acts as manager for the Collingwood netball team.

Ann Pearce recalls when the state league club nearly shut its doors for good. Her beloved club nearly closed and she was not going to have a bar of it. The former Northern Saints team was on the verge of extinction with debts racked up into the thousands that they owed the Northern Tasmanian Association and their future was bleak. It was only generous loans from its grassroots clubs that saved the Hawks from true extinction. As Ann recently told the *Examiner* in an interview:

We couldn't let it happen - in the north that would have left one club for all our talented players to play for - and that licence would have most likely gone for a club in Hobart.

Ann Pearce and Kelly Woolnough from the Tamar Jets joined the committee in the living room of then-president Deb Mohr to raise this team from certain collapse, and this week their efforts were returned in spades. Typically, Ann takes little personal credit. 'I was only a gap - I was just filling in till the Tahiris and Woolnoughs came.' I commend the passion of this wonderful volunteer. This was a win for the battlers. It was a win for a community that would not let its team die. It was a win for local sport and the volunteers who keep it alive.

I will leave the House with a couple of the public Facebook posts that were full of the excitement that filled the stadium and was echoed by the huge amount of people who watched the live stream:

After 23 years Northern Hawks have finally broken their state league netball premiership drought.

Another said:

Some great long passes from Ashlea Mawer to Chelsea Mawer in the last half. Ashlea was the match-winner in the last quarter, scoring 20 goals, with the feeding skills of Zoe Claridge, Ashton Whiley and Chelsea Mawer all top class. After watching their game there is no doubt Tasmania should have their own team in the superleague netball.

The post from the *Examiner* said it all, as the girls celebrated and those people who fought to save the club were in tears:

I'm not crying, you're crying.

Well done, Hawks. You have much to be proud of.

Derwent Entertainment Centre - Proposed Sale

[6.15 p.m.]

Ms O'CONNOR (Denison - Leader of the Greens) - Madam Speaker, I want to read into the *Hansard* some of the concerns that have been raised with me by Glenorchy ratepayers in relation

to the proposed sale of the Derwent Entertainment Centre. I will now read this correspondence into the *Hansard* so all members for Denison have a relatively complete picture of some of the concerns of ratepayers of Glenorchy who do not want to DEC sold:

Dear Cassy and Rosalie,

I am trying to prevent the unwarranted sale of the Derwent Entertainment Centre by the Glenorchy City Council.

There has been one 'unsolicited offer' made, no serious competitive tender process called and therefore no reserve price. It is being rushed through with a potentially below valuation price being accepted. The process seems very concerning.

Ratepayers do not know the names of the Consortium members, only an upfront name of Justin Hickey on behalf of the Hickey Family Trust of Tasmania. Being a Consortium, I believe there are other names behind this offer that we don't know about. We also do not know the names of members of the Hickey Family Trust.

Of major concern is our Community Facility being sold on the basis of the one offer. The mayor stated publicly they were being guided by the Valuer-General's valuation, which is usually a lot lower than commercial market valuation. It was also stated last Friday on the ABC by the mayor that valuations ranged from \$6 million to \$20 million. Also, what have they included in that valuation as there are the business interests, the expensive technical equipment, all furnishings, developed surroundings and 1000 car parks etc to be sold.

Due to rushing this through she stated that, 'on the right tight timelines associated with the proposed sale process, the Glenorchy Council may not have enough time to test the market properly. The Consortium is applying pressure to do this deal quickly.' What is going on? The mayor should not have the discretion to say she will not test the market value of this substantial asset.

There will be no competitive tendering process and Council are acting in conjunction with the current Liberal Government on this issue and supporting these nameless people behind the Consortium.

Glenorchy has had a huge rate increase of 12.5% equating to \$4 million extra revenue and the sale of this Community facility is not a budgetary requirement. This has been confirmed. The question to ask now is 'why is it being sold at all if it doesn't need to be?' There is no alternative facility of this kind for the community to use. This building was a Bicentennial gift to the people of Glenorchy in 1988. I believe this building was gifted to the people of Glenorchy, including our future generations, and I am wondering whether the Council, as custodians of it for the people, have a right to sell it off without the support of the people.

On speaking to a range of ratepayers, I have discovered that the majority of them do not even know about this sale and are very upset to hear about it. Others think it is losing over \$1 million a year so it has to be sold. This is what the Mayor keeps saying in the media. The true operating loss is \$234 000 last financial year and \$105 000 for the previous year.

I have serious reservations that this Community Facility and surrounding landscaped 1000 car park will be sold well below Commercial Market Value, including all business interests, expensive equipment, furniture etc, and misleading information is being directed at the ratepayers by both the Mayor and the Consortium.

I am very concerned that on the basis of one unsolicited offer that any member of the public can purchase significant valued Public land and Assets without a formal competitive Tender or Expression of Interest process being instigated to test the market value and achieve best offer for the people of Glenorchy and Tasmania. Also I believe that Commercial Market Valuation will not be used when considering this offer. This seems to be seriously flawed and wrong. It is definitely against public interest and, in addition, is being very rushed to avoid scrutiny.

On the ABC news on Friday 27 July, the Mayor also stated, 'the sale can be completed after 3 August, some 21 days later'. Sounds like they will be dismissing any objections, which ends on 3 August.

Are you able to assist in putting a halt to this process and call for an investigation on behalf of the people of Glenorchy and indeed all users of this important Community Facility. I will try to find out the Bicentennial Authority's conditions related to this gift to the people to determine if the sale can be prevented on any of these grounds.

I have asked this constituent if I can read their name into *Hansard* but I have decided not to in this instance. Let it be known to the House, however, that she and her husband are residents of Glenorchy, and are not alone in their concern about this sale, the lack of transparency about it and the apparent haste and lack of public consultation about the sale of a public asset.

In Tasmania right now, there is a theft of the commons underway, whether it is the Treasury Building, the Derwent Entertainment Centre, public marine areas or protected areas and parks. There is a corporate assault on public assets. The Greens stand in this place with communities who recognise that those places belong to them.

If there is any move to sell them, there needs to be a comprehensive, honest public consultation and the owners of those assets need to be part, not only of the conversation, but of the decision.

Madam SPEAKER - I make a clarification for the House. I put on the public record that although we share the same surname, I do not believe Mr Hickey is any relative of mine, nor have I ever met him. Thank you.

Burials and Cremation Review - Sale of Church Properties

***The Nightingale* - 75th Venice International Film Festival**

[6.20 p.m.]

Ms ARCHER (Denison - Attorney-General) - Madam Speaker, I rise tonight to bring the House up-to-date in relation to the Burials and Cremation Review.

Following on from the Anglican Church's decision to proceed with a significant divestment program that includes the proposed sale of 76 churches as well as cemeteries, there has been much community interest about how cemeteries that are sold will be managed.

I take this opportunity to provide this update to the House on the developments within the Government's review of the Cemetery Management Legislation, and particularly because I recall the Leader of the Opposition stating during a contribution on a debate that we have had recently, that we have done nothing with the review. I assure the House that this could not be further from the truth.

I acknowledge the significant community interest and concern surrounding the sales of church properties containing cemeteries. The member for Lyons Ms Butler and many other local members have attended many public meetings. I attended the Ouse public meeting and gave that community an update on our review. I felt it was timely to bring that information to the House as well, particularly in relation to a time line. Notable concerns include whether members of the public will continue to be able to access the gravesites of deceased relatives and friends and what will happen to any existing exclusive right of burial in a cemetery that is sold.

Like many of you in this House and in the other place, I have been overwhelmed by the many representations that we have received by concerned community members including those residing interstate and overseas. It has taken quite an extensive interest. These were reflected on in last week's MPI and I thank the member for bringing it forward, and a related motion also by the member for Prosser in the other place.

In response to the Anglican Church's decision to proceed with its divestment program, the Government moved swiftly and publicly committed to considering legislative changes that will preserve, protect and where appropriate, strengthen both the rights of community members and the obligations on cemetery managers.

A review of the current legislative provisions applying to cemeteries and the drafting of legislative amendments to support the Government's commitment is well underway. This review has been prioritised in light of the time line set by the Anglican Church, with their final decisions on potential church sales due in December 2018.

In late September we will be publicly releasing a consultation paper, outlining the proposed amendments that invited public consultation in its submissions. This is prior to the anticipated introduction of legislation to the parliament during the 2018 spring session this year. This work is on track and I am pleased to confirm the recruitment of an officer to lead the work on this project. He has commenced work in the past two weeks, adding to the work that has already been done. Their recruitment is timely and will help expedite this work, noting the substantial amount of work that has already occurred to date.

As part of the review, amendments are being developed which, at a minimum, will provide greater clarity regarding the fit and proper person test that is currently applied to prospective cemetery managers to ensure that the community can be confident that purchasers can and will meet their significant obligations under the act. They will include increased sanctions for the failure of cemetery managers to perform their duties and allow for the issuing of infringement notices to aid in compliance and enforcement, as well as ensure processes and associated time frames for the closure and future alternative uses of cemeteries are appropriate.

The amendments will clarify how the rights of religious and cultural groups in relation to closed cemeteries interact with the rights of the owners of those cemeteries with respect to the exhumation and interment of human remains and a range of other matters, and clarify and resolve future administrative and resourcing responsibilities for the regulatory frameworks that apply to cemeteries.

This is an important and complex piece of work and it is critical that we get this right to provide the clarity that is required. I recognise that the time frame we are working to is very tight and things may be borne out through consultation that could impact on this. However, we also recognise that it is important that both buyers and sellers of properties are aware of potential legislative changes and consider how they may impact on them.

For the benefit of members of this House, in practice the types of legislative changes being considered would likely mean that it will be difficult for private individuals who are simply seeking to acquire church property as a residential dwelling with a cemetery attached to meet the requirements of a fit and proper test. The fit and proper test will specifically require a demonstration of capacity to meet statutory obligations as a cemetery manager which includes safely managing public access, record keeping and general maintenance and upkeep. Church organisations will more easily be able to sell property containing churches and cemeteries where they can subdivide cemeteries from churches and other buildings or properties prior to divestment and retain ownership and management responsibility for cemeteries.

Lastly but certainly not least, in fact I should not say lastly as these are just examples of the types of things to be covered, it will be more difficult for church organisations to sell properties where subdivisions are not practical or possible given the need to find a purchaser who can meet the fit and proper person test.

I do look forward to progressing this important reform with the release of the consultation paper in late September. We did hear many examples in the public meeting where it is going to be quite difficult to separate the churches from cemeteries. In many cases the cemeteries might surround the church and in a couple of cases as the member for Lyons herself identified at the meeting I was at, there are certainly tombs and people located under the altar itself, therefore making it very difficult I would think. Because the Burials and Cremations Act is currently ambiguous in places, particularly in relation to the fit and proper person test, that clarity is required as part of this review and I assure members of the House that it is progressing well. Additional resources have been allocated to achieve that.

I am not sure how much time I have left but I am going to be really quick. Today marks the opening of the 75th Venice International Film Festival and this year Tasmanian feature film, *The Nightingale*, has been selected for screening. Our Government supported *The Nightingale* through a \$250 000 investment from Screen Tasmania. The screening is an outstanding achievement and another example of our screen industry going from strength to strength.

We have many more exciting projects in the pipeline which I do not have time to mention but 2018-19 is shaping up to be another busy year for screen production activity in Tasmania. A record seven projects received support through Screen Tasmania's capitalise production investment program and will create 160 jobs for Tasmanians during production. By investing additional funding into key screen projects through our recently announced \$2 million screen innovation fund we can guarantee these economic benefits for the state will continue well into the future.

Jordan River Learning Federation - Brighton School Farm

[6.28 p.m.]

Ms BUTLER (Lyons) - Madam Speaker, I rise to discuss my growing concern at the future of the Jordan River Learning Federation's Brighton School Farm.

We know that the township of Brighton's population has increased by 2 per cent and that the primary school which comes under the Jordan River Learning Federation is one of the largest in southern Tasmania with an estimated 600 students. We know that there was a Liberal election policy which promised to build a Brighton High School and that the site of that high school would be discussed at a further time.

As some of you might be aware, the Brighton Municipal Council recently published a proposal to build the new Brighton High School on the site of the Brighton School Farm. The concept would infringe or take over five to six of the 11 hectares which currently makes up the fabulous school farm. It is not the first time an attempt has been made to change the usage of the Brighton School Farm. In 2014, the Brighton Council faced community outrage when an attempt to potentially relocate this school farm to another site and to re-zone the area was squashed by public will. I believe that over 2500 people at that time signed a petition to keep the farm as it was.

Because of community unrest I recently wrote to the minister to provide my support for the concept of a new Brighton high school to be explored, but I also sought assurances that the Brighton School Farm would not be compromised by the potential building of a new high school on the site. I also supported the exploration of three other potential sites, all close by, for a new high school to be built. The Minister for Education and Training, Jeremy Rockliff, has responded to my initial concerns on behalf of the community. I can state that the current Brighton School Farm site has not been ruled out as a potential site for the new high school. The response reads:

While I am aware of the concept plans commissioned by the Brighton Council, I advise that no decision has yet been made on the preferred site for the high school.

The Tasmanian Government has committed to undertaking extensive community consultation to inform planning for the both the new high school and the re-development of the Jordan River Learning Federation School Farm. The first phase of this consultation is scheduled to commence in October this year and will ensure all stakeholders have the opportunity to have their say on these important projects.

We can now confirm that the Department of Education is going to be undertaking 'a ... broad suite of community engagement activities ...' including a 'have your say' that is up on their website. Collectively this is community consultation.

Thank you for responding to my letter, minister. I appreciate it. I believe from that correspondence that there is not any surety about the future of the Brighton School Farm not being used as a potential high school site. The school farm itself is located at the north end of the Brighton township. The school farm comprises a series of agricultural paddocks and working sheds. They provide educational excellence in the areas of agriculture. The farm has the potential to be a regional agricultural education hub.

Anecdotally, under the former principal, Jackie Brown AM, an estimated 80 per cent of the students who left the school farm gained employment within two years or went onto further education. All farm kids leave the school usually heavily accredited with dozens of qualifications such as chainsaw licences and tractor driving.

My argument would be you have a model that is working; it is getting results. Why compromise that potentially either using half the school farm site to build a high school or using the whole site to build a school? It would be great if the other three sites could be explored with preference over the existing high school site.

The introduction of the Paddock to Plate has been a fabulous proposal which would be run through the Jordan River Learning Federation's Brighton School Farm. I can tell you that the public will fight to keep their school farm in entirety. They believe it cannot be divided and encroached upon by the building of a high school on its site. They feel that it will compromise both a potential new high school space as well as the educational facility which we know as the Brighton school farm. I have a quote from the friends of the farm community group, who state:

If you value the good work of the School Farm, if you value the education of our most needing youth, if you value the life skills that you or your children have been taught, once again we need your support.

We need you to use your voice and to tell the Department of Education and Minister Rockliff that you do not support the school farm being relocated. You do not support the school farm losing any land for a Brighton high school. Combined we have a stronger louder voice than those who sit against a school farm in Brighton. Leave our farm as it is and where it is. Thank you.

Jordan River Learning Federation - Brighton School Farm

Bruny Island - Ferry Service

National Skills Week

[6.35 p.m.]

Mr ROCKLIFF (Braddon - Minister for Education and Training) - Madam Speaker, I was searching for some correspondence so I could inform the member who raised the issue of the Brighton school farm, but she has read out my correspondence. It clearly states that a lot of consultation will take place, and includes a number of potential options. No government has invested more than this Hodgman Liberal Government when it comes to school farm infrastructure, including the Brighton school farm and Sheffield school farm to name two particularly, as I will be there in a week or so.

I am mindful of the community concerns, Ms Butler, and the issues that you have raised. Let me give an ironclad guarantee commitment that the Department of Education will leave no stone unturned when it comes to thorough consultation.

There are a couple of issues I would like to raise tonight. One is the issue of the Bruny Island ferry that was raised by the Greens member for Franklin, Dr Rosalie Woodruff last night and tonight by Mr O'Byrne. I disagree with much of what Mr O'Byrne said in terms of process, but I would have to agree with his comments made in reference to Dr Woodruff's comments last night. That

contribution was ill-conceived and has generated some angst on the island. A number of people were upset by the comments. I felt that the contribution was unacceptable.

I have a letter that has been written to Dr Woodruff and copied to me. I will not quote or table the letter, except to say that it has been put to Dr Woodruff that her speech last night was unhelpful and divisive. It would have been advisable for Dr Woodruff to consult with a wider sector of the Bruny Island community before she made those comments last night. The majority of Bruny Islanders - and I am quoting now from the letter - would seem to be happy with the representation provided by the Bruny Island Ferry Reference Group and are appreciative of their efforts. This is quoting from the letter written to Dr Woodruff.

I also defend Mr Adams. Mr Adams is a well-respected and universally trusted resident of Bruny Island. Mr Adams is working very hard as an unpaid and independent Chair of the Bruny Island Ferry Reference Group. I thank Mr Adams very much for his work. Mr Adams was born and raised on Bruny Island and is a permanent resident of the island. Mr Adams received a Medal of the Order of Australia for service to the community of Bruny Island, particularly fundraising through the Bruny Cork Club. Mr Adams is currently Deputy Chair of the Bruny Island Advisory Committee, a member of the Bruny Island Community Association and a committee member of many other Bruny community organisations. He is doing an outstanding job in his role as independent chair. I think Ms Woodruff could well recognise that. Mr Adams is a longstanding member of the Bruny Island community and does not deserve what I would call a personal attack last night from Ms Woodruff.

Mr Adams and other members of the Bruny Island Reference Group are volunteers, putting considerable time and effort into gaining the best outcome for Bruny Islanders, given the contract is signed by the Government and SeaLink.

There are a number of other claims as well that I want to point out to Dr Woodruff, and I genuinely would like Dr Woodruff to seek a briefing from the department. Mr O'Byrne sought and was provided with a briefing and I offer Dr Woodruff the same. Dr Woodruff's claim that people who are appointed to the ferry reference group who are not representing other people in the community is false. There are seven community members in the Bruny Island reference group, including the chairperson. All of them are committee members or office bearers of key Bruny Island governance entities and at its most recent general meeting earlier this month the Bruny Island Community Association passed a unanimous resolution in support of all the community representatives on the ferry reference group.

Another claim was that there is an undue weighting towards people from the tourism industry. This is also false. There is one member out of 10 connected to the tourism industry and the current secretary of the Bruny Island Tourism Association. The member for Franklin's claim that we will have a situation where people in Tasmania are no longer able to catch a ferry from their home to a service on the main island without booking a week in advance is also false. This has never been proposed to the ferry reference group. It is inconsistent with the contract terms and simply does not reflect reality. Dr Woodruff's claim that the new ferry service will be substantially inferior to the one that is currently being operated is also false. The contract with SeaLink clearly says the company has to meet demand and provide at least as good a service than the previous operation.

Madam Speaker, the ferry reference group has been doing a great job, providing a single point of contact to work with the Bruny community to address a range of concerns about the delivery of

services for all users of the ferry under the new contract. There is plenty of work to do but they are getting on with the job and I thank them very much for that.

I would also like to raise National Skills Week. I pay tribute to student achievements in vocation, education and training and to those who deliver that training in Tasmania during National Skills Week. We are very committed as a government to promoting the fact that vocational training is a valid first choice career pathway for many of thousands of Tasmanians and should be recognised and valued that way. The latest Skilling Australia report revealed that vocational graduates can expect to earn an equal if not higher wage than university graduates, and find it easier to gain employment once their studies are complete.

Time expired.

Legacy and Legacy Week

[6.43 p.m.]

Mr BARNETT (Lyons - Minister for Veterans' Affairs) - Madam Speaker, I speak in support of Legacy and Legacy Week. Legacy Week in Australia runs from Sunday 2 September until Saturday 8 September, with Legacy Badge Week on Friday 7 September.

Legacy Week was first held in 1942 and is the annual national appeal of Legacy, our nation's primary charity providing services to Australian families suffering after the incapacitation or death of a spouse or parent during or after their Defence Force service. I encourage all Tasmanians to get behind Legacy, not just in the south but in the north and the north-west and all across the state because Legacy does a terrific job and has been doing so for over 90 years.

Ms O'Connor - Hear, hear.

Mr BARNETT - Thank you, member for Denison, Ms O'Connor.

During the Great War, a generation was lost, with over 60 000 killed and 156 000 wounded, gassed or captured. Two-thirds of those who served overseas were killed or wounded, a casualty rate of 65 per cent, one of the highest of any nation in the war. Tasmania also suffered, with 2432 servicemen losing their lives out of the 15 485 who enlisted during the war. In subsequent conflicts such as the Second World War, Korea, Malaya, Vietnam and the Middle East, over 40 000 Australians have died on active service.

Tasmanians were among the first to land on the shores of Gallipoli on that first Anzac Day in 1915 and have since served in all branches of the Australian Defence Force with courage and distinction.

Funds raised during Legacy Week, with its iconic badges, go to helping Legacy care for around 58 000 widows and around 2000 children and disabled dependents throughout Australia, including 2100 in Tasmania, comprised of 1100 cared for by Legacy in Launceston and approximately 1000 by Legacy in Hobart.

Legacy provides essential services including counselling, special housing, medical advocacy and social support for Australian families and also helps assist the education of the children of our deceased veterans through contributions to school fees and resources and the hosting of recreational activities to grow their self-confidence and achieve their potential.

I say upfront that I have a vested interest because my grandfather, H S Barnett, was the president of Legacy in 1949 and 1950 in Hobart. He was a First World War veteran who has passed away now so there is softness clearly in my heart for Legacy, and Hobart Legacy in particular, which cares for the families of incapacitated and deceased veterans.

The birth of Legacy took place in Hobart in 1923 when it was re-established at the remembrance club by one of the nation's foremost war heroes, Tasmanian Major-General Sir John Gellibrand, KCV, DSO and Bar. Previously I had the privilege of handing over the medals of Sir John Gellibrand on behalf of Hobart Legacy and with the support of his family to the Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery, which still holds them today. There is a wonderful memorial to Sir John Gellibrand in the Anglican Church at Ouse. I encourage members to visit and pay their respects.

Hobart's Legacy service is carried out by many volunteers know as Legatees. They also receive strong support from a dedicated group of Friends of Hobart Legacy. Legacy does fine work all across the country. Their anniversary will be coming up for over 95 years of service, and in 2023 it will be 100 years.

In terms of Legacy in our veteran community, more generally we are now in this final year of the centenary of Anzac commemorations, where we have spent nearly five years commemorating 100 years since the beginning of the war. Now we are coming up to the 100-year anniversary of the signing of the Armistice to mark the end of the First World War.

The Australian Government's Anzac Centenary Public Fund provided more than \$9 million for three projects in Tasmania of national and state significance which have been completed or well underway. They include \$300 000 for the Flame of Remembrance at the Hobart Cenotaph, which I know you are fully aware of, Madam Speaker, in your former role as Hobart City Council Lord Mayor; \$1.1 million for the Soldiers Memorial Avenue project, a wonderful project indeed; and \$8 million for the pedestrian bridge in Hobart linking the Cenotaph with the Soldiers Memorial Avenue Remembrance Bridge, scheduled for completion in the second half of 2018.

Next week I have the pleasure of hosting my federal counterpart minister, Darren Chester. He will be visiting the three public-funded projects, or a number of them at least. The federal minister and I will be hosting a round table attended by representatives from ex-service organisations. I look forward to Mr Chester's visit. I know he has been a terrific advocate for veterans across the country and he is doing a terrific job.

For all veterans, ex-service personnel, their friends and families, organisations like Legacy are extra special. Today we have over 10 500 veterans in Tasmania, and their service and sacrifice must be remembered.

I congratulate the staff, Legatees and volunteers of Legacy, including the president of Legacy Hobart, Mr Alec Young, Friends of Hobart Legacy and the president of Legacy Launceston, Kevin Evorall, for their tireless efforts and their teams and supporters in supporting the families of our incapacitated and deceased veterans. It is a very special day. I encourage all Tasmanians to mark it in their diaries as an opportunity to note and acknowledge the work of all those in the ex-service community. This Legacy Week I encourage the community to reflect upon the price of freedom and give thanks to all those prepared to pay that price on our behalf. Lest we forget.

Avebury Nickel Mine - Reopening

[6.49 p.m.]

Mr BROOKS (Braddon) - Madam Speaker, I want to talk about a couple of things that are going really well on the west coast of Tasmania, an important part of my electorate for Tasmania but also to the economy of Tasmania. My good friend and colleague, the Minister for Resources, Mr Barnett, understands what is going on down there.

On 9 July 2018 I had the privilege of going with my gorgeous partner, and alderman Tania Denison was there too, so it was a very good time, to attend, along with some of our colleagues, the reopening of the Avebury Nickel Mine, which delivers 200 mining jobs to the west coast. I have worked in nickel mines before. My first mining job was at the Mt Keith nickel operation. I worked at Leinster Operation as well. I heard the other day they are starting that up again too. I may not be as across the mining operations around the country as I once was.

It was important. When I was the chair of the west coast economic working group, working with the community on what we could do to help stabilise the economy of the west coast, minimise the impact of job losses we were seeing from the decision from CMT to go into care and maintenance due to the tragic loss of life at that mine. The economic consequences of that decision from that one company were severe. Not only did we invite work on initiatives submitted from the community, I worked with the community. It was not my committee. I was privileged to chair it. It was about the community feeding into that committee some initiatives and projects that could help even out the economy on the west coast but also look at opportunities.

A couple of those opportunities have now come to fruition. One of them was the west coast wind project. That was identified back then as how wonderful it would be for the area, for construction jobs. There were a couple of hundred construction jobs and 40 ongoing. I may have those figures a little out, but it was a significant investment opportunity.

It took a little longer than we had hoped to get it going. To the credit of the Minister for Energy helping deliver that project, it is now employing people on the west coast. It was a project identified by the community that would be crucial to the future economic needs of the west coast. We continue to support CMT and the reopening of CMT. Mining is crucial to not only Tasmania's economy but to the west coast. It is the heartland. That is why we relocated MRT. It was opposed by Labor, then supported, then opposed, then supported. I do not know where they are now.

The 200 jobs Avebury Nickel Mine creates is very important for the west coast. The Premier was there and our most previous serving prime minister Malcolm Turnbull was there as well. I am not going near the debate of events of the last week. I had the opportunity to talk to the Prime Minister of our country and the Premier of our state in the Queenstown pub about what was going on in their town. We had a look at the mine, saw how it was going to operate and the Prime Minister and Premier stopped in at Tullah and had a chat to the community there as well.

In spite of whichever colour or whoever the prime minister of this great nation is, it is vitally important that prime ministers not only understand the needs of regional Tasmania and places like the west coast. The last prime minister to have a cup of tea or coffee in Tullah, probably never happened. I cannot remember it. Then to have a beer in the pub at Queenstown with the Premier was vitally important for part of our engagement.

The sense of confidence returning to the west coast is paramount. It is also evident in these projects coming up. It needs to be noted that these things are happening under a majority Hodgman Liberal Government. We are delivering these projects. These projects have taken some time but we have seen Accelerated Resources start drilling for nickel and cobalt on the west coast. We announced of the drilling exploration partnership, where we are helping fund drilling and exploration. Drilling in mining is expensive; I can assure you of that. It costs money.

The Government initiative, through the leadership of the Minister for Mining and Resources, my good friend, Mr Barnett, has delivered that. That has helped get a project like this off the ground. There is a great future in mining, not only on the west coast but across Tasmania and also for the west coast community.

The other initiatives, such as mountain bike and adventure tourism and things like that were also delivered as part of that process and part of that project from the economic working group that the community fed into. They are still having benefits in the community from that and they are getting more tourists there still.

There is still work to be done on the west coast but there is some real excitement about what is going on. Irrespective of events we have seen recently in Canberra, and I am not going to comment, because it is about the respect a prime minister of Australia had for that region and that is a wonderful thing.

Time expired.

The House adjourned at 6.56 p.m.