

Thursday 21 March 2019

The Speaker, **Sue Hickey**, took the Chair at 10 a.m., acknowledged the Traditional People, and read Prayers.

RECOGNITION OF VISITORS

Madam SPEAKER - Honourable members, I welcome the legal studies students from St Mary's College. Welcome to Parliament.

Members - Hear, hear.

STATEMENT BY SPEAKER

Employee Assistance Program

Madam SPEAKER - Honourable members, in early March I spoke with the Clerk of the House about extending the existing employee assistance program covering parliamentary officers to all members of this parliament. Such employee assistance programs apply throughout the State Service. That means to all servants of the public.

I am pleased to advise that such an extension has been enabled by way of an extension of our existing contract with Converge International.

This program will remain strictly confidential and is designed to enhance the emotional, mental and general physiological wellbeing of parliamentary employees, and now members, and includes services for immediate family members.

The aim of the program is to provide preventative and proactive interventions for the early detection, identification and/or resolution of both work and personal problems that may adversely affect performance and wellbeing.

The service is available 24 hours a day seven days a week to facilitate inquiries. Booking requests can provide assistance in crisis situations.

I hope that is to the satisfaction of the House. We thank the Clerk, even though he does not wish to be thanked.

Members - Hear, hear.

STATEMENT BY PREMIER

Government Members - Responsibilities

Mr HODGMAN (Franklin - Premier) - Madam Speaker, I inform the House of some matters that pertain to question time today, but also Government responsibilities.

First, Mr Jaensch is absent today and is on a pair. I will take any questions in relation to his portfolio.

Also, I want to inform the House of changes in response to the new members being sworn into this place. I have this week appointed Mark Shelton as parliamentary secretary to the Premier. I have appointed returning member for Braddon, Mrs Rylah, as the new parliamentary secretary for regional affairs, reporting to the Deputy Premier. Mrs Rylah will also serve as Government Whip in the other place.

I have appointed the member for Prosser, Jane Howlett, as Deputy Leader of Government Business in the Legislative Council.

I look forward to their contributions to our strong majority Liberal Government team.

QUESTIONS

Health Workers - Proposed Industrial Action

Ms WHITE question to PREMIER, Mr HODGMAN

[10.07 a.m.]

This morning your Government escalated your hostile threats to bully and intimidate nurses at the Mersey Community Hospital, to stand them down without pay for taking part in planned industrial action.

Is it not a fact that as we stand here now you have a letter signed ready to go to nurses at the Mersey telling them they will be stood down and their pay will be docked?

It has come to this unprecedented action only because you and your Government have not attempted to act fairly and negotiate, in good faith, a reasonable pay increase for public sector workers.

Will you confirm that your Government continues to keep the threat of standing down nurses on the table?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I welcome the opportunity to talk about not only what we are hoping to achieve by way of very good faith negotiations and discussions that have to this point been quite constructive, as union leaders have acknowledged.

It strikes the right balance with what we are proposing, by way of a revised upwards pay offer, which will actually pay our public servants more, improve terms and conditions, productivity and efficiency, and most importantly give us the ability to put more public servants into essential services for Tasmanians. We have committed to do this and make sure that our wages policy and our budget remains strong and sustainable.

We have been negotiating in very good faith with union leaders. We want that to continue. We want them to take our offer to their members, those hard-working public servants who we value.

Take the offers to them for a pay rise and for improved terms and conditions. Explain again, I hope they have already, but please explain what we are endeavouring to do by way of an increase in putting more teachers, nurses, police officers and more essential public servants delivering the services Tasmanians need and deserve. That is exactly what we are endeavouring to achieve.

Any time the health, safety and welfare of Tasmanians is put at risk by industrial action, activated by union leaders, then we will take advice and consider any options to avert that happening. Our concern here is to ensure that Tasmanians are getting the essential services they need.

Union leaders might have the right to activate industrial action, but Tasmanians have the right to expect essential services: to be able to get their surgery, to be able to get on a bus, to be able to live their lives without being hindered by industrial action when we have a strong and improved offer on the table. That will be our priority but it will not prevent us from considering what we need to do to ensure that will happen and to talk with union leaders, as we have done.

Whilst it has been claimed this sort of action is entirely unprecedented, it was not that long ago a former Labor-Greens minister, in a government in which the Leader of the Opposition was a part, was talking about standing down staff at Risdon Prison. Mr Nick McKim said -

While people are refusing to carry to out and obey lawful and reasonable instruction from prison management it is very difficult or impossible to run a prison properly.

That was the view of, then minister, Mr Nick McKim in a Labor-Greens government. It is not unprecedented, as Labor are suggesting.

Union leaders have activated industrial action and there are other political forces at play. We have Legislative Council and federal elections coming up. The Opposition is happy to play politics. They have made their priorities clear and have explicitly said they are happy for patients to be put at risk and for services to be disrupted.

Members interjecting.

Mr HODGMAN - You have been the cheer squad for union leaders over the last few months, even when certain actions were proposed that could put motorists and people on our roads at risk. You should be called out on that. As well as that you do not even have a wages policy of your own.

The Treasurer and I look forward to meeting with union leaders again soon to continue discussions of a positive way forward. I hope it is done on the basis of the best interests of Tasmanians; giving Tasmanians the services we promised at the election and that they deserve, and ensuring their lives and livelihoods are not disrupted by industrial action.

Health Workers - Proposed Industrial Action

Ms WHITE question to PREMIER, Mr HODGMAN

[10.12 a.m.]

Your Government's unfair and incompetent efforts in wage negotiations with nurses, health workers and thousands of other public sector workers has resulted in a threat of standing down

nurses escalating today. It has been escalating toward this position over the past nine months but has become worse since you inserted yourself in the negotiations in January. Your Minister for Health went rogue last week when he bullied nurses and other health workers on live radio and in a press release, where he issued hostile threats they would be stood down and their pay docked. Do you, as you said yesterday, continue to back the actions of your Minister for Health and the extreme stand down action he and your Government threatened to take today, or are you finally going to show some leadership and step in to fix the mess?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, what is worse about our proposed revised wage offer, which would increase the wages of public servants? A number of initiatives the Treasurer and I have outlined, about which we have had positive and constructive conversations with union leaders and which they have acknowledged, are toward improving productivity and efficiency in the State Service, employing those hundreds of nurses and medical professionals, teachers and frontline staff, which we have committed to. It is an improved offer we would urge union leaders to come back and talk about. We would love them to present a counter offer. It is not acceptable for them to simply raise their demands and not come back with a responsible and realistic offer that meets us at least halfway. That is what we are proposing.

Did the Leader of the Opposition condone the comments of the then minister for prisons, Nick McKim? You did not say anything about it. The Leader of the Opposition talks about strength and leadership and was not prepared to not condone that action taken by her former colleague. It highlights the hypocrisy of this stand-for-nothing Labor Party. The Leader of the Greens aptly said it yesterday; you know what the Liberal Party stand for and the Greens do not agree with a lot of it, but after two years of Ms White being Opposition Leader no-one knows what you stand for.

Electoral Donations Disclosure Framework

Ms O'CONNOR question to PREMIER, Mr HODGMAN

[10.15 a.m.]

Tasmanians know that your 2018 election campaign was bankrolled by the gambling industry to the tune of many millions of dollars. Neither you, nor the Liberal State Director, have ever been upfront with the people about how much you took from vested interests and - because we have the weakest donation laws in the country - we will never know the price of your collective soul. For more than a decade, community groups, governance and legal experts and the Greens have been calling for substantial donations reform, yet you and your party have ignored those calls. Last year, the *Mercury* newspaper campaigned for changes to the Electoral Act and you jumped. Why are you and the Government you are leading so obviously tinkering and delaying what needs to be done? Why are you afraid to deliver a strong donations disclosure framework? Is it because you know if an election was a genuine contest of ideas, policies and values, you would probably not be sitting in that seat?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I thank the member for the question. The people of Tasmania were freely able to exercise their vote this time last year. It was a resounding re-election of a majority Liberal government and an endorsement of our policy commitments, including our policy on gaming. We

have outlined the way forward and we are intent on delivering that as promised along with a range of other portfolio and policy reforms we are undertaking, a number of which I have outlined during the debate this week and will continue to do so.

In relation to donations and electoral reform, a bill will be brought before us today and some priority has been given to that.

Ms O'Connor - It is tinkering.

Mr HODGMAN - It is an important reform that goes to the heart of democracy and the ability for the press to operate freely in an election campaign. It is something we should respond to as quickly as possible, given we have elections in this state in a matter of weeks. We are moving on with that. I hope the Opposition, which has indicated support for these reforms, will honour that today.

We have also committed to reviewing the Electoral Act 2004. An interim report on the Electoral Act Review was released in December of last year, which is currently out for public consultation. Political parties will have their own views on what our electoral laws and donations laws should be. Most Tasmanians would view it with some caution because political parties have their own interests. It is important that the broader community are also invited and have their say, which is why we have this out for consultation.

We have tabled the first stage of our electoral reform, wanting to move on with it and not have it obstructed and distracted by other matters. I hope opposition parties allow that to occur. It incorporates a number of important amendments to modernise and streamline the electoral process, including removal of the election day media coverage ban, which is a strange anomaly.

The first tranche of these amendments provides opportunity for the new laws to be put in place before the Legislative Council elections. It has been widely supported by stakeholders and in public consultation on the broader points, and more complex matters will continue up until 15 April. I encourage all Tasmanians with an interest to have their say. This time they will enable the report to be finalised this year, well in advance of the next state election so we can ensure we move on to those significant areas.

The Attorney-General alluded to a significant development in the High Court, which concerns electoral laws around the country. It is important that the regulation of third parties, the High Court decision on New South Wales electoral laws also be taken into account. While things sound really simple with a broad brush, they are often more complex than members opposite would want to believe. It is appropriate we carefully handle important matters that go to the heart of our democracy.

The High Court handed down its decision in Unions NSW and others against New South Wales which directly related to the issues of capping electoral expenditure, which is one of the matters that has been proposed by some and also during this consultation. It is really important to note that the High Court has recently ruled in relation to one of the matters we are currently considering, capping electoral expenditure by third-party campaigners, and potentially it also extends to limits on donations to third parties for the purpose of electoral expenditure.

The decision in this case made it very clear that careful analysis, research and evidence gathering is required to support and justify, as reasonably necessary, the formulation of legislation

or policy that seeks to burden the implied freedom of political communication on governmental and political matters.

What I am getting at, and I will summarise by saying, is that the Greens, who often claim to be the strongest supporters of free speech, are wanting us to blindly forge ahead because it suits their party's interests, and potentially raise serious legal implications or, worse still, perhaps impact on the right to free speech.

Madam Speaker, we are a responsible government and we take these matters seriously. It will take some little time to get to the next phase but we hope that the first phase, which we are bringing before the parliament today, can be dealt with and got on with.

Government's Wages Policy

Mrs RYLAH question to TREASURER, Mr GUTWEIN

[10.22 a.m.]

You have revised the Government's wages policy which meets unions' demands for an increase above 2 per cent. Even so, the unions have rejected this offer and are now engaged and threatening further industrial action. Could you explain to the House the Government's balanced and very sensible wages offer and what the Government's next steps are?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I thank the member for Braddon for her question and her interest in this matter. As we have consistently said, we have offered a wage policy that is affordable, responsible and, importantly, sustainable. We will not accept a wage outcome that means we have to borrow to fund wage increases as this would be unsustainable and would mean job losses would be the inevitable conclusion.

What should once again be pointed out is that a wage increase of 3 per cent per year, which is what the unions are demanding, would have an increased cumulative cost over the forward Estimates of \$280 million. We want an outcome so we offered to revise upwards our wages policy as long as the increases were offset by sensible savings and productivity improvements. All of these were discussed with the unions when the Premier and I met with them and not one of these did the unions ask to take off the table.

Mr O'Byrne - Because you asked them to take it back to the members. They did, and guess what they said?

Mr GUTWEIN - They have not put these to their members yet - that is the point. The offer included significant increases in employment conditions such as increases to family and parental leave arrangements, improvements to superannuation coverage as well as other benefits to decrease workload, such as lower classroom contact hours for teachers, and more teachers as well. We also offered improved rostering arrangements for nurses to ensure we could manage the overtime task.

The unions have rejected this sensible and affordable wage offer without putting it to their members. The unions are rejecting this offer, so they have rejected more teachers in schools and less contact hours for teachers, more nurses in hospitals and less overtime. More importantly, they

are rejecting better outcomes for our students at school, better healthcare for Tasmanians, and a sensible and affordable pay increase for our hardworking public servants.

Our proposed revised wages policy, which increases to 2.5 per cent per annum over the term of the agreement, along with the most significant changes in terms and conditions in over a decade, compares more than favourably with anything that has been struck in recent times in the private sector. When annual increments are taken into account, in addition to the offer to increase to 2.5 per cent over the three years, many public servants will receive total annual increases in pay of between 3.5 per cent and up to 7 per cent, as well as generous family leave and superannuation arrangements. By any measure this is fair and reasonable and, importantly, it is affordable.

However, it is becoming patently obvious that this is more about politics than about getting an outcome. It is clear that the public sector unions appear to not want an outcome. It appears they want ongoing industrial action to continue. In large part that is because of the timing of the political cycle that we fit into in terms of the election cycle. This is evidenced by the revised offers we have received back from some of the unions which in fact contained additional demands over and above what they had included in earlier offers, after they had been sitting at the table with us. That is not good-faith bargaining; it is not even close. The unions have in fact been increasing their demands while still proposing wage increases of up to 3 per cent per annum, knowing we cannot afford to deliver what they want.

Ms O'Byrne interjecting.

Mr GUTWEIN - The member who keeps interjecting should be reminded that when she was minister for health they sacked a nurse a day. We want to give our nurses a pay increase.

It is obvious that this is all about politics for the unions, who see a great opportunity on the eve of the federal election, and unfortunately the losers will be the Tasmanian public who need their surgeries completed and want their children educated or other services provided from government. We do not want to play their game and we will not play their game. It is not fair on the public or our hardworking public servants.

The Premier and I will be requesting that the unions come back to the table again next week to discuss this matter once again. As the Premier outlined yesterday, we must ensure that public health and public safety are not put at risk, so once again I call on the unions to pause any further industrial action until we meet. Should they not and wish to continue and should they put the public at risk, the Government will have no other option other than to use all of the lawful means at our disposal to protect Tasmanian's health and safety.

Members interjecting.

Madam SPEAKER - Order. Through the Chair, please.

Mr GUTWEIN - Madam Speaker, the Government wants to give our public servants a pay increase - we have made that perfectly clear. We have provided a revised offer which meets them halfway. We do not want to play their political games and we will not. We will be contacting the unions today and requesting once again that they cease their industrial action and come back to the table to negotiate.

Gambling Policy

Ms O'CONNOR question to TREASURER, Mr GUTWEIN

[10.28 a.m.]

Yesterday you outlined how your socially devastating gambling policy will be delivered by legislation early next year. You made it clear that if the individual licensing model legislation fails to pass, the deed will stay in place. Either way, your political donors are happy, although we see the Federal Group, which pockets around \$100 million a year from pokies losses, is bleating for more special treatment. Can you confirm the Federal Group, or Mulawa Holdings, is pushing for a sweet tax deal with your Government? Will you rule out delivering a lower gambling tax rate to a company that has leeches off this state and its people for the past 40 years?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, there is no doubt - and I will again make the point I made yesterday - this is all about politics and you separating yourself from that lot. That is what this is about. If you look back at the media releases you put out in recent times, that is exactly what you are looking to do.

Ms O'CONNOR - Point of order, Madam Speaker. I ask the Treasurer to withdraw that accusation. We are talking about a policy here that will cost lives, will lead to child abuse, neglect, homelessness and poverty. We are not using this as a political exercise. It is because we are the only people in this place who are standing by people who are addicted to gambling.

Madam SPEAKER - That is not a point of order. It would be nice if the Treasurer withdrew his accusation.

Ms O'Connor - What an outrageous thing to say.

Mr GUTWEIN - Madam Speaker, the accusation that she is trying to separate herself from Labor?

Ms O'Connor - They did that.

Mr GUTWEIN - If the member has taken offence at anything I have said, I withdraw it.

Madam SPEAKER - Thank you.

Mr GUTWEIN - Again, it is a statement of fact that the member is doing exactly what I suggested she is doing and attempting to separate herself from Labor.

In terms of gaming, it is important that some facts are put on the table. There are some things that the member seems to completely ignore. First, the member understands that Tasmanians are spending less on gambling than they were in previous years. The number of Tasmanians who gamble has decreased as well. The revenue returns that we receive are decreasing as well. The mandatory code that was put in place is the strictest in the country. They are the facts of the matter. The vast majority of Tasmanians can gamble responsibly.

It seems bizarre that you are suggesting we are attempting to cosy up to the Federal Group. I want to make this point, as the Premier by interjection did earlier, that they have been a very good

corporate citizen in this state. They have invested when others would not and they have employed thousands of Tasmanians over the time that they have been in business.

In terms of the ongoing arrangements, as I indicated yesterday, we will be introducing legislation next year to end the monopoly in 2023. We are engaged with stakeholders. We have a unit within Treasury which is working with stakeholders in terms of taxes, licence fees and term.

As we said in our election policy we will benchmark across the country to understand a position for Government to enter those discussions. That is exactly what we have done and that process is underway.

Bushfire Season 2019 - Update

Mr SHELTON question to PREMIER, Mr HODGMAN

[10.33 a.m.]

Can you please update the House on the Hodgman majority Liberal Government's response to the 2019 bushfire season?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I thank the member for his question and his support for fire-affected communities around the state, particularly in the electorate of Lyons over what has been a long and ongoing fire season.

I took the opportunity at the start of this session in my state of the state address to provide an update to the House on our response to the summer fire season. It has been ongoing for some months and causing a considerable challenge for our firefighting effort and affected communities. I have noted what other members have said in the state of the state responses and seek to add some additional information.

Multiple fires were started by lightning strikes back in December and early January. These fires activated a comprehensive and multi-agency response. Any resource requested by our firefighting experts was made available by the Government. It was a massive effort, a combined 3000 firefighters, including from interstate and New Zealand, as well as our wonderful firefighters here, both career and voluntary, as well as other agencies that lent their support. They were strongly supported by Fire and Emergency Services officials coordinating daily operations.

In excess of 40 water bombing and intelligence gathering aircraft were deployed. The fire area has affected about 95 000 hectares, or 6 per cent, of the Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area, and approximately 42 600 hectares, or 3.4 per cent, of other reserves managed by the Parks and Wildlife Service. Early analysis indicates that around 84 per cent of the vegetation within the fire boundaries of the TWWHA is fire-adapted. With fires ongoing and resources still deployed, aggregate costs are yet to be quantified.

We live in one of the most bushfire-prone places on the planet so we need to do all we can to ensure the protection of people and their properties, but also, as we are doing, the protection of our wilderness areas.

Tasmania is better prepared than ever to respond to major fire events. Ahead of this fire season the Tasmanian Fire Service, Parks and Wildlife and Sustainable Timber Tasmania worked tirelessly on mitigation activities, preparedness days, exercising emergency management plans and ensuring appropriate resourcing arrangements and contracts were in place, especially for the aircraft.

The \$55 million fuel reduction program dramatically reduced the risk of bushfires to our communities, and targets those areas most at risk as priority. Further, following the fires that threatened the TWWHA in 2016, the Government committed \$250 000 for the TWWHA bushfire and climate change research project. This Government, led by researcher Tony Press, examined the impact of climate change on the TWWHA and ways to improve how Tasmania prepares for and responds to bushfires in the TWWHA. That work on climate change in the TWWHA was commenced by this Government. Of the research project's 18 recommendations, the Tasmanian Government supported 13 in full, five in part. Some are already implemented, others are continuing to be progressed, due to their longer-term nature. In the 2017-18 budget, the Government allocated additional funding of \$4 million for bushfire management in the wilderness area. Some of those initiatives, like the innovative sprinkler systems have helped protect sensitive high value and iconic natural value areas this season.

In conclusion, the sustained impact and spread of the bushfires has meant that while we have been able to limit property losses, the impact on communities has been significant. We established the bushfire recovery taskforce led by Michael Stephens very early to support communities affected.

We have a number of funding and financial support packages in place, which we have also activated with the Commonwealth government. We are initiating important programs supporting events and finding other ways, for example, through Ten Days on the Island, to get people to visit fire-affected communities. A great way to do that will be to visit during the Autumn in the South of the State campaign, which includes wonderful events such as screenings of *Women of the Island*, a short film and the iconic *Acoustic Life of Sheds*. These are part of our initiatives to get visitors back to one of our state's most beautiful destinations. The Weekend in the Valley Festival on 30 to 31 March will showcase the communities of Franklin, Geeveston and Huonville, in the beautiful electorate of Franklin and far south through a packed program of free events for all ages. It is a special part of this year's Ten Days on the Island festival and a great way to showcase autumn in the south. We are providing support for that. It is designed to encourage visitors and locals to get down to all affected areas, support local businesses and to ensure that they are receiving support, given the high level of impact that they suffered over the fire season.

Health Workers - Proposed Industrial Action

Ms WHITE question to PREMIER, Mr HODGMAN

[10.40 a.m.]

Your Minister for Health Michael Ferguson's disastrous performance in health has led to patients waiting for days in the emergency department, ambulances ramped for hours on end and Tasmanians dying avoidable deaths, and is very well documented. Now he has threatened hostile and extreme action against his workforce. This is severe action and you said yesterday that you backed it in, so you support this absolute mess he has created.

It is now being revealed that nurses participating in industrial action today at the Mersey Community Hospital have had their names taken down so they can have their pay docked. Do you support this action by your minister?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I thank the member for the question. Of course we will check everything that is asserted in it, as we always have to do, but -

Ms O'Byrne - How could you possibly not know?

Madam SPEAKER - Order.

Mr HODGMAN - I will say again very clearly that what I do support is Tasmanians having access to the public services they need, getting treatment in our hospitals, being able to travel safely on our roads, being able to go about their lives-

Members interjecting.

Madam SPEAKER - Order. I have been very tolerant this morning because there have been a couple of subjects that are quite passionate to us all. But if you continue to waste question time by screaming and yelling at each other you have another thing coming. We are going to sit it out until everyone reflects on their behaviour and I am ready to put up with it again. There will be warnings given and I will have no hesitation in throwing people out. I suggest everyone calms down. I want to put a stop to the cross-conversation across the Chamber. All of that must go through the Chair, as you know. Thank you.

Mr HODGMAN - Thank you, Madam Speaker, and I note that. I am disinclined to raise the volume of my voice but find it often necessary to overcome the incessant interjections of members opposite but we will note your request.

I want to be very clear that our position and what I do support is patient safety, the ability for Tasmanians to travel around our state safely and to go about their lives without being disrupted by industrial action that has been activated by union leaders at a time when we have a revised and improved offer on the table and we are asking them to come back to us with a counter offer if it is not acceptable. It meets all our objectives, certainly, not only budget sustainability -

Ms O'BYRNE - Point of order, Madam Speaker, under standing order 45, relevance. The Premier was asked whether or not his rogue minister was supported in his decision to have the names of staff taken down so their pay could be docked.

Madam SPEAKER - Thank you, Ms O'Byrne. You all understand my frustration with standing order 45. I am yet to hear what is going to leave the Premier's mouth but hopefully he will address your question.

Mr HODGMAN - I am afforded some time to answer questions and I do so by responding to each part. We are doing nothing other than supporting patient safety. An improved offer and a request for a counter-offer from the unions, or at least a discussion about the way forward which we are suggesting occurs as soon as possible to avert industrial action and, of course, the ability for this Government and former governments to utilise whatever lawful means are available that go to

achieving that objective of a good outcome but also importantly no disruption to our essential services. We are talking about people going to hospitals today across our state, in fact a hospital which I should point out this Government has kept open and the former government wanted to shut at the Mersey. We have kept that open and employed more health professionals in our health system. That is our track record. We want to see them unencumbered as well by union leader-activated industrial action.

Of course I support what this Government is doing to not just stand by and allow patients to be put at risk. I am not going to allow the opposition parties to cheer on union leaders who propose measures that would place our road users at risk. It is entirely irresponsible and suggests to me that those who are the loudest in the cheer squad, the Labor Party, are only doing this to stir up more division and discontent.

Our offer stands for itself. It is improved, it is a pay rise, it is sustainable and it is delivering on our objective to invest even more into our health system and improve terms and conditions for our public servants wherever they work, including at the Mersey. Whilst the Opposition offers nothing by way of an alternative, they are very good, as the Leader of the Greens said, at coming in carping and complaining but they offer very little. I still do not know what the Labor Party's wages policy would be. I suspect it is to give them whatever they want because that is what is going to happen in Canberra as well if Bill Shorten becomes Prime Minister. It would be great to know what the self-proclaimed leaders of the Opposition - and there is more than one - actually stand by as a position on this matter, because they offer none.

Ours is very clear. We will continue to work constructively with union leaders and call on them in good faith to recognise what we have put forward or at least come back with a counter-offer, and in the meantime stop encouraging actions that would put Tasmanians at risk in our hospitals.

Health Workers - Proposed Industrial Action

Ms WHITE question to PREMIER, Mr HODGMAN

[10.46 a.m.]

The only reason this industrial action has reached this point is because of your refusal to pay nurses an increase that keeps up with the cost of living. That refusal will result in them becoming the lowest-paid nurses in the nation. In this toxic environment that your rogue Health minister has created, how do you expect to recruit and retain the quality staff that Tasmania's health system needs?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I thank the Leader for her question. I have had not sufficient time to highlight the significant investments we are making to our health and hospital system over this year, and what we have done and what we plan to do, but we are talking about a \$7.6 billion investment in health, 500 nurses across our hospitals, 130 new beds, 130 more doctors across the state, more funding for ambulance services, elective surgeries, paramedics, allied health professionals and an increase in the number of graduate nurses. This is only possible because we have got our budget back into good shape.

The Deputy Leader of the Opposition goes on and on about what I do and do not know, including directives, but the know-it-all Deputy Leader of the Opposition should remind herself of the fact that back on 4 November 2011, when asked about directives being given to health professionals under the then government, when Ms O'Byrne was told, she was unaware of any directives and said that is pretty indicative of the gap between reality and the Government. I ask the Deputy Leader of the Opposition, who claims to know everything, to remind herself that back in the day, directives were issued under her Government which she did not know about. It just highlights the hypocrisy. It is easy for hypocrites who stand for nothing to be critical but not offer anything.

Once again we have seen and heard today that this Opposition has nothing to bring to the table and nothing to offer other than to stir up things and try to create obstruct and distract. We will just get on with the job of delivering, as we have done.

Online Bullying - Protection of Victims

Mrs RYLAH question to ATTORNEY-GENERAL, Ms ARCHER

[10.49 a.m.]

Could the Attorney-General please update the House on what the Hodgman majority Liberal Government is doing to protect victims of serious online bullying?

ANSWER

I thank the honourable member for her question and her concern around the very serious issue of cyberbullying.

Ms O'Byrne - Which occurs in the Premier's office.

Ms ARCHER - I heard such allegations from the Deputy Leader of the Opposition yesterday. Cyberbullying is a serious issue. Perhaps members opposite could take the time to listen to the initiatives across education, approaches on restorative justice, now dealing with the most serious cases of bullying and improving our legal responses to bullying, including cyberbullying. Such a serious matter that can be a crime causing self-harm, mental harm and in worse case scenarios, suicide, should not be the subject of such flippant comments from across the Chamber. I urge members to hear the initiatives of the Government in relation to bullying.

Today, the Government will table legislation criminalising serious acts of cyberbullying to protect victims of serious online bullying, particularly children and young people. This is an issue of concern to many parents and others in our community. The Criminal Code Amendment (Bullying) Bill 2019 delivers on the Government's commitment to amend the criminal code to make serious cyberbullying a criminal offence.

While the growth of the internet and online access has many wide-ranging benefits, technology can also generate difficulties within the community, such is the problem of cyberbullying. As technology becomes increasingly intertwined with almost every aspect of our lives, so can the reach of those who may seek to do harm to others. Our online lives now make bullying even more commonplace; social media and other platforms mean bullies can now have access to their victims 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Bullying can cause significant harm and have lasting effects on

individuals and their families. As recent tragedies in Australia have shown, serious bullying can result in tragic personal consequences for victims such as long-term mental health impacts, self-harm and psychological damage.

The criminal justice response is justified where the consequences of serious bullying behaviour are so severe. This bill seeks to strengthen the criminal law by amending the existing stalking provisions in the Criminal Code to cover a range of serious bullying behaviours, whether they are pursued in person or online. However, the Government recognises it is important we do not unnecessarily bring people, especially young people, before the courts. To reflect this, the Government's reforms include a safeguard, which provides that a prosecution must not be commenced without the consent of the Director of Public Prosecutions. This will ensure only the most serious examples of bullying and cyberbullying will be criminally prosecuted and only when it is in the public interest to do so. To be serious and resolute about addressing this issue, authorities must have the range of tools they need to respond to all levels of bullying. The reforms the Government proposes complement the host of measures we are already undertaking as well as work undertaken at a national level to reduce this scourge on our society.

Bullying can have devastating impacts on people, their families and the wider community. This bill provides another option to respond to and address serious bullying behaviours that can have a harmful and long-lasting impact on victims and their families. This draft legislation is one part of a whole-of-Government and whole-of-community approach to tackling bullying. As well as law reform, education and community awareness initiatives have an important role to play in addressing the problem of bullying. Further to this bill, we are investing \$3 million over four years to combat bullying and cyberbullying in all Tasmanian government schools. Since 2014, we have employed over 63 support staff to provide more social and emotional support where needed.

The Hodgman Liberal Government is confident this bill will send a clear message that serious bullying behaviour, including cyberbullying, is unacceptable and must be stopped.

Battery of the Nation Initiative

Mr TUCKER question to MINISTER for ENERGY, Mr BARNETT

[10.55 a.m.]

Can the minister please update the House on the exciting developments in Tasmania's Battery of the Nation energy initiative?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I thank the member Lyons, the new member, and I welcome him to this House like other members earlier this week. He will make an excellent contribution, particularly for rural and regional Tasmania. It is fantastic to have John Tucker on the team.

The answer is yes. Renewable energy is a fantastic natural asset. It is a fantastic competitive advantage for the state of Tasmania, and we have in this state what the rest of the nation wants, and that is low-cost, reliable, clean energy. Increased interconnection will unlock our potential. It will help deliver massive renewable energy developments. That further interconnection has been put on the Infrastructure Australia priority list and that is good news. Unlocked, Tasmania's Battery of

the Nation will deliver billions of dollars of investment, thousands of jobs, put downward pressure on our power prices, electricity prices, and improve our energy security. It is good news.

We have been working with the Australian Government for a long time and I thank the Morrison Liberal Government for their terrific support. Last month, they noted Tasmania's solutions to Australia's problems on the mainland and made a big commitment. That is a \$56 million commitment to progress the planning and development approval process for the Marinus Link, the second interconnector. They committed to working with the Tasmanian Hodgman majority Liberal Government to underwrite the new generation investment. That is the first phase of Tasmania's Battery of the Nation project. It is an exciting next step to become the Battery of the Nation, the renewable energy power house of Australia, in the state of Tasmania. We are spearheading those industrial development plans and this will be in place for decades to come. This is long-term and we are seeing vision in action happening under the Hodgman Liberal Government.

The Tasmanian Government has backed this with up to \$30 million for Hydro Tasmania to progress phase 1 of the Battery of the Nation project, with three shortlisted sites for those pumped hydro sites identified - Lake Cethana and Lake Rowallan in the north-west, the beautiful Mersey Valley; and on the west coast the Tribute Power Station, south of Tullah. Those three have been identified for further work and consideration in a report due by the end of next year. We are progressing. What is more, the second interconnector, the Marinus Link, will unlock billions of dollars in wind development, particularly in our rich and well-acknowledged renewable energy zones in the north-west and north-east coasts. We are talking of billions of dollars of planned development for wind.

Do not simply take my word for it. What do other people say about these projects? Let us have a look. We have unparalleled support from our industry leaders such as the Tasmanian business chief, the Tasmanian Chamber of Commerce and Industry CEO, Michael Bailey. He says, 'Project Marinus is an absolutely critical piece of infrastructure, not just for Tasmania, but for the nation.'. He then said, 'It will bring power prices down for the nation and set us (Tasmania) up for 30 years at least of significant development, most of it in the North-West.'. Our initiatives are critically needed. The federal Minister for Energy, Angus Taylor, said, 'Projects like this aren't nice to have, they are necessary to have. We must have them...We stand ready to finance them.'. I will repeat those words for Mr O'Byrne, my counterpart. He said, 'We stand ready to finance them.'.

The other side, the Labor Party, have been sitting on the fence. What is their position? They have no position and no plans. What is their position when it comes to energy and the second interconnector and our plans for Battery of the Nation? They have been too bush sharpening the knives, they do not focus on getting a position. What is Labor's position? We want to know. The people of Tasmania want to know Labor's position. They are fence-sitters.

What we need across the country is a whopping 17 000 megawatts of new energy storage. Pumped hydro can help deliver on that and Tasmania is part of that solution.

Ms O'CONNOR - Point of order, Madam Speaker. The minister has had sufficient time to answer a Dorothy Dix question. By my estimate he has been on his feet for at least six minutes.

Madam SPEAKER - I can correct you. He has been on his feet for five minutes and eight seconds so I think that is enough time, minister. Thank you for your contribution.

Minister for Health - Actions in Industrial Dispute

Ms WHITE question to PREMIER, Mr HODGMAN

[11.01 a.m.]

Yesterday you were forced to back in your Health minister's decision to stand down workers. Today, despite not knowing it was happening, you appear to again have been compelled to back in his decision to have the names of staff taken down so they can have their pay docked. It is clear that your Minister for Health has gone rogue. When will you take control and stand up to this incompetent, irresponsible rogue Health minister?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I thank the member for the question. I have already outlined the reasons repeatedly today which are first and foremost to put patient safety first. We are very clear on our position. It is to put patient safety first and to do all we can to ensure that Tasmanians who need health care are able to get it, even if the industrial action that has been activated by unions might disrupt that. As I have said, it may well be that union leaders can activate industrial action and have the right to do so, but Tasmanians surely have the right to be able to get their hospital treatment they expect and deserve.

We have improved our offer and, yes, there has been a lot of debate over the journey about our 2 per cent wages policy, a policy that was adopted and in fact implemented by the Labor Party in government and now of course hypocritically criticised, but we have been prepared to revise upwards our 2 per cent wages policy. That demonstrates the good faith and goodwill we are applying to our negotiations with unions, along with a range of improvements to terms and conditions, more support to alleviate workplace stress -

Ms O'Byrne - The hard-working nurses - you have taken their names down and you are going to dock their pay.

Madam SPEAKER - Mr O'Byrne, I am going to take down your name too.

Mr HODGMAN - an ability for us to employ more nurses and more public servants and allow them to get on with delivering something positive and constructive for Tasmanians. We are very determined to ensure that we continue to keep our budget in good shape so we can do that. That is exactly what we are endeavouring to achieve here.

I utterly reject the assertions by the Leader of the Opposition about our Government position on this. This Government is very firm in its resolve and very strong in what it stands for, unlike the Opposition. Unlike the Opposition as well, I certainly back my colleagues. Sadly, you are not able to say that yours back you.

Industrial Action - Government Position

Ms WHITE question to PREMIER, Mr HODGMAN

[11.04 a.m.]

Your Government's incompetent efforts in negotiations with your workforce have dragged on for nine months. It has resulted today in extremely hostile action against nurses. Who will you

punish and threaten next? Will you stand down teachers, firefighters, ambulance paramedics, child safety officers? Will you dock their pay too? How far do you intend to take this aggressive and nasty bullying behaviour? How many public sector workers will you punish because they have had the courage to stand up to your unfair and unreasonable refusal to give them the pay rise they deserve?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I thank the Leader of the Opposition for basically the same question again. I will not delay the House by providing the same answer, other than to say we are not doing anything other than what is lawfully available to a government to ensure that Tasmanians get the public services they need, and that is our priority.

Encouraging union leaders to activate industrial action and to stir up discontent may be your priority. Ours is ensuring Tasmanians get the essential services they need, given a pay rise which we have offered, get improved services and more colleagues around them to work in essential frontline services. We hope the union leaders come back to the table next week either with a counter-offer or at least a response to what we have put on the table. It is all about compromise, conciliation and a way forward, not as described by the Leader of the Opposition.

Health and Hospitals - Budget Decrease

Ms WHITE question to PREMIER, Mr HODGMAN

[11.06 a.m.]

Health workers are struggling to operate within a broken hospital system, patients are languishing in the emergency department waiting rooms, and every day Tasmanians understand that the health system needs more funding. Can you explain to them why the budget for health and hospitals will decrease by \$15 million next financial year?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I thank the Leader of the Opposition, the former spokesperson for health from the Labor Party, who perhaps no longer has to shoulder the burden of knowing that it was under a Labor government that medical and health staff were cut, sacked. It was under a former Labor government where hospital wards and beds were taken away. It was under a Labor-Greens government where there were strikes or threats of industrial action and public rallies against members who now sit opposite in Opposition and have no credible health policy of their own.

I assume and hope that you, along with most of your other signature policies, have abandoned your signature policy to put sick patients into hotels. Is that still the case?

Opposition members interjecting.

Mr HODGMAN - I did not think it was serious either.

Ms WHITE - Point of order, Madam Speaker, under standing order 45, relevance. The question to the Premier - and I ask you to draw his attention to it - is why he is cutting the health budget next year given the crisis the health system is in?

Madam SPEAKER - That is not a point of order. I ask the Premier to address it as best he can.

Mr HODGMAN - Thank you, Madam Speaker. I point to the record of those opposite. In the absence of any policy, they are a stand-for-nothing Labor Party.

Our record is in fact investing more into health and human services, into more staff, more investments into our hospitals, responding to increased demand as we have done, and it is only possible because we are able to deliver another fundamental requirement of government, and that is to manage our budget well.

Time expired.

CRIMINAL CODE AMENDMENT (BULLYING) BILL 2019 (No. 5)

First Reading

Bill presented by **Ms Archer** and read for the first time.

FRUIT AND NUT INDUSTRY (RESEARCH, DEVELOPMENT AND EXTENSION TRUST FUND) REPEAL BILL 2019 (No. 6)

First Reading

Bill present by **Mr Barnett** and read the first time.

SITTING DATES

[11.12 a.m.]

Mr FERGUSON (Bass - Leader of Government Business) - Madam Speaker, I seek the leave of the House to move a motion without notice in connection with the sitting dates of the House.

Ms O'CONNOR (Clark - Leader of the Greens) - Madam Speaker, we will debate whatever stunt the Labor Party pulls today. This was the Green's first matter of public importance debate for the second session of the 49th Parliament. We made a decision to have this parliament debate gambling policy on the basis that we now have some clarity from the Treasurer on the Liberals' policy. Labor walked away from the policy it took to the election to remove poker machines from pubs and clubs.

Ms O'BYRNE - Point of order, Madam Speaker. I may be reading the flow of the House wrong but I am pretty sure we are at the normal procedure during which the Leader of Government Business will advise us that the House will rise at 6 o'clock and resume in a couple of weeks' time. I am not sure Ms O'Connor is addressing that question. I could be wrong.

Ms O'CONNOR - I am simply belling the cat, so it is clear to everyone in here that Labor does not want to debate gambling policy because they have sold out to the gambling industry. They are gutless cowards and they are abandoning gambling addicts for a generation. The reason they will

pull whatever stunt they are going to pull is because they do not want to talk about the harm caused by their massive backpedal on a policy principle they took to the election and deceiving voters into voting for them.

Members interjecting.

Madam SPEAKER - Order.

Leave granted.

Mr FERGUSON - Madam Speaker, I move -

That the House at its rising adjourn until Tuesday 9 April 2019 at 10 a.m.

Motion agreed to.

MOTION

Leave to Move Suspension of Standing Orders

[11.15 a.m.]

Mr Ferguson - Now, you can go.

Mr Bacon - None of you care about nurses. This is amazing.

Ms O'Byrne - We are taking down their names.

Ms Archer - You don't want to debate gambling.

Mr Bacon - Why don't we debate it after this?

Madam SPEAKER - Order. Mr Bacon and Ms Archer, please, through the Chair.

Ms WHITE (Lyons - Leader of the Opposition) - Madam Speaker, I seek leave to move a motion without notice for the purpose of moving the suspension of Standing Orders to debate the following motion -

I give notice that on tomorrow this House:

- (1) Censures the Minister for Health, Michael Ferguson.
- (2) Regards the way the Minister for Health handled industrial negotiations with the health workforce as unprofessional and hostile.
- (3) Notes that in his press release of 14 March 2019, he threatens pay reductions and standdowns for workers in the health system undertaking lawful industrial action.

- (4) Further notes that this step by the minister demonstrates no respect whatsoever for Tasmania's health staff who are constantly working double shifts and overtime to keep up with the demand in caring for our families.
- (5) Acknowledges that many of these people are at breaking point and the Government is only offering them a real pay cut instead of putting forward an offer that recognises their true worth.
- (6) Further notes that in Tasmania's history nurses have never been stood down for taking part in industrial action.
- (7) Condemns this unprecedented threat from the Minister for Health.

I am seeking leave to debate this motion. It is an urgent motion, given the events that occurred this morning at the Mersey Community Hospital, where nurses taking lawful industrial action returned to work to find their names taken down so that their pay could be docked. We also understand letters were authorised to be given to the workforce to stand them down. It is my understanding that did not occur today.

What we have repeatedly heard from the Premier is that he supports that action taking place. He supports standing down nurses. He supports docking their pay and he did not rule out doing that for teachers, for firefighters, for ambulance paramedics, for child safety officers and for other public sector workers.

This is an urgent motion that needs to be dealt with. This Government has mishandled and been incompetent in its negotiations with the public sector workforce because of its own failures. It is now the workforce's only choice to take industrial action to escalate matters in the hope of achieving an outcome in which they will be offered a pay rise that keeps up with the cost of living.

I urge the House to approve the leave and to approve the suspension preventing the motion to be dealt with forthwith, as will be the next stage that we move on to.

For the House's interest, we would be seeking to debate until 1 o'clock so we do not interfere with the inaugural speech to be given by the newest member of the parliament. This is an important moment. The Minister for Health has acted disrespectfully in an unprecedented move in Tasmania's history in threatening to standdown nurses and the parliament should censure him for that.

[11.19 a.m.]

Mr FERGUSON (Bass - Minister for Health) - Madam Speaker, I will comment and listen to other people's observations. My colleagues and I will discuss whether we will entertain this stunt from the Opposition. Given that I am the subject of the proposed standing motion, I will shortly step out of the debate and allow another member of my team to address it. I will make some important observations about what happened, which is highly relevant to members of this House. This motion made by the Leader of the Opposition is a pure stunt. We saw it coming all morning and you are doing this because you do not want to discuss the matter of public importance the member for Denison, Ms O'Connor, has put forward.

Mr O'Byrne - We're happy to do that.

Mr FERGUSON - It is clear you are uncomfortable with the substance of that. It is also very clear that in your conduct through question time today you are not interested in members of our employ receiving a pay rise. You only want industrial strife. Your motion here today is a further demonstration that you only want to up-end the business of the day.

We have important legislation on the blue, the electoral amendment, which the Leader of the Opposition knows is urgent legislation for it to be considered by both Houses. You would seek to up-end that.

Also, the Motor Accidents (Liabilities and Compensation) Amendment Bill is an important piece of validation legislation. There is some urgency to that as well.

Our new member has the opportunity for his first speech today. It is part of our orderly planning for today. What you are trying to do is something that ordinarily would have been a private members day motion. I will listen to what others have to say and I will consult with my colleagues.

[11.21 a.m.]

Ms O'CONNOR (Clark - Leader of the Greens) - Madam Speaker, I thank the Deputy Opposition Leader for belatedly giving us a copy of this censure motion.

It is a matter of principle that the Greens will always vote to support a debate on censure or want of confidence. We are quite prepared to support having this debate.

It is a matter of great regret that in Tasmania, at this point in time, you have our fantastic nurses who are prepared to stand united for a better deal from government being threatened by the Government. It is a matter of great regret because these are the same nurses, every day, who are there in our emergency departments and in our operating theatres and working in medical settings across this state. They are some of the most important public servants we have and they should be treated with respect. It is appalling that we are in a situation where nurses are being threatened with stand-down.

It is part of a wider problem that this Government has with dealing with legitimate concerns about wages and conditions from public sector workers. It has an antagonism toward unions that organise and represent public sector workers in Tasmania. We are at this point, as a parliament, where you have a Government that is effectively at war with public sector workers in Tasmania.

It dug in for far too long on the 2 per cent wages policy. It cannot win this fight over the long term. There are too many vitally important public sector roles in Tasmania, too many public servants who know that they are being disrespected and shafted by this Government for it to win this fight over the long term.

The problem is it is Tasmanians who rely on quality public services by properly paid public servants who will suffer in the long run as a result of this Liberal Government's intransigence and inability to negotiate in good faith with those public sector workers who keep this state together.

[11.23 a.m.]

Mr O'BYRNE (Franklin) - Madam Speaker, I rise to clarify a few points that were put on the record by Mr Ferguson in terms of our position.

We are keen for the Greens' MPI to be debated. This in no way should be characterised as anything other than seeking to censure a minister who has created chaos within our health system and a Government that has no leadership, no vision and no capacity to resolve the biggest industrial dispute in the public sector for the last generation.

We will be supporting any measure that will allow the Greens to have their MPI debated. If it is stopped, it will not be stopped by us. It will be stopped by the Government.

In terms of the new member of the House, Mr Tucker, member for Lyons, the Leader of the Opposition Rebecca White said in her contribution that we seek this debate to go to 1 p.m. to allow time for Mr Tucker -

Mr Ferguson - A pretty short censure debate.

Mr O'BYRNE - First he is having a crack at us because we are upending the order of the day and now, apparently, he wants some more time. Members could be here every day debating your appalling management of this health portfolio, if you want to open that up day after day. We are in this House asking questions about your poor performance. That is why we are censuring you, minister.

You are the worst Health minister in Tasmania's history. I am going to put it on the record. You are appalling the way you treat people. You have ramping at the Royal Hobart Hospital -

Members interjecting.

Madam SPEAKER - Order. This is a very significant debate. I remind members of this House that we need to be following good parliamentary principles. Yelling at each other and name calling is not part of that. Please proceed.

Mr O'BYRNE - You have cut Health by \$15 million next year. These are the facts. You play politics with this issue all the time. You complain about others playing politics but you are the first to play politics. We heard your interview on ABC radio last Friday where you were so geed-up and so aggressive and so divisive. You were keen to attack the union bosses for their work. The only person that is instructing public servants to take down the names of nurses who have taken legitimate and legal industrial action in support of a fair claim is you. You are the one who is instructing public servants to dock nurses' pay for taking action in support of their fair claim. It is wrong for you to be so divisive and to blame union bosses. Union bosses could never instruct any worker to take action that they do not want to take. This is action voted on and acted upon by workers in your public service - nurses. You are the one that is escalating the dispute; you are the one that is forcing nurses into this circumstance. It is you, minister, that is creating problems for your own Government.

There was no greater picture of that dysfunction, of watching you with the Premier, the Deputy Premier and your staff in the last few minutes scrambling to work out what to say. The Premier made clear in his answers in question time today that he had no idea you were all geed-up and you wanted to attack nurses and wage a war on your staff - the very staff you pretend to respect. You say, 'I really value these workers'. If you value them, why are you deploying bully boy tactics, having staff going around taking down their names? Walk in the shoes of a nurse - every day they get up for their shift. They are probably working double shifts; many of them are working long hours. They care deeply about the patients they care for. They care deeply about the system they

work within. They are forced to take this action, I have never seen a government so incompetent in negotiations -

Madam SPEAKER - Excuse me, Mr O'Byrne, we have to stick to the leave motion and not the substantive debate, thank you.

Mr O'BYRNE - We are seeking leave to debate this censure motion because it is one of the major issues confronting the Tasmanian community at the moment. It is the safe provision of health services. The biggest risk to the provision of those health services is a minister who is refusing to negotiate in good faith with their staff, who is not informing the Premier of what he is doing on a day-to-day basis, and he is forcing public servants to take down the names of nurses so that they can dock their pay and bully them back to work when they are taking legal and rightful and lawful industrial action.

Mr Ferguson - We are trying to resolve this. You are trying to rip it up.

Mr O'BYRNE - We heard your contribution yesterday. I hope you get up on this censure debate so we can get you on the record a bit more, because the people of Mersey, who work at the hospital will be hearing your words from last night and how you spoke to them, saying they were not productive. It was an outrageous attack on nurses at the Mersey and on the north-west coast of Tasmania. It was an attack on all nurses in Tasmania who are taking action.

This is not the action of one or two nurses. This is not the action of one department. This is an action of an entire department across the state. Thousands of public sector workers, hundreds of nurses are supporting this action in support of a fair and decent claim.

This minister, so geed-up up on his power, so divisive in his language and rhetoric, is seeking to bully nurses, and bully his own staff, disrespectfully. He is clearly, by the Premier's actions, misled the Premier in terms of what he is doing. That is why we need to debate this censure motion, because this is a rogue minister who is dragging this Government into the gutter and down into depths we have not seen before. No health minister in the history of this state has gone to the lengths of docking nurses' pay for taking legal action. It is a disgrace and we need to debate it.

[11.30 a.m.]

Mr HODGMAN (Franklin - Premier) - Madam Speaker, I welcome the opportunity at any point to defend the actions of this Government and all my ministers. Much of what was just said is complete and utter rubbish. It is all part of the routine. This is a very familiar return to political playtime by the opposition parties. They have had months when they say they have been working hard but you would not know on what they have done this week. It was an appalling response to the Premier's Address, another stunt to end the first week, and of course we have had the same routine - a pretty lame and limp moving of a motion by the Leader of the Opposition which opens the opportunity for the putative leader to get up and do a better job.

This happens every single time we come in here. It is political playtime by an opposition party that does not have a health policy, does not have a wages policy and offers nothing by way of a constructive way forward in this matter. All they can do is move motions of this type when the Parliament sits, which shows how little interest they have in doing what will serve Tasmanians best. We will have more to say on the next motion and we will not oppose leave.

Leave granted.

SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDERS

Move Motion of Censure Forthwith - Motion Negatived

[11.32 a.m.]

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

That so much of the Standing Orders be suspended as to prevent the motion of censure from being dealt with forthwith.

The reason this is so urgent and the reason we will be seeking to debate it until 1 o'clock is because there is action taking place right now at the Mersey Community Hospital that is seeing the docking of pay of nurses who are taking lawful industrial action. They are only taking that action because for the last nine months they have been trying to negotiate in good faith with the Government that refuses to pay them a wage increase that keeps up with the costs of living. It is as simple as that. They have been forced into the position of now taking industrial action for quite a number of months to try to get this Government to budge.

Today we saw come into effect the threats of the Minister for Health. Last week he issued a press release where he made it quite clear that industrial measures including pay reductions and stand-downs will be pursued. At that point, we took a look at the history of Tasmania to see whether or not nurses have ever been stood down, and there is no record of nurses ever being stood down in Tasmania's history. There is a record, however, of nurses being stood down in Victoria in 1986 that led to 5000 nurses marching on that parliament. It was such a disrespectful claim made by this minister to his workforce last week that he has now given effect to today.

This is not a new leaf for this minister. This is true for form for him. We see time after time the disrespect he treats his workforce with and the way he handles negotiations with such incompetence that we now have industrial action escalated to this point.

The reason we need to bring on this censure motion in this minister is that he is out of control and has gone rogue. There is clearly a split in the Cabinet when it comes to whether or not there is support for this minister's bully-boy tactics of standing down and docking the pay of nurses. Yesterday that was on display when I asked the Premier a number of times if he backed in the minister's stand-down call. It took him four questions before he finally backed in his minister.

This is a minister who has not just lost control of his portfolio, he has lost confidence of his workforce.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER - Order, I remind you we are still on the suspension, not the censure motion.

Ms WHITE - Mr Deputy Speaker, the reason we need to move the suspension to debate this motion right now is that it is not just that the minister has lost control of his workforce, gone rogue and lost the confidence of his workforce, but he has lost the confidence of the Premier, and that was demonstrated both yesterday and today when the Premier clearly did not know what was going on in the minister's portfolio. There is no communication there or severe disagreement over the course of action that needs to be taken. When the Premier got up today he was unaware that the minister today had taken the names and docked the pay of nurses taking industrial action at the Mersey

Community Hospital. He has lost control of his portfolio, he has gone rogue, the Premier does not know what is going on, and the people of Tasmania are the ones who suffer.

It is the nurses who are doing overtime and double shifts who want us to debate this motion because they are the ones who are feeling the impacts of this minister's incompetence. This parliament must censure this minister. This parliament must require this minister to no longer force his bully-boy tactics on the workforce who are keeping the state hospital system running, and require him to withdraw the threat of stand-downs. There has been no case of stand-downs ever being made against nurses in this state until this minister. That is why the parliament must censure him. His hostile manner and the way he has disrespected the workforce that keeps the hospital system ticking, supports patients and delivers safe patient outcomes in this state, is extraordinary.

The Labor Party is appalled at the way in which he has handled himself in this portfolio and the weak way in which the Premier has enabled that. This parliament must censure the Minister for Health, not just for what he has done today to nurses at the Mersey Community Hospital, but for what he has done to the Tasmanian health system that for the last five years has become further and further embroiled in crises. Redevelopments at the Royal Hobart Hospital are found to have mould and asbestos, and there has been wage theft. No employees from Tasmania are able to get a job there because you are bringing in workers from interstate because you have not trained up a local workforce. Ambulances are ramped at the emergency department for hours.

Routinely regional and rural communities are not covered because there is no service provider for them. Emergency departments have patients waiting for days and days before they can access the health care they need, all because of this minister's incompetence. This House must censure him and send a strong message that this House and this state will no longer tolerate the actions of this minister. He must respect his workforce. He must withdraw those threats to stand nurses down if they continue with industrial action.

This House has the opportunity to send a very clear message today that we do not condone the threats and bully-boy tactics from this minister, condoned by the Premier, that they will not only dock the pay of workers, as they have done today, but they will threaten to stand nurses down for continuing with lawful industrial activity.

I remind the House that the only reason this industrial activity is taking place is because for the last nine months the Premier and Treasurer have been too incompetent to negotiate a wage outcome that provides a pay increase to public sector workers that enables them to keep up with the costs of living. This year Tasmanian nurses will become the lowest paid in the country. At a time when our health system is in crisis, the minister has presided over a toxic culture. How are we supposed to recruit and retain the workforce we need to deliver the services Tasmanians expect?

This is serious and the actions and threats made by this minister over the past week have escalated this matter to the point where we have to move this motion today. We have no choice. On behalf of the people of Tasmania, this minister must be told very firmly by this parliament today that we do not condone standing down nurses. They should not have their pay docked for engaging in lawful industrial activity. We fundamentally disagree with that and we ask that the minister be finally brought into line by the Premier and told he cannot pursue those methods and to make sure that nurses can continue to go about their lawful activity without threats or punishment from this Government.

There are people right across the state who are watching very closely today. There are workers at the Mersey Community Hospital who are watching very closely right now, waiting to see what happens next, because their future livelihood depends on what happens to this Minister for Health.

[11.40 a.m.]

Mr HODGMAN (Franklin - Premier) - Madam Speaker, as I said a moment ago, this is an entirely predictable rerun of the stunt by a Labor Party that offers little or nothing, when it comes to substantive policy. It is, as we have often pointed out, hypocritical in its stance now as opposed to what it did in government. Without wanting to labour the point it is galling to have members opposite, including those directly involved, make claims and demands of us in Government that when they were in government either did themselves or, in worse cases, led to an entire disruption in our health system causing many thousands of Tasmanians to voice their discontent about what happened under your government.

We do not support this motion. We do not support this stunt. We do not support the prevention of this parliament getting on with doing something that helps Tasmanians. That is what we are about. I said in my Premier's Address we will not be distracted by the infantile antics of the Opposition. Knock yourselves out. You can spend your time doing this but it is not helping Tasmanians. It is not helping the nurses who are working in the hospital we kept open. It is not helping the people who work frontline day in, day out to get advancement on wage and condition negotiations, which have been undertaken and are ongoing, I hope, in good faith, with unions coming to the table. We want them to come back with a counteroffer next week.

It does not substantiate a case for Opposition members to say things that are untrue. Half of what you have said in your questions and in your last address is untrue, meaningless and pointless distraction. Yes, we get that you play politics pretty well. You spend your hours plotting, thinking up any opportunity to disrupt our business. You do it well. You have had a lot of practice. It is how you spend your time. We are seeing it again today. There is important business before this House, a number of important bills. There is a matter of public importance, which I know will be very awkward for the Opposition Leader. If the Opposition Leader heard what people are saying in the community about their new position on gaming policy, which has been characterised as extremely weak, then you would think the Leader of the Opposition would be less presumptuous in handing out character assessments of her own.

It has been, as the Leader of the Greens said yesterday, a most unedifying thing to see the Labor Party walk from policies they said they believed in. They are a Labor Party that stands for nothing. Why would they want to debate gaming policy today? They would love to see that punted out because they have no policy. They will be exposed for shifting a policy that the Leader of the Opposition bet her electoral fortunes on in the state election last year and said it was a matter of conviction. It was what the Labor Party believed in, it was what was right and even back in Opposition they said they would continue with. Now it is off limits, now it is off the agenda, now it is no longer important.

Mr Bacon - Do not run and hide. Let us have a debate.

Madam SPEAKER - Order. Mr Bacon, you have warning number one.

Mr HODGMAN - It is galling but bemusing to have the Leader of the Opposition claim to be strong, tough, whatever it is by implication she says of me. She should look very firmly in the mirror when it comes to gaming policy, pill testing policy, a number of other things. Politics is

actually about standing for something and believing in something. It is not just about coming into this place and causing disruptions and undertaking political stunts. That is not leadership, that is not strength and that is not helping Tasmanians.

I stand by what I said on Tuesday. We are not going to be distracted by this nonsense. We are interested in Tasmanians. That includes getting them into hospitals sooner. We are not going to be distracted by the infantile political game playing of the Labor Party that offers little.

We are going to focus on what is important, the patients who are trying to get into hospitals, the people who need essential services, our public servants who we want to support with an increase pay offer, improving conditions to get on with delivering for Tasmanians. Union leaders have it at their disposal and it may be their right to activate industrial action, but when it impacts on patients' safety we will stand in front of that and try to circumvent it.

We will do what you did in the past and consider all options to ensure that Tasmanians can get into a hospital and receive the services they need. We will ensure that if people in the public service are unwilling to do that then whatever action is reasonably and lawfully available to the Government should be considered.

There are a number of ways that can occur. The nonsense that this is not supported by the Government is one of the great mistruths you have been putting out today in question time. This government is very firm in its resolve and determined in what we are doing.

We all back this minister. He is doing an extraordinary job fixing the mess you left him by getting on with buildings, investments, infrastructure, improving services, fixing the system that was busted by you and putting more into our hospital system in the process.

We are experiencing increased demand. There are pressures on our health system and we are responding. For a former government that cut health services to criticise ours, which has invested more than ever before and has responded whenever increased demand occurs, is laughable.

[11.47 a.m.]

Ms O'BYRNE (Bass) - Madam Speaker, unlike the Premier I am going to address the matter before the House, which is why we need this suspension, why the censure motion is so important and needs to be debated. It needs to be debated because the Minister for Health has gone completely off script with the Government and started threatening staff. It is clear that last Friday he did a panicked, angry, white-knuckled phone call into the ABC to threaten those staff. He followed that with a press release just to make sure it could not be undone by anybody else on his side.

The Premier clearly had no idea this was going on. The Premier never knows that anything is going on. A number of times he has stood in the House and said, 'I will have to seek advice, I don't know'. We have to talk about this because your minister has taken action that is unprofessional and hostile, that you did not know about and you have had to back in.

We saw it again today when you were asked whether you supported the action being taken today where the names of workers were being taken down so that they can dock their pay. Think about where that leads us. Think carefully about this kind of bullying behaviour after the actions of the last couple of weeks. You take down the names, you have told the staff they are having their pay docked. You did not know but you were forced by the end of that question to back it in. You are consistently having to back a minister you cannot control, who has completely lost his capacity

to do anything to resolve this dispute and to have any kind of working relationship with his staff. His staff are at their wit's end.

Do you know how hard it is to get people like nurses to take industrial action? They are not the most militant of workforces. What has driven them to this is the disregard and contempt showed to them by this minister, and the disregard and contempt show to them by you, Premier, since you have inserted yourself into the dispute and the solution. You have only made it worse. It has deteriorated since you rode in on your white pony. You have not done the job that people would have expected.

The media lines were, 'The Premier is at the table'. Everyone thought, 'Great, we are finally going to get a resolution because we are at the end point now. The Premier is stepping in to fix it'. You haven't fixed it, Premier. You do not know how to fix it because you do not know how to construct these debates.

Every government has had to negotiate them. This is the only government that has managed to put itself into a dispute of this length and intensity, now with this kind of vicious behaviour from its minister. It is unheard of over what is, essentially, a standard negotiation that regularly occurs with the workforce. You are the only government that has mismanaged it to this extent. I am tired of a Premier who says, 'I didn't know, nobody told me, I didn't understand that, I didn't have advice, I didn't know about Brooksie, I didn't know about Ms Courtney, I didn't know about Hidding, I didn't know about standdowns, I will have to check and see whether we are docking pay but I am sure I support it because someone has already said it, so I have to back it up, I have to or I might look like I do not run my Government and do not know what is going on'.

I can assure the Premier that the workforce he purports to care about is convinced that he does not know what is going on, as they are also convinced they are being treated with vicious hostility by this minister. Even the Government's own State Service employee survey says that over half the public servants who responded are not confident they were free from reprisal from this Government. They are not confident they can raise concerns without being punished. That is how frightened your workforce is now. That is what you have done.

As you have failed to resolve this dispute, the only thing they have left is to take industrial action. What do you do? Do you think, 'This has really got to a point where I need to resolve the matter. Yes, I need now to negotiate in good faith and genuinely resolve this issue. I need to sit down without playing games. I need to come to a resolution so the state can move on'? No. At 5 o'clock on a Friday, feeling a bit grumpy, feeling a bit sick of not getting his own way, Mr Ferguson makes a desperate, unplanned phone call to the ABC. He commits his government to a course of action, which I doubt had Cabinet support. I doubt the Premier knew it was going to happen or that other ministers at this table would have endorsed it. You know what it means. Having made that decision in Health, you now have to make that decision in Education. You now have to uphold this decision made by this minister for your fires. Are you going to stand down your fires next? If your fires take industrial action, are you going to stand them down? The same people who ran into the flames to support us in the last few months. Are you going to stand them down? Who is next on your hit list?

That is why we have to debate this motion now. We need to make sure this parliament makes its intention clear. It is not okay for members of this parliament to act like bullies and intimidate its workforce. You have an obligation as ministers of the Crown to resolve this issue. You have shown an absolute incapacity to understand what your job is. No government in the past has

managed to put itself into such a state of crisis over a normal negotiation; only you. After listening to Mrs Rylah's comments yesterday, maybe it is because you do not like nurses, but she has only been back two days in order to make that decision. We will see who she does not like in her next contribution. I am sure those nurses in her electorate, who had their names taken down today, will be looking at her comments and understanding exactly why they did not elect her in the first place.

We cannot continue to have a situation in which any licence is given to this minister to continue behaving in the bully fashion that he has. He gives very little respect to the intent of this parliament. We saw that when he failed to deliver on his commitment on reproductive health. Women still cannot access services and I reckon he is quite proud about that too, aren't you, minister? It fits entirely with your personal agenda and your personal way of approaching this dispute, rather than allowing a proper, good-faith negotiation that should have been resolved months ago. It speaks to your capacity, your intention and overwhelmingly speaks to those of the Premier. We need to have every member of this House put on record as to how they feel about standing down workers and having their names taken down to dock their pay.

[11.54 a.m.]

Mr FERGUSON (Bass - Minister for Health) - Madam Speaker, I will take the opportunity to defend the Government and my own actions even though the Government is not supporting the suspension of Standing Orders to up-end the business of the day to facilitate this stunt. People ought to think about the ramifications of supporting actions that could put people at risk. That is why I have attempted to take a moderate tone, to try to encourage resolution.

Members interjecting.

Madam SPEAKER - Order, please.

Mr FERGUSON - I ask members of the Opposition to stop looking for industrial strife because there are people caught in the crossfire. They are our Tasmanian public; they deserve our support, they do not want to see a government at war with the unions and we are not. Neither do they want to see the Opposition on the sidelines, egging on industrial strife. In our state, I have never known a time at which union leaders have instructed nurses or health staff to interfere in the delivery of patient care. I have never known that to happen. We are in uncharted waters.

To this day, I do not believe our health staff would refuse to treat ill patients who need our care. That is why I hold out optimism and have expressed it in the press. I have been thoroughly misrepresented throughout the conduct of what could be generously called some kind of debate today. We have not been hostile, bullying, holding out threats, angry nor vicious. We are looking for resolution. We want to pay our staff more money. We need to pay it within the resources we have. We do not want to see industrial strife, throughout which our patients are denied the surgery that surgeons have listed them for.

I am astonished to know and to witness Rebecca White, the great pretend-help for health workers, in a position of egging on cancellations of surgery. I am shocked and appalled the Labor Party would want to see that happen. The Premier has called out the Opposition for not having any kind of alternative costed policy but that is naked for all to see. What we are all shocked about is to see the Labor Party willingly egging on the disruption of public services, including health services.

Members interjecting.

Mr FERGUSON - I have heard enough misrepresentations and I wish to speak for myself.

Madam SPEAKER - Order. Please proceed in silence.

Mr FERGUSON - As Minister for Health, I want patients to receive the care they need and our staff to receive the pay they deserve. There is a tension between the parties. As the Treasurer outlined this morning, we are inviting unions back to the negotiating table next week. A responsible Opposition would encourage that because the Government has never left the negotiating table. We have never closed the door.

I do not appreciate that members of the Opposition who could be helping by encouraging resolution are attempting to drive the wedge in and we do not appreciate it. It is wrong and patients are potentially being denied their health care. That should never happen. A lot of gratuitous advice has been offered from members of the Opposition. We inherited significant challenges and we have not finished fixing them, but we have the redevelopment back on track for delivery this year.

We brought our health system together. We saved the Mersey, we are redeveloping the Launceston General, we have set out the vision for the long-term future of the Royal, we are seeing elective surgery records being set, we are helping more people through residential drug rehabilitation, we have increased places by 50 per cent and we have more paramedics providing more care. Where members of the Opposition fail is in recognising their record. They sacked staff, they stood down workers, they docked pay of people who did not turn up for their rostered shifts. As the Premier has outlined, I look to our head of agency to responsibly manage the staff of the THS. I believe that is happening and I am confident in that. I do not want to see standdowns, it is the last thing we want because we want to see resolution. If I could ask one thing only of the members opposite; help us encourage resolution. Do not be on the sidelines egging on the schoolyard fight. Help us encourage resolution, because we all know the Labor Party's connections to the unions gives them a great opportunity to encourage resolution.

What I will not tolerate, apart from all of my moderation through my remarks, is Tasmanian people, Tasmanian children, who are deserving and needful of their surgery, being denied by the political games that are hurting Tasmanians who we are sworn to look after faithfully in trust for the people. We will not tolerate that. We stand by our staff, and I again say thank you, because by far the majority of our staff are doing the right thing. By far the majority are not participating in the cancellation of surgeries and that is to be applauded.

I hope that out of this debate one thing might happen, and that is that we can all agree to encourage resolution for parties to return to the negotiating table, to see good sense and to recognise that there is a limit to a government's ability to afford pay rises. It needs to be fair and affordable for the taxpayer - fair for our workforce and affordable for the state budget. Then the parties can get back to what they do best, managing our state, looking after patients in our health system, and not these petty political point-scoring exercises, which today will show, as the Premier has said, you are not actually helping anybody by egging on industrial strife.

Opposition members interjecting.

Madam SPEAKER - Order, please.

Mr FERGUSON - So many interruptions from members opposite. The best thing that could come out of today is that the Opposition -

Mr O'Byrne - Is for you not to dock pay.

Mr FERGUSON - You see, they do not want to hear. The best thing that could come out of today is if the Labor Party would just realise that egging on industrial strife and goading the parties is not the answer to achieving resolution. This Government is working together, we have consistent policy, we have a whole-of-government approach to our negotiations and we are prepared to continue to negotiate. We do not want to see strife, but we will not tolerate -

Opposition members interjecting.

Madam SPEAKER - Order.

Mr FERGUSON - I know you do not want to hear it. That is why you keep interrupting but we will not tolerate patients being hurt in the process.

[12.02 p.m.]

Ms O'CONNOR (Clark - Leader of the Greens) - Madam Speaker, as a matter of principle the Greens support the suspension of the Standing Orders in order to have the substantive debate. I believe that is the first time I have heard the Minister for Health beg in this place. We had the minister there, who unarguably has made some intemperate remarks, beg Opposition members not to egg on the unions.

Standing behind the Health Minister is the Treasurer, and if there is one person in this place who should be held responsible for the enormous and unproductive tension between public sector workers and government in Tasmania, it is the Treasurer, who for nine months dug in on the 2 per cent, told public sector workers it was 2 per cent or nothing - 'my way or the highway' Gutwein.

We have come to the point where the Minister for Health has apparently done his lolly on radio out of frustration, but it goes back many months to an attitude of arrogance towards public sector workers and their union representatives that has brought us to a place where we have fantastic nurses at the Mersey taking industrial action, bus drivers prepared to take industrial action, and teachers and other educators prepared to take industrial action because they are being treated unfairly. They are being underpaid and they are being dismissed. We have got to a point after nine months where the conflict between government and public sector workers has become so intense that we now have rolling industrial action across the state that was avoidable.

We had to cop in last year's state budget speech from this Treasurer, 'my way or the highway' Gutwein, that we are in a golden age. We had to listen to the Premier say in his incredibly poorly written and constructed state of the state speech, that this is Tasmania's time to shine. You cannot on the one hand say that we have entered the glory days, and on the other, say to your thousands of hardworking, loyal public sector workers, 'When we said that we didn't mean you.' This is from a government that brought legislation into this place in the last term to give every one of us a pay rise substantially over 2 per cent, prepared to peg this parliament's salary at the wages price index, but says to public sector workers, 'No, you can stick on 2 per cent and we're not budging'. Then when finally there is some sign that they will be budging, we hear the public sector workers might be asked to give up their Easter Tuesday.

It is all very well to censure the latest government minister who has been caught in this situation, but the malaise and the conflict goes back further than nine months. It goes back into the last term of the parliament where a culture was set by the Liberals when they came to government,

and it is in the DNA of conservative parties to be antagonistic towards unions. The culture was set. We saw hundreds of public sector workers lose their jobs across health, human services, education and biosecurity. It is unarguable that one of the first things that happened under this Liberal majority Government was an attack on the public service, so it set the dynamic which has remained toxic to this day.

The one thing I will agree with the Health minister about is that we need clear heads here because Tasmanians cannot afford to be caught in rolling industrial conflict. It impacts on public services and on the ability of our public servants to do their job. You cannot on the one side of your face say we are entering a golden age and on the other say to our public sector workers that you will not pay them properly and they will actually be further behind as a result of this wages policy over time, and then finally be dragged to the table kicking and screaming and offer the most miserly compromise. That is not the way good-faith negotiations work, Madam Speaker.

The House divided -

AYES 11

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

NOES 11

Ms Archer
Mr Barnett
Ms Courtney
Mr Ferguson
Mr Gutwein
Mr Hodgman
Mrs Petrusma
Mr Rockliff
Mrs Rylah
Mr Shelton
Mr Tucker

PAIR

Ms Houston

Mr Jaensch

Madam SPEAKER - The result of the division is 11 Ayes and 11 Noes. In accordance with standing order 358 the vote does require a two thirds majority so therefore the Noes have it.

Motion negatived.

MATTER OF PUBLIC IMPORTANCE

Gambling Policy

[12.14 p.m.]

Ms O'CONNOR (Clark - Leader of the Greens - Motion) - Madam Speaker, I move -

That the House take note of the following matter: gambling policy.

Every day in Tasmania at venues across this state in areas of socioeconomic disadvantage such as in my electorate of Clark in Glenorchy, people who do not have money to spare are pouring that money into one of the 2500 electronic gaming machines in our community. We know the money that goes into those machines primarily comes from people who have a problem with gambling. We thought it important today that this parliament has a debate about gambling policy in Tasmania. It was certainly an issue that was front and centre during the last state election campaign and it is an issue in which Tasmanians have a great deal of interest.

While the Premier can stand up in here this morning and say that Tasmanians overwhelmingly endorsed the Liberals' policy on gambling at the last state election, that is simply untrue. We know that is untrue because of the makeup of the numbers in this House, and the fact that the Labor Party unquestionably secured votes off the back of their principled position on the removal of poker machines from pubs and clubs, so public concern about the social and economic impacts of poker machines certainly influenced the way people voted.

When we talk about gambling policy in Tasmania, the Treasurer yesterday made it very clear that the Liberals' policy is to extend the socioeconomic harm of poker machines in our community out to 2048. The policy is to move towards an individual licensing model, which is exactly the model that the Tasmanian Hospitality Association and the Federal Group took to the parliamentary inquiry into gambling reform in Tasmania. We know, because of the evidence that was put forward by the THA and Mr Farrell, that the individual licensing model would overnight lead to a significant increase in the value of venues and also increase the take for those venue operators from currently keeping some 30 per cent of the revenue to around 50 per cent of the revenue that goes into those machines.

We know the Liberals' policy is all about the industry. The Liberals' policy has been bought by the industry and it will embed harm in our community to 2048. We also know that the Liberals' policy when they were in opposition was to have \$1 bet limits in Tasmania. If Tasmania had \$1 bet limits the harm caused by poker machines in our community would be considerably reduced, but that was a policy the Liberals walked away from after the 2010 state election.

It is a matter of historical record that the Labor Party, after years of taking donations from the Federal Group, after taking their marching orders from Greg Farrell and the THA, finally took a position of principle late in 2017 and said that its policy was to remove poker machines from pubs and clubs. That was an extraordinarily brave and principled position for the Labor Party to take, and it was on the basis of that position that many people who previously voted Greens, for example, voted for the Labor Party this time around.

I tell you what, Madam Speaker, there are some people wandering around out there who sure have buyer's regret. They actually believed the Labor Party and the Leader of the Opposition, Rebecca White, when she said, 'We will remove poker machines from pubs and clubs, we will provide what is effectively a just transition for the industry through some compensation measures, but we believe it will create substantial social and economic benefits if we remove poker machines from pubs and clubs'. Not that long ago the Leader of the Opposition went on statewide radio and made it really clear that the industry had won. The industry not only got the Government on board, it now has the Opposition - what it wanted.

The reason we believe parliament needs to have this debate today, and will have it again, is because according to the Treasurer there is now around a year before the legislation comes back to this place that would revoke the deed and embed the toxically dangerous individual licensing model.

That is the licensing model that the former Gaming Commissioner, Peter Holt, said would cause substantially more harm than the current monopoly deed. Who wheeled out the former Gaming Commissioner? Labor's Treasury spokesperson, Mr Bacon, in the lead-up to the election.

Madam Speaker, you can understand why people get jaded and cynical about politicians. You can understand why people think we say one thing and then do another after the election. That is because the major parties in Tasmania and Australia do just that. On gambling policy, the Liberals' position has substantially shifted from the original position, which was for a price-based market mechanism. We had the joint select committee through which Federal Group and the THA put in their proposal, which was by the Liberals in Government not long after. The use of the words 'individual venue model' in their policy document - this is the Liberals - is a shift towards the language used in the THA and Federal Group joint submission and away from their market mechanism approach. We can see what has happened. The Federal Group and the THA have paid for a Liberal win and they have the policy they want along with an extra \$6.8 million in funding to the Tasmanian Hospitality Association.

We now see what has happened in the Labor Party. At a federal level, the ALP secures about \$700 000 to 800 000 a year from poker machines. Nationally, the Labor Party is heavily reliant on the money coming out of the pockets of some of Australia's most marginalised, impoverished people. The Labor Party should hang its head in shame and they should stand with the Liberals because you are both as contemptable as each other on this social and economic issue.

Mr GUTWEIN (Bass - Treasurer) - Madam Speaker, I make a contribution on the MPI on the basis that the member spent, and I think *Hansard* would indicate was almost a majority -

Ms O'Connor - Would you speak up, please?

Mr GUTWEIN - During your contribution you spent almost half of it talking about the politics of the issue and the Labor Party's position. The comments I made this morning are quite valid in this place. This is more about positioning you and the Labor Party than anything else.

Ms O'Connor - Sure. You are the person who makes it all about politics and never talks about human beings.

Mr GUTWEIN - Now that we are out of the glare of question time, that the member is not pulling me up on that makes my point.

Ms O'Connor - I just pulled you up on it.

Mr GUTWEIN - This is about politics.

Ms O'Connor - Is that right? How so? Talk about human beings for a change.

Madam SPEAKER - Order, Ms O'Connor.

Mr GUTWEIN - Madam Speaker, in terms of the Greens policy, Greg Farrell would have been very happy with you lot because you wanted to put all the machines back into the casinos. That was your position.

Ms O'Connor - Obviously, our policy is to remove them from Tasmania but back to casinos was a first step.

Mr GUTWEIN - That was your position. You wanted to put them back into the casino.

Ms O'Connor - Not 3500 of them.

Madam SPEAKER - Order.

Mr GUTWEIN - Your policy position is not pure. You were simply going to give them back to the Federal Group. As to the individual licensing model, I will need to check this. My recollection is that was a recommendation from the joint House committee -

Ms O'Connor - It was a recommendation of your mate, Greg Farrell.

Mr GUTWEIN - We have been clear about our policy on gaming. We took that policy to the election, Tasmanians expected us to deliver it and we will. As I said yesterday, the Government will be introducing legislation to put in place the new framework from 2023, to end the long-held monopoly in the state that has been in place for around two decades.

Ms O'Connor - It has been 40 years. Do your homework.

Mr GUTWEIN - If you look back at gaming machines in pubs and clubs, casinos might -

Ms O'Connor - The monopoly has been in place for 40 years.

Mr GUTWEIN - We are talking about gaming machines, not casinos. I am happy to discuss casinos. Gaming is a legitimate form of entertainment for many Tasmanians, the vast majority of whom gamble responsibly. The framework we will deliver will facilitate a sustainable, well-regulated industry that supports freedom of choice. Freedom of choice minimises harm and supports jobs.

As to the question from the member, tax rates and licences will be an important part of the new framework and our policy states that the taxes and licence fees will be benchmarked against comparable casino operations interstate and will ensure a competitive and fair outcome for the community, players and the casino operator. There will be no sweetheart deals.

Ms O'Connor - You have already given them their sweetheart deal.

Mr GUTWEIN - You only have to read the paper this morning to understand there will be matters the Government, Federal Group and Mr Farrell will disagree on.

Ms O'Connor - You would have loved that headline. It totally misrepresented the facts.

Mr GUTWEIN - I expect there to be a number of matters we will disagree on over time.

Ms O'Connor - But you will agree that preying on poor people is legitimate business, which has been leeching off Tasmanians for decades.

Mr GUTWEIN - The member attempts to demonise a business and an industry that has employed thousands of Tasmanians over many years.

Ms O'Connor - It doesn't even pay its workers properly.

Mr GUTWEIN - We hear the member taking another shot at one of the state's major employers.

Ms O'Connor - Every day of the week. They are a predatory corporation.

Mr GUTWEIN - I ask you to desist.

Ms O'Connor - No.

Mr GUTWEIN - That is a matter for you. Your position is understood by people in this place and the vast majority of Tasmanians. This is about you taking the opportunity to separate yourself from the Labor Party and that is entirely your purview.

Ms O'Connor - We don't need to. You people are so much more similar than we are to you.

Mr GUTWEIN - You can do that. Ms White is to speak on this matter in a couple of minutes. That will be enlightening because I would not mind understanding what their policy is as well.

Ms O'Connor - What is their policy?

Mr GUTWEIN - Exactly. I would like to understand it.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER - Treasurer, through the Chair. Interjections should cease.

Mr GUTWEIN - Mr Deputy Speaker, it will be enlightening to hear Ms White outline her policy in respect of gaming, especially pubs, clubs and EGMs.

The overall adult gambling participation rate in Tasmania has been declining.

Ms O'Connor - Yes, but the concentration of money from at-risk gamblers has been increasing.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER - Order.

Mr GUTWEIN - The SEIS provides facts and figures the member will use, twist, turn and distort to make her argument. These are the facts out of the Social and Economic Impact Study conducted on a rolling basis.

Time expired.

[12.28 p.m.]

Ms WHITE (Lyons - Leader of the Opposition) - Mr Deputy Speaker, I am pleased to make a contribution on this issue because it is an important one. The Labor Party took a policy to the 2018 election that was to phase out poker machines from pubs and clubs. We did that because the opportunity to do something about poker machines arose because of the monopoly agreement

allowing pokies in pubs and clubs was coming up for renewal. My understanding was that expired on 30 June 2018. However, as the Treasurer updated the House yesterday, he subsequently issued correspondence to the Federal Group, and there is a story in the paper about that today, which he says will give effect to the changes the Liberal Government is proposing from 2023. That has been disputed by the Federal Group, who is saying it will be 2024. It will be interesting to watch how this is resolved.

Those of us who have read the deed understand that when the letter is issued it triggers a period of five years and the existing arrangements roll over before any change is made. I was curious to learn that the Treasurer indicated yesterday he had written and it would take effect from 2023. My understanding would be that it would be 2024 if they are not doing anything until the next financial year. That is only a point of interest.

The reason we approached the debate the way we did was to make sure we could look after vulnerable people but also look after working people. It is accurate to say we provided, as part of the policy framework we took to the election, a just transition that would have supported the employees and those businesses as we moved toward progressing the outcome of that policy, had we been successful. It was based on evidence and extensive consultation; it was compiled following our participation in the parliamentary inquiry that was held, as well as extensive consultation that we undertook. I personally met with owners and operators of over 70 venues to understand their business models, to speak with their staff and to speak with them directly about how electronic gaming machines played a role in their business and what it might look like for them if they did not have those machines. We were informed. That is why we put together the just transition package as part of our policy.

We also spoke to community leaders, charities, local government, social workers and support workers, small business operators and health professionals. Our members would remember me talking about this in the context of it being a health issue.

Upon the Liberal Government being elected to office, they made it clear that their policy was to renegotiate the deed, which the Treasurer outlined yesterday to the House, and to give effect to a different policy than what the Labor Party took to the election. All of that is true.

What we have said since the election, and what people have made a lot of noise about in the last few months, is that we are waiting to see what legislation comes to the House. The Treasurer has outlined that will not take place until early 2020. That is later than we expected. We anticipated that the Treasurer would be acting sooner. We have said we will scrutinise that legislation when it comes before this parliament, as we do every piece of legislation. We will be seeking to improve harm minimisation effects, because we do understand that there are improvements that can be made.

The Government shares this view. I only have to look at press releases that were issued by the then opposition leader, Mr Hodgman, when he was talking about poker machines in the community. It is a shared concern across the political parties.

I am interested in identifying changes that have been made between what the Liberal Party took as their policy position to the inquiry, that is, that the right to operate these machines would be allocated and priced by a market-based mechanism, such as a tender, and the policy they now hold.

They have talked in the past about density. I point to comments the Premier has made in the past. In a press release he issued on 28 October 2009 he accused the Labor Party of having its head in the sand -

Contrary to the wild assertions of Mr Aird, the Gaming Commission is not asking the Government to rip up the deed with Federal Hotels, which sets a cap on pokies. They are simply asking for a review to be undertaken into the placement of these machines into disadvantaged areas. Other states have acted on this issue. Surely if this Government is to live up to its claims that it will be data-driven and evidence-based, then it should not put its head in the sand and should at least find out what its options are.

The Premier also identified that poker machines are placed in some of Tasmania's poorest communities. He did specifically name Glenorchy as an area that does have a high prevalence of gaming machines. I draw the attention of the Government again to these statements that have been made by the Liberal Party in the past, particularly by the Premier, where he said -

The failure of the Government to move on smart cards was just one example of this harm minimisation framework for problem gaming being woefully inadequate.

That was in reference to the then Labor government.

There is no doubt that concerns about the harm poker machines cause Tasmanians has been an issue shared across the Chamber by all political parties. It is not helpful for members to come in here and politic on this.

There is now a Liberal Government elected to this place. They will bring legislation to this House, presumably at the start of next year - the Treasurer made that statement yesterday - that will deal with their policy with respect to that. There are hurdles to overcome along the way. The first is the Federal Group's disagreement with the Government about how they are progressing on this matter.

Time expired.

[12.35 p.m.]

Mrs RYLAH (Braddon) - Mr Deputy Speaker, our election policy on gaming was clear. We took that policy to the election and Tasmanians expect us to deliver it. We are now working towards implementing our policy to give the industry the certainty it needs to move forward.

Bec White and Labor have backflipped on their election-losing Greens-lite election policy in a clear admission they got it wrong. It is clear that Ms White is all about the politics, the cameo and stands for nothing. Furthermore, we support harm minimisation, regional jobs and freedom of choice, with the collateral of individual responsibility.

The tax rates and licences will be an important part of the new framework and important to get right. Our policy clearly states that the taxes and licence fees to be paid by the Federal Group will be benchmarked against comparable casino operations interstate and will ensure a competitive and fair outcome for the community, players and the casino operator. A deed of agreement provides

the Federal Group with the exclusive right to conduct casino operations, operate electronic gaming machines and conduct games of Keno in Tasmania until at least 30 June 2023.

Following the release of the Treasurer's ministerial statement on the future of gaming in Tasmania in March 2016, the Government reconfirmed its gaming policy in January 2018, which will end the monopoly on gaming machine operations in Tasmania.

The proposed reforms respond positively to the final report of the Joint Select Committee on Future Gaming Markets. In particular, the reforms will provide for a decrease in the statewide cap on EGMs by 150, individual venue licences to operate EGMs in hotels and clubs, and that I can advise was very strongly received in my electorate, two new high-roller non-residential casino licences, more appropriate distributions of return and I commend that, tender of the network monitoring licence and increased future funding to improve harm minimisation, which as Ms White said has universal support in this House. Implementation of these changes delivers a sustainable market that is more comparable with other states, supports freedom of choice, minimises harm and supports local jobs.

The Government has established a dedicated project team to manage the significant and complex restructure of the gaming industry, which will require legislative amendments to implement covering the financial and regulatory arrangements that will be applied post 2023. No-one can dispute that the gaming industry is a very complex arrangement. Labor and Greens might be obsessed with the termination of the deed with Federal, but as announced we will simply end the current arrangements by way of legislative amendment. The legislation that implements the new framework will simply include provisions that cease the current arrangements on 30 June 2023 and commence a new framework on 1 July 2023.

Ms O'Connor - It will simply embed harm for another quarter of a century.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER - Ms O'Connor, order, please.

Mrs RYLAH - We are focusing on getting the settings right and providing certainty to the industry. This ensures that the status quo continues to apply until the new framework has been approved by parliament and that sufficient time is left to implement it. It will be a sensible step-through process in a very complex matter.

This is a sensible approach to implementing such a major structural reform process. We are currently working through policy and legislative issues that will give effect to the Government's commitment to end the monopoly in 2023. This work will be completed over the next 12 months to enable legislation implementing the Government's new framework to be drafted and introduced to parliament. Determination of the right tax rate, licence fees and the terms is a complex process and that work is being carefully undertaken by Treasury, involving the engagement of an external consultant to provide financial modelling services.

Our position on pokies has been consistent since the Hodgman Liberal Government's post-2023 Gaming Structural Framework was released in early 2016, more than two years ago. Gaming is a legitimate form of entertainment for many Tasmanians, the vast majority of whom gamble responsibly. Sadly, some do not. The framework will facilitate a sustainable, well-regulated industry that supports freedom of choice, minimises harm and supports jobs.

Ms O'Connor - Freedom of choice and addiction.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER - Ms O'Connor, I officially warn you for constantly interjecting.

Mrs RYLAH - We will end the monopoly, moving to an individual venue licence model and ensuring the returns are shared appropriately. We stand by our commitment to reduce the EGM cap by 150 machines in 2023. If more are installed at that time, machines will be removed in a last in, first out basis. The right to operate the network licence for EGMs, excluding the casinos, will be put out to tender, ending the monopoly. The details of the venue licence transition arrangements and terms will be developed based on expert advice.

Time expired.

[12.41 p.m.]

Dr WOODRUFF (Franklin) - Mr Deputy Speaker, when talking on this issue it is appropriate to bring into this Chamber the experiences and voices of people most affected by the issue we are discussing today. I remember the people I met at the showgrounds whose lives have been utterly ruined by gambling. Those people have lost children, have sons and daughters in jail, have had family members kill themselves. They were so addicted to gambling they had lost their homes, their relationships, their children and their own sense of self worth. This is an utterly predatory industry. It is about making money out of other people's misery. Every person in this Chamber should know that.

The Liberal Party and now the Labor Party are prepared to walk away from those people's lives, Tasmanian people's lives; people who live in our suburbs, in our streets, people like every person in this Chamber and every other person we might meet at a community event or in our day-to-day work. They are the people who desperately needed us to make a principled stand, all of us, at the last election.

That the Liberal Party sold their soul and was prepared to sell the souls of every single person who is struggling with addiction from gambling in Tasmania and allowed themselves to be bought is a matter of public record. It is a stain on that party and that stain will live with the Liberals and with Premier Hodgman for decades to come. The Premier carries that stain and he knows it in his heart that this election was bought by Federal Group so that they could continue to gouge money out of Tasmanians.

In the last year in Tasmania, nearly 330 more gambling machines were approved to go into pubs and clubs. According to the estimate of \$150 000 a machine, that amounts to an extra \$50 million being taken from the poorest people in this state - on top of the hundreds of millions of dollars a year already taken from those people. This is not simply some figure, this is real money. Where does it come from? It comes from the money they would spend on the food they would put on the table for their children. The Labor Party knows this, which is why they went to the last election and told Tasmanians they would finally take a principled stand against the terrible history of their party for supporting the Federal Group, Farrell hotels moving into our suburbs and gouging Tasmanians as they have for decades.

Rebecca White, the Leader of the Labor Party, has left the Chamber, clearly not wanting to hear what the Greens have to say on this important matter. She promised that Labor had listened and they would act to end this disgusting, predatory behaviour and remove pokies from pubs and clubs, break up that whole arrangement and make sure Federal Group does not continue to do what they are currently doing every single day; putting people into poverty, mental health, ill health, neglect of children and all the other things that come with gambling. Instead, the Leader of the

Labor Party in Tasmania has buckled to federal Labor, which buckled to Federal Group. The money that flows to the federal Labor Party and the Tasmanian Labor Party, as it also flows to the Liberals, from the gambling industry. She has buckled, letting down those people to whom she made that promise.

I do not want to waste my time talking about Labor. They have utterly shamed themselves on this issue. People know they were lied to. The problem is these things ricochet. When people lie, when people change their position, when they say they are acting on principle and they backflip, it sets a stain on all of us. Look what is happening at the federal level right now. Look at where we are in politics. The institutions of democracy are beholden to uphold the principles we say we believe in. The Greens do not accept the word gaming. It is gambling. There is no fun about this. There is misery and suffering. It is not about freedom of choice; the Liberals use that as a narrative to pick up and put down at will.

The crazy, conflicted values the Liberals have about this means that they want to lock people up for petty, personal levels of drug use but they are more than happy to weaken our gun laws to give people freedom of choice. Your approach is, 'if you would like this type of gun or it is not convenient for you, the administration is too much, we will just weaken the laws so you can get what you want'.

Time expired.

Matter noted.

ELECTORAL AMENDMENT BILL 2019 (No. 3)

Second Reading

[12.49 p.m.]

Ms ARCHER (Clark - Minister for Justice - 2R) - Mr Deputy Speaker, I move -

That the bill be now read the second time.

This bill is a preliminary step in the review of Tasmania's Electoral Act. It proposes a first tranche of amendments to the Electoral Act 2004 to address issues arising from delays in postal delivery times and makes other changes to improve the operation of the act. The bill also removes the ban on newspaper advertising, commentary and reporting on election day.

Following the state election last year, the Premier announced on 3 May 2018 that there would be a review of Tasmania's Electoral Act and associated laws to be jointly conducted by the Department of Premier and Cabinet and the Department of Justice.

The terms of reference for the review are: modernising the current Tasmanian Electoral Act, with specific examination of sections including section 191(1)(b), 196(1) and 198(1)(b); whether state-based disclosure rules should be introduced and, if so, what they should include; and the level of regulation of third parties, including unions, during election campaigns.

The review is to be guided by two principles - protecting freedom of speech, with note to constitutional implications, and minimal cost to the taxpayer.

The Premier indicated that an interim report would be released within six months of the review's commencement with a final report to be provided within 12 months. The review commenced in June 2018 with a call for public submissions on the terms of reference. The interim report was released for public consultation in December 2018.

The closing date for submissions on the interim report was initially set at 18 February 2019. However, following the release of the interim report, the High Court handed down a decision (*Unions NSW & Ors v NSW*) which was directly relevant to aspects of the review.

An addendum to the interim report was released on 18 February 2019 providing an overview of the High Court decision and posing further consultation issues for feedback. This consultation period was extended to 15 April 2019 to allow the High Court decision to be considered appropriately by stakeholders and further feedback to be provided.

As indicated in the interim report, it became apparent during the early stages of the review and through the consultation process that there are a number of reasonably straightforward technical and administrative changes that could be made to modernise and improve the operation of the act and electoral system. It was recommended in the interim report that these amendments should be made as soon as possible to commence prior to the next state elections, which are the upcoming Legislative Council elections in May this year.

The Government has accepted those recommendations and is implementing them through this bill. At this point, I would like to emphasise that this bill is only a first tranche of reforms with the full review not yet completed and, as such, only contains administrative and technical changes. It does not propose any reform in relation to more complex policy issues such as disclosure of donations and regulation of third parties. These matters are still being considered by the review and I expect that there will be recommendations in the final report to be provided to the Government later this year.

I will now provide some detail on the proposed amendments in this bill.

First, there are a number of amendments to address difficulties arising from recent changes to postal delivery times. These difficulties were raised by the Tasmanian Electoral Commission in its submission to the review. The TEC observed that in the 2018 elections it experienced longer timeframes than estimated by Australia Post in the delivery of postal vote applications and postal votes, making it difficult to meet the timeframes set out in the act. It noted that using priority mail services would impose a significant additional cost on taxpayers.

A key change in relation to postal delivery times relates to postal vote applications. Currently, the act requires a postal vote application to be lodged by 6 p.m. on the second day before polling day - that is the last Thursday before polling day - if the postal vote is to be sent within Australia, and 6 p.m. on the fourth day before polling day - that is the last Tuesday before polling day - if the postal vote is to be sent outside Australia. For a postal vote ballot paper to be counted, it is to be marked and returned by delivering it to a polling place or posting it to the returning officer before the close of polls. As noted by the TEC, if a postal vote application is lodged on the final Thursday before the election, it is unlikely that a postal vote will be delivered prior to polling day to anywhere outside of Hobart, which means that the elector will not be able to cast their vote in time.

Under the bill it is proposed that the deadline for the lodgement of all postal vote applications be brought forward to 4 p.m. on the eighth day before polling day. This timeframe was

recommended by the TEC and will mean that all postal vote applications will be required to be lodged by 4 p.m. on the Friday a week before the election. This should allow the TEC to use regular mail services to deliver postal votes within the state, thereby minimising costs.

Other proposed amendments to timeframes in the act to take account of longer or delayed postal delivery times include:

- including a timeframe for applying for replacement postal vote information consistent with the postal vote application timeframe;
- extending the period to lodge, post or send a nomination to contest a recount from 10 days to 14 days;
- extending the minimum period between nomination day and polling day from 15 days to 22 days; and
- clarifying the time allowed for postal responses to a notice of failure to vote.

In addition to the postal timeframe amendments, the bill proposes some minor technical and administrative amendments to improve the operation of the act and electoral system. Again, these changes were suggested by the TEC.

The bill makes an amendment to section 127 of the act to allow postal vote information to be made available for viewing at the TEC office. Currently the act provides for this information to be made available at the office of the returning officer. However, returning officers are generally situated in short-term premises which are vacated shortly after an election. It is more practical for this information to be made available at the permanent office of the TEC.

The bill also includes amendments to modernise various provisions in the act so that information and documents can be transmitted by electronic means such as email rather than by facsimile. Along similar lines, there are also amendments to TEC meeting procedures to allow the commission to determine an electronic method by which a proposed resolution may be distributed to and voted on out of session by members. The bill also allows a returning officer to delegate a number of administrative duties to election officials.

A significant amendment in the bill is the removal of the ban on newspaper advertising, reporting and commentary on election day. Section 198(1)(b) of the act prohibits a person from publishing or causing to be published in a newspaper an advertisement for or on behalf of, or relating in any way to, a candidate or party on the day fixed for polling. It also prohibits the publishing in a newspaper of a matter or comment relating to a candidate or a question arising from, or an issue of, the election campaign. This provision was specifically raised in the terms of reference for the review as it has caused concern in the community. It has long been seen as being anachronistic and an unfair fetter on the ability of newspapers to report or comment on election issues and candidates on election day.

During consultation on the terms of reference for the review, there was strong support for the removal of this provision, particularly in relation to the restriction on newspaper reporting and commentary. The general consensus was that the ban is outdated and unfairly penalises newspapers given that it does not apply to other forms of media such as online and social media platforms. No other Australian jurisdiction prohibits newspaper commentary and reporting on election day. It was

therefore recommended in the interim report of the review that the ban be removed by the repeal of section 198(1)(b)(ii), with this amendment to be included in the first tranche of reforms so it can come into effect prior to the Legislative Council elections coming up in May.

During consultation on the bill, there was feedback that the ban on newspaper advertising on election day was also out of step with other states and territories and because of the repeal of section 198(1)(b)(ii) it was decided to remove this as well by repealing section 198(1)(b) in its entirety in fairness to all candidates.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I reiterate that this bill is very much a preliminary step in the review and reform of Tasmania's electoral laws. Many other more complex issues were canvassed in the interim report for the review including disclosure of donations and regulation of third parties. These issues were directly raised in terms of reference 2 and 3 of the review. Consultation on the interim report is due to close on 15 April and the final report is due later this year. I expect that the final report will make recommendations for further reforms. I commend the bill to the House.

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

ELECTORAL AMENDMENT BILL 2019 (No. 3)

Second Reading

Resumed from above.

[2.31 p.m.]

Ms HADDAD (Clark) - Madam Speaker, as the Attorney-General outlined, this is hopefully one step in a very detailed and sweeping set of reforms to amend and update our electoral laws.

Three terms of reference were released by the Department of Justice following the last state election -

1. Modernising the current Tasmanian *Electoral Act* with specific examination of sections 191(1)(b), 196(1) and 198(1)(b);
2. Whether state-based disclosure rules should be introduced and, if so, what they should; and
3. The level of regulation of third parties, including unions, during Election campaigns.

Some of this has been addressed in the bill. A number of submissions were made, including by the Labor Party, to that initial terms of reference, leading to the release of an interim report.

In particular, the Tasmanian Electoral Commission made detailed submissions to the Government about a raft of administrative changes it saw as necessary to the Tasmanian Electoral Act and associated legislation that would modernise the running of elections, postal ballots and so on.

This bill extends the time for postal ballots to be sent and received and a series of changes which relate to the fact that Australia Post delivery times are significantly delayed these days. It gave me an opportunity to comment on the increased tendency to privatise public assets across this country. There have been attempts to privatise different arms of Australia Post over a number of years. While it is still a government-owned asset, it is run as a private business with a whole series of contractors. Those contractors might have been initially offered sweet deals to sign up as contractors but those conditions of work have been slowly eroded over many years. One result is delayed delivery times for Australia Post mail. One of the tangible effects of that decision is that we now need to amend the Tasmanian electoral laws to accommodate slower postal delivery times.

One of the key changes the terms of reference wanted to look at was section 198(1)(b), which deals with media commentary on election day. For a long time it has bamboozled Tasmanians that while social media and various other campaigners' activity within the bounds of the act can continue on polling day, there is a blanket ban on newspaper media cover, such as advertising and editorial comment. It does not fit with what people expect these days in a modern democracy. Public comments and media analysis of political activity in this state requires scrutiny, not only by opposition parties, but by members of the public and a free and independent media. That is, of course, what we all want to see flourish in Tasmania and Australia.

This bill's main achievement is the removal of that media ban on election day. The editor and others in the *Mercury* made clear how outdated that section of the Electoral Act was by printing a close to full page comment which said the electoral coverage would be there if it were not for that particular section of the Electoral Act. It is a positive that this bill amends that section of the act and that we can expect to see quality media coverage leading right up until the close of polls next time around.

More noteworthy than what is in the bill is what is not in this bill. Looking at the Government's own terms of reference, there were two other administrative sections identified for analysis which were not covered in this bill, namely section 191, the section of the bill that deals with electoral matter needing to be authorised, and section 196, the section of the bill that dictates that between the issue of the writs the name, photograph or likeness of an alternative candidate cannot be used without their permission.

The Labor Party made submissions to those terms of reference. We supported changes to those sections. Section 191 deals with materials needing to be appropriately authorised. We maintain that it is very important that political material is authorised, whether it is coming from political parties and candidates, or a member of the public or an interest group, but recognised that the section needed to be updated to clarify the treatment of material on social media and in other digital communication platforms.

When the Electoral Act was written, online and digital communications were not anticipated to run the way they do today. It is disappointing that has not been dealt with in this bill, even though it was in the mind of the Government when formulating the terms of reference.

Section 196 of the Electoral Act deals with the use of candidate's name or image or likeness without their permission. It also has not been included in this bill. In our submission to the terms of reference, the Labor Party argued that the provision, as it stands, is out of date and no longer reflects the way elections are conducted. The provision is impractical to follow and difficult to monitor in online and social media campaigning.

Not many people in Tasmania understand what it means for the writs to be issued. What it means for a candidate or political party is that a whole lot of campaign materials that are lawful outside of the writs period become unlawful inside the period of the writs.

We argued in our submission that section 196 needed modernising to take into account that social media and online media operate differently. We should be able hold our opponents to account and, likewise, they should be able to hold their opponents to account. Online media makes that a different ball park altogether.

More substantively, the other parts of electoral reform that could have been dealt with in this bill but were missed is anything on donations reform. In her second reading speech, the Attorney-General made it clear this is the first tranche of reforms. I would love to take the Attorney-General on her word and I understand work continues in the Justice Department with a closing date of 12 April. I encourage members of the Tasmanian community to make comment and make their views known to the department and to the Government as to the issues identified in the interim report. It is hard to take the Attorney-General on her word at that. I know what it is like to work in the public service, to work tirelessly on research, community consultation and writing of reports that can ultimately end up in the bin. It is heartwrenching and disappointing. The public servants I worked with over the years take their jobs seriously and work hard at the policy initiatives they pursue on behalf of government. Regardless of political colours, people work hard on the projects they conduct in all political departments in the Tasmanian public service.

My cynicism is due to comments made recently and in 2013, when Labor conducted a similar review into Tasmania's electoral laws. Comments made by the Liberal Party Director, Sam McQuestin, in a media release on 1 February this year, the topic of which was the release of the disclosure, said he believed the current disclosure system works very well. In 2013, in his submission as Director of the Liberal Party, he submitted a long response to Labor's attempt to improve Tasmania's donation disclosure laws. He said, in black and white, the Liberal Party supports the current framework for parliamentary donation, spending and disclosure laws. He argued that no evidence whatsoever was presented that the current system is failing or needs change. The Liberal Party would not support any changes to the system. The Liberal Party would not support any changes to donation, spending or disclosure laws and that the review process - this was my favourite bit - was nothing more than a flagrant attempt by Labor and the Greens to manipulate the system for their benefit at a time of flagging popularity in the lead-up to an election. Yet, all these years later in the lead-up to another election, the Liberal Party is making commitments with regard to donation disclosures laws. I would like to think they did so in good faith because people expect better of our politicians in a modern democracy, no matter which party they come from. Every voter in Tasmania has the right to expect to know where the money is coming from that supports whichever party it is they choose to cast their vote for.

Disclosing those donations received by parties or individual candidates is paramount. One of the things that shocked me when I first became a candidate, and I felt a little clueless finding out, was that candidates for lower House elections in Tasmania do not need to declare any of their donations. I can confirm I did not receive any donations above the level of the threshold. My understanding of the law is that political parties are currently required to disclose donations above \$13 500. Labor's policy, federally and at a state level, would reduce that disclosure threshold to \$1000 or cumulative donations up to \$1000 from any one donor. We would require real-time 14-day rolling disclosures. If a party has time to cash a cheque, they have time to tell the public where that cheque comes from. We would also prohibit anonymous donations above that \$1000 threshold.

That same set of requirements would also be applied to candidates. Presently and in theory, candidates could receive and spend billions of dollars, unlikely as that sounds. It is not right that individual candidates do not need to disclose where their donations have come from or how much they have spent on their elections. We have spending caps in local government and Legislative Council elections in Tasmania and I do not believe there is a cogent argument that we should not also have spending caps for parties and candidates in lower House elections as well.

Labor's policy goes further and would impose expenditure caps of \$1 million on political parties and expenditure caps of \$100 000 for House of Assembly candidates. It is my sincere belief that elections should be about a battle of ideas and good policy; values, honesty and the things that Tasmanians want to see in their politicians. People are sick of feeling cynical about politics and they want to start electing regular people you can talk to in the street, who mean what they say and say what they mean. Elections should be about a battle of ideas and policy and not about the balance in your bank account, the ability to buy the most television ads or the biggest billboard with your face across those billboards.

Going back to Mr McQuestin's comments about Labor's inquiry into electoral laws in 2013, some of those terms of reference asked contributors whether there should be any limits on how much donors should give. His response was that the Liberal Party does not believe there should be any limit on the amount of support given to any political party, and that individuals and entities wishing to participate in the political process should be free to contribute. That is an interesting way to phrase it - 'participate in the political process'. I would argue that bankrolling a campaign is a unique way to participate in the political process. If you conducted a straw poll of 10 people in the street and asked, 'what does it mean to you to participate in the political process?', my guess is they would probably talk about what matters in their local community, whether their kids have access to a good education, whether they can be seen in the emergency room in adequate time or receive the surgeries they need in our public health system, whether they can access the social services they need, if they have a roof over their head or if they have food on the table. They would probably not say, 'the way I would like to participate in the political process is to give someone a million dollars'. It is not what people would bring to mind when they talk about participating in the political process.

Labor's current policy is that there would be a limit on what donors would give. Anything over \$1000 would be declarable and any cumulative donations from one donor up to and above \$1000 would be declarable as well. Labor's inquiry process asked participants whether donations should be made public and Mr McQuestin said, 'no', he did not believe that was the case and he was committed to the current system remaining in place. We asked if there should be caps on spending on elections. The policy we took to the election was that there should be caps on spending for political parties and for individual candidates in House of Assembly elections. At that time, he said the Liberal Party believes there should be no limit on the spending allowed during lower House election campaigns. We asked if candidates for elections to the parliament should be required to declare those donations they receive and should there be any exceptions. He answered that the Liberal Party supports the current legal framework, including disclosure laws as they are in place at the federal level, which at the moment is that only political parties need to declare their donations and, even then, only donations over \$13 500.

The reason I go into the history of what was said at the time of the 2013 review into Tasmania's electoral laws conducted by the Labor Party is to come back to my initial point. I would like to take the Attorney-General at her word that she is serious about the continuing public consultation process into Tasmania's electoral laws that her department is running well. The terms of reference very

clearly go to much more than what is included in this bill. We support the bill but it makes minor administrative changes which are worthy but do not go anywhere near the importance of wider electoral reform that Labor has committed to and that the Tasmanian public quite rightly expect of their parliamentarians.

Does the Attorney-General stand by those claims made by Mr McQuestin, not just in 2013 that the current system is adequate and change is not required, but his similar claim made on 1 February 2019 in a press release from the Liberal Party that the current system of disclosure works well? I would like to know right now in the Chamber whether the minister stands by those comments made by the director of the Liberal Party, because it will influence how much faith the Tasmanian public can have in the continuing community consultation that is going on.

As I said at the beginning, I encourage people to make contributions to that public consultation process but, to put that into perspective, I believe we have a right to know whether the minister is serious when she says this is the first tranche of laws.

Ms Archer - Are you alleging I misled parliament before?

Ms HADDAD - I am not alleging that you misled -

Ms Archer - Well, take me at my word. I have not misled parliament.

Ms HADDAD - You did not hear what I said just now. I have not at any time suggested that you misled parliament. What I said is that I have asked very clearly whether -

Ms Archer - She is making a very serious allegation.

Madam SPEAKER - Through the Chair, please, Ms Archer.

Ms HADDAD - I am not making an allegation that you misled parliament. What I am asking you on the record right now in my contribution is whether, as a member of this Liberal Government, you stand by comments made by Sam McQuestin not only in 2013 that the current system of disclosure laws is adequate and does not need change, but also the comments that he made on 1 February 2019 that the current disclosure system is working well.

Ms Archer - That is different to what you just said then.

Ms O'Connor - The Treasurer has made identical comments.

Ms HADDAD - Thank you, Ms O'Connor. If the Treasurer has made the identical comments it is not cheeky for me to ask whether a member of the Liberal Government who was elected on this policy to reform Tasmania's electoral laws stands by the comments made by the director of that same party. That is not an unreasonable question for anybody in this Chamber to ask and indeed anybody hoping to contribute to the public consultation process being run right now to ask whether the Attorney-General and this Government, who were elected on this policy, stand by the comments made by the Liberal Party director. If they do, we can shut the door on that public consultation right now because we know it is just for show.

What I would say to the public who might be listening to this speech today is do not be fooled that this bill before us goes anywhere near what is needed for electoral reform. If there is a headline

tomorrow that says, 'Hodgman Liberal Government tackles electoral reform' it is not true. This bill has the support of the Labor Party because it makes some minor and other changes to the current electoral system, namely the removal of the media ban on election day, which we support, and the rest of the changes in this bill are worthy administrative changes requested by the Electoral Commission.

It must be made clear for the members of this Chamber, the public and to the media that this does not go anywhere near touching true electoral reform. Labor's policy does. Labor's policy will ensure that Tasmanian elections are run transparently and the public will have a clear idea of who is supporting the candidates who seek election. No matter what political colour their candidates are - red, green, blue or independents and other minor parties - anyone receiving donations of \$1000 or cumulative up to \$1000 would have to declare those donations every 14 days and, more importantly, there would be spending caps. There would be a level playing field for people seeking election in Tasmania. The elections held for this Chamber, the House of Assembly, would be fought based on people's ideas, values and policies and not based on the size of their bank account.

Recognition of Visitors

Madam SPEAKER - Honourable members, I acknowledge the children from grades 3 to 6 from the Hobart and Launceston campuses of Oakwood School. Welcome to parliament.

Members - Hear, hear.

Debate adjourned.

PREMIER'S ADDRESS

Resumed from 20 March 2019 (page 95)

Ms HADDAD (Clark) - Madam Speaker, I will quickly finish my contribution from last night because, like the rest of the members, I am very much looking forward to the member for Lyons' inaugural contribution. I wish him all the very best and look forward to working with him in this Chamber.

Aptly, considering what we have just been discussing, I was talking about political donation laws at the time that the adjournment debate was upon us last night and I had to cease my contribution on the Premier's Address. What I was going on to speak about was other ways in which the public erosion in the confidence in politics has been playing out. Another way that has been happening and what contributes to public cynicism is the refusal of the Government to be open and honest about what they are doing and how they are spending public money, which is a fundamental feature of good government.

Openness and honesty ensures propriety in government decision-making and imposes accountability on ministers. Just as importantly, it gives the public confidence that decisions are being made in the public interest. Its absence leads to an erosion of public trust and the potency of populist messages like Donald Trump's 'drain the swamp' slogan.

The Hodgman Liberal Government is addicted to secrecy. We have seen this in the Premier's claim after the 2018 election that he had a mandate for over 200 policies that his Government hid from everyone except a selected few interest groups in the lead-up to the election. We see it in the lack of consultation on legislation since the election, with government ministers often arguing that the election campaign itself constituted consultation on a policy. We see it in the Health minister's determination to hide the true extent of the health crisis by refusing to release multiple independent reports detailing just how bad things have become.

We see it in the Government's refusal to provide information to Tasmanian Disability Education about the number of students not receiving support at school, information they needed for a fund exhibition to assist students with disabilities. We see it in the Government's move to shield the new children's commissioner, the Deputy Premier's immediate former chief of staff, from Right to Information requests only days after her appointment. We saw it in the Government's refusal to disclose key housing statistics for months leading up to the 2018 election, keeping Tasmanians in the dark about the true extent of the housing crisis. We see it in the editorials published by the *Mercury* newspaper since this Government was first elected. It is not a good sign when a generally even-handed local newspaper begins its editorial by saying 'Another day, another example comes to light of our state government's natural aversion to openness - a position that now appears as deeply engrained in our public service'.

We also see it in the administration of the Right to Information Act. The act was developed under then premier David Bartlett, and it is one of Labor's greatest contributions to good government in Tasmania. Replacing and building on the former freedom of information legislation, its noble aim was to improve democratic government in Tasmania. The act stated it would increase accountability for ministers, increase the ability for Tasmanians to participate in decision making, acknowledge that information collected by public authorities is public property and deliver on parliament's intentions to ensure the provision of maximum amount of official information.

So impossible was it to argue against such sentiments that the now Premier voted for the legislation in 2009, and it passed this tripartite court. Yet, now subject to the act's provisions, the Government has constantly sought to undermine the act's operations. Under the Right to Information Act, any member of the public has the right to collect information held by a government department or public authority. If the request is refused, an appeal can be lodged with the Ombudsman's office after internal review. However, since coming to power in 2014, the Liberals have overseen or, more accurately, deliberately caused chronic underfunding of the Ombudsman's office. This means it is near impossible to have decisions to withhold public information reviewed in a timely manner.

To explain the problem, if the Government holds public information but they do not want to disclose it, they can start by simply denying the requested access. Notification of such a decision is supposed to be provided within a month but it is not adhered to. If you disagree, you must request a review with the department or public authority that made the original decision. Lodging this request takes a further month. The same department reviews its own decision, add another month, and usually offers the same answer; a refusal to release information. Only then can you request the intervention of the Ombudsman. There is only one staff member dealing with all open cases of RTI reviews in the Ombudsman's office and the waiting time is 415 days, on average. It can take almost 18 months to access information the Government wants to keep hidden and they say a week is a long time in politics.

In 18 months, ministers will often have moved to new portfolios or resigned in scandal, the nature of issues and problems will have changed, accountability will have been avoided and controversies forgotten. With this backlog, if there is any information the Government wants to keep hidden from the public in the 18 months before the next election, requesting parties will not see it before casting their vote. I do not support that kind of system and the Government must increase resourcing of the Ombudsman's office in the upcoming budget.

The second most concerning problem with the RTI system is a loophole the Government discovered in the act and, instead of trying to fix it, they are using it as often as they can. If a minister rejects a decision, this can eventually be reviewed by the Ombudsman. However, if the minister delegates his or her decision -

Time expired.

Ms O'CONNOR - Madam Speaker, I move -

That the member be heard.

Do you have much further to go?

Ms HADDAD - I have tabled a bill to amend this loophole and I encourage the Government to support it.

Members - Hear, hear.

[3.03 p.m.]

Mr TUCKER (Lyons) (Inaugural Speech) - Madam Speaker, I first acknowledge Senator Eric Abetz and Senator Jonathon Duniam for coming along today.

It is with a true sense of pride and great honour that I stand before this House and the people of Tasmania as the new member for Lyons. This, indeed, is a very humbling experience. To become a political representative for the people of my electorate is truly awesome and I pledge here today, in the parliament, that I will not let you down.

My presence here is due to the retirement of Rene Hidding. Rene was a great advocate for Lyons and he gave 23 years of unselfish service to the community of Tasmania in many roles, including as opposition leader and as minister in the Hodgman Liberal Government. I wish him and Shirley well in their retirement.

I am a farmer and I am incredibly proud to say that. I am Tasmanian-born and bred and my family has been in Tasmania for six generations. I grew up on our family properties on the coastline north of St Helens. My childhood was shaped by isolation and distance, starting with my birth in Hobart at the time the Tasman Bridge collapsed in 1975. My parents and three older sisters had to travel many hours south in preparation for my arrival. My father, who was staying with family on the eastern shore, had to travel up to the Bridgewater Bridge each day and across the Derwent to visit my mother and me in hospital.

When I was a small child we had an hour-long drive to St Helens along a dusty and bumpy track. Trucks coming out to the farm had to shorten their axles to drive around the corners. This led to my mother homeschooling my three sisters until I, as the youngest, was old enough to attend

school in 1981. By this time, the road had been redirected along a much shorter route thanks to a former Liberal government. We could meet the Binalong Bay school bus to then travel into St Helens. Our telephone line was nailed to trees from the exchange and was maintained by my father. We had diesel generators for electricity until power lines were finally brought into The Gardens in 1995 with the help of former premier, Robin Gray.

As you can imagine, my mother and father were resourceful and hardworking. We ran Spanish Merinos and I spent a large part of my childhood in the shearing shed or walking behind sheep with my dogs. Many a day was spent picking up rocks and wood off paddocks as we cleared land and improved pastures. Many Tasmanians grow up with a strong affinity to this wonderful state we live in. The connection a farming family has with their land can never be underestimated. With the popularity of the Bay of Fires region it is hard to imagine how isolated this place was, by today's standards of convenience, not that many years ago. The focus for visitors to the area is now the beauty of the place and the wonderful lifestyle we have. We easily forget the struggles people had establishing themselves and the battle fought in maintaining these pristine environments.

I am extremely proud of what my ancestors have achieved over the generations. My great-great grandfather, William Stammers Button, was the first mayor of Launceston and the city's representative in the first elected Tasmanian Legislative Council. He was also a founder of the Mechanics Institute, today's public library. He was heavily involved with the formation of the *Examiner* newspaper in Launceston. My great-great grandfather, Thomas Tucker, and his brother-in-law, Thomas Heazlewood, were the first and second settlers to arrive in Scott's new country, now known as Scottsdale. My great-great grandmother, Jane Tucker, the first-known bride. My great-grandfather, William Tucker, was a member of the Ringarooma Council and a pioneer in leading prospecting parties from his home across trackless country to the new mining district of Waratah on the west coast. William Tucker owned a 50 per cent share in the Briseis Tin Mine at Derby when the company was sold. With these funds, a large stake of Winnaleah was purchased. As every member of the family was married, they received a parcel of land. Some of my relatives are there today, still farming in the rich red soils of Winnaleah.

William and Marion had six children; four daughters and two sons. My grandfather, William Ewart Tucker, was the youngest child. His eldest sisters were twins, Ella and Ida. One of the twins, Ella Tucker, trained at as a nurse at the Launceston General Hospital and as a midwife in Melbourne. She was one of the first Tasmanian nurses to enlist with the Australian Army Nursing Services shortly after the outbreak of World War 1. Ella was aboard the hospital ship, HMAS *Gascoyne*, at the landing of Gallipoli on 25 April 1915. In 1916, she was awarded the Royal Red Cross for her service to the Australian Army Nursing Service.

As a young man, my grandfather, known as Ewart, drew the short straw and was sent by his family to the east coast to sort out some business interests. This step ultimately led him to becoming known as a pioneer in mining, sawmilling, boat building and farming.

The local timber mill in St Helens was owned by the Tucker and Von Bibra families. Ewart brought the first bulldozer into Tasmania in 1928 after a trip to the United States to look at logging practices. This led Ewart into his next venture which was to own his own boats to cart the timber. Ewart owned the Arga Shipping Company which built two boats at St Helens to cart the Ansons Bay Timber Company products to the mainland. The *Arga* was the first boat built, otherwise known as the AK96, and was commandeered by the Australian Army for carrying supplies to New Guinea and other Pacific islands in World War II. Interestingly, Ewart had the rights to purchase the AK96

back after the war but as the *Argonaut* was built by then, the rights to purchase was sold to the Kauri Timber Company at Smithton.

Ewart was a very active community member in the north-east. My father would often say he employed the whole town of St Helens during the Great Depression and the following Second World War. He was also a councillor and warden on the Portland Council for a number of years. In his time as warden Ewart was instrumental in getting the St Helens aerodrome built in 1963 with the then Labor premier Eric Reece. This was the first aerodrome built in Tasmania under the local ownership plan.

Ewart was chairman of the Liberal Party of St Helens and a member of the state executive for many years. In 1980 he was awarded the MBE. Another of Ewart's sisters, Cora Tucker, became heavily involved in the family businesses in St Helens and, as a businesswoman in her own right, Cora gave parcels of land to the community so that the Medea Park nursing home and RSL buildings could be constructed in St Helens.

My late father, John William Tucker, has also been a huge influence in my life. It was his expectation that I contribute to our community that has ultimately led me to standing here today in Tasmania's 49th Parliament. My father was on our local council for over 30 years and was elected as warden a number of times. He was an extremely loyal and honest man who hated being lied to and he instilled these principles into me at a young age. Once he had made his mind up about something you could never budge him. His word was his word.

My father had a real passion for farming and taught me all about hard work, but also how to think, to not fight with nature but work with her. My father often talked of Eric Reece, especially on fire management after the 1967 bushfires in Tasmania. As a fire permit officer, dad always gave the applicant a month in which to carry out the burn, not a week, as was usually done. As he used to say, you need to pick the right day to burn and not rush - again working with nature and not against her.

My mother, Maureen Jessie Hope, died at 60 from cancer. She was a strong-minded woman with clear morals, a lot of pride and a quick wit. Mum was also determined that my sisters and I receive an excellent education. I attended St Helens District Primary School and boarded at Launceston Church Grammar School for my secondary education. Boarding taught me respect for my elders very quickly. I have very fond memories from my boarding days and lifelong friends who are like brothers from the boarding house. My glory days were winning the Head of the River in the under-15 boys four and eight in 1990. There is nothing like the teamwork of rowing - and then we beat Hutchins.

Members laughing.

Mr TUCKER - My tertiary education took me to Lincoln College in New Zealand and really set me up for success in farming by teaching me how to think. It is interesting that in this Hodgman Liberal Government there are now two Lincoln University graduates. I hold great memories of these days in New Zealand, as I am sure our Deputy Premier would also.

My wife Mhari and I have now been married for 16 years and she is my constant sounding board and my biggest critic. My four children, Elizabeth, Angus, Campbell and Posie, struggle to recognise me in a suit and are all wondering how long it will take for my hands to lose their farmer's

hands appearance. My family are the unpaid conscripts in my journey into politics, but all understand the importance of contributing to the wonderful state of Tasmania.

Mhari received a Bachelor of Nursing with Honours from UTAS and is now heavily involved with Tasmanian Women in Agriculture. She has held the role of chairperson on the local school association at St Helens and two weeks ago was involved in hosting the first International Women's Day Lunch at St Helens.

With Mhari's encouragement, I stood as a candidate for the Senate in 2016, an experience I thoroughly enjoyed. What a powerhouse of Liberal senators to hit the campaign trail with. I will always be indebted to Eric Abetz, Stephen Parry, David Bushby, Richard Colbeck and Jono Duniam for their encouragement and support. Eric has played a huge role in my political journey and I would not be where I am today without his help. I will always admire his honesty, loyalty, humour and wisdom.

I have been asked by many why I entered politics, especially with everything I have going on with my farming business. Politics was never on my radar in my earlier years, but while I have been writing my inaugural speech for today and putting together the political history of my family, it was bound to come out one day. I too want to make a difference. I remember talking to Mayor Mick Tucker and the Break O'Day Council general manager John Brown about standing in the upcoming 2018 state election, and John's comment was, 'You're doing it'.

Being a councillor on the Break O'Day Council has been a hugely rewarding role for me. I have watched as the outside workforce has been transformed from a group lacking confidence and self-esteem into one of optimism and unbelievable pride. Council equipment is being bought, not sold off, and we now actually have an asset replacement plan. We are keeping the hard-earned ratepayers' dollar in the community, not sending it out with contractors.

I am also proud to say that as a council we now take on apprentices. The older workforce is educating the younger workforce. I feel that the future in Break O'Day is exciting. We are building relationships with our schools that will lead to better discussions around what jobs will be in our community in the future for our children.

As I said at the beginning of my speech, I am and have been a farmer at St Helens all my life. I knew from a very young age that was what I would be doing. I remember sneaking off to follow my dad wherever I could and mum telling him off when we came home, as she had no idea where I was. I think she knew it was a losing battle. It is hard work but a very rewarding and challenging occupation.

My passion for breeding Angus cattle has brought me huge satisfaction over the past 20 years and perhaps selling stud bulls has played a major part in my political career. There is nothing like a trip to Flinders Island to meet with the bull-buying clients to get a robust discussion going around the needs of rural and remote communities.

Madam Speaker, this has been a brief summary of my family's history and my journey to this place, the Parliament of Tasmania. It now includes being a proud part of the Hodgman Liberal majority Government. For me as a Tasmanian farmer, this is a particularly exciting time, with the knowledge that the Government I belong to is investing heavily in major infrastructure such as the irrigation schemes earmarked as a potential \$500 million third tranche with the proposed pipeline to prosperity. Irrigation may not be a priority for city or urban folk but to farmers it is vital do-or-die

component, especially in times of seasonally low rainfall and drought that can force even the most determined and dedicated farmer off the land. An objective like a \$10 billion agricultural sector by 2050 may seem like a lofty vision to some, but to farmers and other primary producers it is a target for hope and endurance. It also means jobs and survival of regional communities.

Do not underestimate what government can do for the primary production sector and what enormous impact it can have. I am not just applying this to farmers but also allied sectors in the inland and aquaculture industries and the importance of biosecurity to our fruit growers. I firmly believe agriculture has a very bright future in Tasmania. I believe strongly in the Government's goal of achieving an agricultural industry worth \$10 billion by 2050. My family has been heavily involved in agriculture, forestry and mining for generations. I hold these industries dear to my heart and I believe they have a strong future as pillars of the Tasmanian economy.

I have seen our production on our farm double in the last five years and envisage production to triple in the next five years with the technology now available in agriculture. It amazes me that I can now see what is happening on our farm at any given moment by looking at an app on my phone. We can turn centre pivots on by phone or look at stock watering systems to see if there are leaks anywhere. Tasmania needs to be at the forefront of this technology.

Among our farm employees are two men over the age of 70, one who has worked for us for over 50 years. In today's society there is an emphasis on retirement. I do not believe it is necessary to retire and immediately step down from roles. Just slowing down in your role and completing the workload appropriate for your ability will be much more effective and be of benefit to all Tasmanians.

Having four young children and coming from a large family I truly believe in the importance of family. It is not only important to me but to the future of Tasmania. Our children are the future of Tasmania. We must continue our efforts to stop Tasmania's biggest export, our youngest and brightest children. I have personally seen the export of my three sisters to the mainland pursuing their careers. This is why we are so determined in the Liberal Party to create more job opportunities so they do not need to leave. We must foster and rekindle that 'can do' attitude in Tasmania, developing employment opportunities for our young. That is why people voted for a government that gets things done and keeps its promises.

I am also passionate about helping rural and regional communities to get the services they need, like the new ambulance stations, police stations and school upgrades throughout Lyons, as well as essential services like the new \$12 million hospital at St Helens. Tourists are flocking to many regional centres in Lyons because they want an authentic Tasmanian experience. That means business opportunities in more jobs that support our smaller towns. Whether it is investments in the Great Eastern Drive, the Midland Highway, Freycinet Peninsula, Esk Highway or Cradle Mountain, a strong economy and a balanced budget have allowed the Hodgman Government to invest in this infrastructure for visitors and locals alike.

Education is also vitally important and new schools and school upgrades are spread throughout Lyons. It is also fantastic to see that many of the regional communities in Lyons have embraced extending year 11 and 12 to our high schools. This is allowing many young adults to continue their education in their local communities until they are ready to travel. This is the future, and the Hodgman Liberal Government is delivering it.

Just as importantly for many residents in Lyons, the Hodgman Government is putting downward pressure on the cost of living, those essentials like the cost of electricity, water and sewerage. We want everyone in Tasmania to share in the benefits of a strong economy.

In bringing this speech to a conclusion, I need to thank many people for their support, encouragement and efforts in getting me here today. I personally thank all those who voted for me and I am conscious of the faith they have put in me. I am determined to make a difference and will strive to serve every Tasmanian.

To Mhari and our children, what can I say but a sincere thank you. To my mother-in-law, Frances, and Shane, thank you for always being there for our family from bull sales to campaign trails. To our farm family, Cullen and Jenna, Syd, Rob and Anne, Shane and Belinda, Paul and Marlene, your efforts have been above and beyond. They were always noticed and hugely appreciated. To Mick Tucker, you have been a great mate and a terrific leader of our municipality. To Jane Howlett, a super smart lady and a real fighter for Prosser. A huge thank you to the campaign team, especially the Young Liberal Team who do such a fantastic job. To all those who erected signs for me and to those who were willing to have signs on their fence, thank you. David and Randy, you have been outstanding.

There are many influential people within the farming community who I am lucky to have worked with and I need to acknowledge them. A number of years ago I became associated with the Concerned Farmers Group. Those involved with this group include Colin Howlett, the late Don McShane, Allan Cameron, Peter and Mada Innes-Smith, Don Fish and Richard Bowden. I mention these people with respect and admiration. This was my first time at being involved in political activity and it shaped my early political career.

I re-state my pledge to the Lyons electors that I will not let you down and will work hard alongside Guy Barnett and Mark Shelton to represent your interests. It is a great honour to be your representative and a real privilege to be part of Will Hodgman's Liberal Government. This state is going places and I want to be part of the team leading an exciting future for Tasmania.

I will do all that I can to use my experiences in primary industry and local government to represent the people of Lyons properly and diligently. I will continue to listen and learn from them. Thank you for this opportunity.

Members - Hear, hear.

Madam SPEAKER - Welcome to Parliament.

Debate adjourned.

ELECTORAL AMENDMENT BILL 2019 (No. 3)

Second Reading

Resumed from above.

[3.27 p.m.]

Ms O'CONNOR (Clark - Leader of the Greens) - Madam Speaker, first, I take this opportunity to welcome our newest member to the House and to congratulate him on his inaugural speech.

There are things that he said that resonate with everyone in this place. I have taken notes but it is good to have you here, Mr Tucker.

The Greens will be supporting the Electoral Amendment Bill 2019. How could we not? However, on the way through I need to point out some of the deficiencies in this Government's approach to what is an urgent need for electoral reform in Tasmania, for far greater transparency in relation to the conduct of elections, the money that flows to political parties and candidates, the level of transparency around that money, how much money can be spent, whether or not there should be, as there are in other jurisdictions, around the country, public funding allocated to elections in Tasmania.

I also commend Ms Haddad on her contribution, which struck many of the right notes, particularly in relation to some of the flaws in this Government's approach to a pressing need for electoral reform in Tasmania. This is not me pulling out props but during the election campaign, every single day there were tens of thousands of dollars' worth of pro-Liberal, pro-gambling industry advertisements placed inside our newspapers, on our airwaves, on our televisions, on social media and even on children's iPads. That wall-to-wall advertising was funded primarily by the gambling industry in Tasmania, and it just goes on and on. The ABC, in something I read not long ago, estimated that in one day in this state there was about \$48 000 worth of pro-Liberal, pro-gambling industry advertising in print alone. What we know is that the negative campaigning, the fear campaign, began on our televisions during the Boxing Day Test and continued relentlessly after that.

Madam Speaker, all of us who have worked in politics for a while - and I have worked in television journalism - know that it costs a lot of money to put just one television advertisement to air. What it cost to fund the Liberals' fear campaign on our airwaves is something Tasmanians will never know, but it was millions. Ms Haddad is right; there were millions of dollars spent on advertising in order to support a Liberal Party win at the last state election, and those millions of dollars are still concealed from the people of Tasmania. The people of Tasmania went to the election on 3 March last year not knowing which vested interest donated how much to the major parties. The reason people knew what the Greens had received was because we had secured a policy position at our 2016 state conference that the Greens would publish donations in real time.

The bottom line is that we are an open book on the money we receive. It is a fraction of the money the Labor Party receives during campaigns and a minute fraction of the money that was received by the state Liberal Party going into the last state election. It is important to remember that there is the money that went to the party, there was the money that was donated to state Liberal headquarters, there is also the money that went into the Love Your Local campaign, which will not come up on the Australian Electoral Commission returns, and there is also the money that the Federal Group poured into its pro-industry, anti-Labor, anti-Greens, pro-Liberal advertising campaign which was not about making sure Tasmanians can exercise their free choice about the forms of recreation and entertainment they enjoy but solely with the purpose of locking in the profits of the Federal Group and the gambling industry in Tasmania for another quarter of a century.

During the campaign it was confronting to face that wall-to-wall negative advertising and see that it was coming from so many different directions, all of them about locking in the profits of a predatory industry. It was disheartening to see my colleagues in the Liberal Party put their corflutes on gambling venues because when we are elected to this place, we swear to serve the interests of the people of Tasmania. That is our job, that is our responsibility. We are elected in faith and entrusted to serve the interests of the people of Tasmania. In the last state election campaign, my

Liberal colleagues in this place, and other candidates, were serving the interests of the gambling industry. They were bought and paid for by the gambling industry and the history is there for all to see.

When we go to the Australian Electoral Commission returns, from what little information we do get out of the Liberal Party's return, it is clear that of around \$4.1 million received by the state Liberal Party, the source of some \$3 million remains a mystery to the people of Tasmania. That is disgraceful, disgusting and immoral. That is at the heart of the cynicism I believe I heard from Ms Haddad, or the concern. Sorry, Ms Haddad, I will try not to unfairly post motive on you, but there is a deep cynicism the Greens in this place have about the process of the electoral reform which was been initiated by the Attorney-General whose corflutes were all over gambling venues.

Ms Haddad - Definitely we share that cynicism.

Ms O'CONNOR - We share that cynicism and concern, I am sure, Ms Haddad.

When you have a look at the terms of reference for the review the word 'transparency' does not rate a mention, and ultimately an effective electoral framework and good donations disclosure provisions should be founded on the principle of transparency as a bedrock of a healthy democracy. Instead what we have are a narrow terms of reference which has been designed to confine the extent of the reforms in a second tranche we have been promised by the Attorney-General.

The terms of reference, as the Attorney-General tells us, are guided by two principles, protecting freedom of speech with note to constitutional implications, she says, and minimal cost to the taxpayer. It is difficult to understand how it is a positive for freedom of speech, the implied right to political communication in our Constitution, when millions of dollars are coming in from vested interests that are undisclosed. That is not a freedom of speech issue. That is a vested interest trying to distort good policy debates in an election campaign, and with enormous success last year.

I truly believe that if in a state election we had robust donation disclosure laws and public funding of campaigns, as occurs in the Commonwealth and other state and territory jurisdictions, and if elections were a genuine contest of policies and values, we would have a Greens government in Tasmania, because we were the only party that took really robust, democratic donations disclosure integrity policies into the campaign. We were the only party that developed a plan to deal with climate change in Tasmania. We were the only party that took a policy on planning for population growth to the last state election. Our housing policy was far and away the strongest of all the three parties.

It is not a matter of free speech. In fact corrupted donations laws stifle speech on good policy and values, and that is what happened last March. People might point to us and say it is sour grapes. It is not sour grapes. I am just furious for democracy. I am devastated for the people who will be harmed by poker machines over the next 25 years if Labor does not find its spine and help us deal with that legislation early next year. The consequences of a gambling industry buying a government back will have profound social and economic implications for Tasmania for another quarter of a century and then some, out to 2048.

It is also concerning that the guiding principles include minimal cost to the taxpayer in such a narrow way, which does not acknowledge the cost to our society and to taxpayers of having poker machines in pubs and clubs in areas of disadvantage around Tasmania. Anglicare commissioned work by Professor John Mangan, released early last year or late 2017. From recollection, Professor

Mangan found that the social clean-up costs of poker machines in pubs and clubs in Tasmania is more than \$100 million a year. When you think about it, that is not too hard to understand because you have poker machines placed in areas of entrenched disadvantage. We know that people who are experiencing mental illness and addiction are not making reasoned choices about how they spend their money and their time. Anyone who has spoken to an addict of poker machines will understand that along with the decision to spend what little money they have on these predatory machines, without exception, every gambling addict I have spoken to is battling other demons in their life - depression, anxiety, trauma, childhood trauma, poverty, homelessness and disconnection from their community. You only need to walk past gaming rooms to see this.

While I avoid Wrest Point Casino like a toxic plague, I had to walk through the Launceston Country Club Casino last week to attend the Honour Roll of Tasmanian Women. I walked past the gaming room and no-one in there looked happy and that is because they are not. They are sitting in front of a robotic machine that is sucking the money out of their pockets. I hear Mr Shelton over here having a chuckle. If you want to interject, say it.

Mr Shelton - You are the ultimate reader of how people feel as you walk up a corridor looking across at a group of people; you know exactly how they feel.

Ms O'CONNOR - I said nobody looked happy. I have also spent enough time in pokie venues in my life, whether it is because of my professional work or my family history, to know that. People who sit down in front of poker machines for extended periods, and repeatedly, are not happy. Anyone who doubts that needs to watch Ka-Ching! Pokie Nation, which is a documentary I hope my colleagues on the Government benches have watched. It is a documentary highlighting what drives people to gambling addiction in the most stark and distressing detail. People who have held down high-powered, high-demand jobs, people who have been successful in business, people who have raised a family, and there can be a triggering event in their life that causes mental distress, disconnection or desperation and that is what drives them into the venues.

The Tasmanian Hospitality Association, the Federal Group and other gambling venues are highly aware of the vulnerability of the people they target with the rollout of poker machines in pubs and clubs. The reason we know that is because, when you look at the overlay of where the some more than 2500 EGMs in our communities outside the casino are, it is in areas of socio-economic disadvantage.

If you could go back to the original Kids Come First dataset, scotched by the Liberals when they came to Government, which was an excellent dataset, you could overlay the experiences of children's lives with socio-economic disadvantage indicators. You could see a very clear, at least geographical, link between where these machines are deliberately placed and instances of child abuse and neglect. There is a connection between areas with these machines and where people are struggling, and with child abuse, neglect, family violence, homelessness, poverty, mental illness and addiction.

The decision the Premier and the Treasurer made going into the last state election to give the gambling industry exactly the framework it wanted and thus to take those millions of dollars in blood money has stained their souls. There are people in this place who do not believe in a soul; I certainly do. The actions we take over our lifetime shape that inner spirit. In our hearts we know when we have not done our best, when we have not done the right thing, when we have not tried hard enough, or when we have let people down. We know that in our quiet moments. Every

member sitting on this Government's benches sold their soul to the gambling industry at the last state election and they will wear that stain on their souls for the rest of their lives.

They escape lightly, unlike the thousands of Tasmanians who will suffer as a result of the gambling industry deciding to buy Government so it could lock in its profits for the next 30 years. It locked in profits and expanded its value because of the policy the Liberals took to the state election, which was not their original policy; it was the policy the THA and Greg Farrell asked for. Once that policy to individually licence venues comes into effect it will, overnight, substantially increase the value of the venues and will lock in the profits of venues for the next 25 years. The estimated windfall gained by people who understand these numbers is around \$250 million out to 2048 and that is only on the individual licensing model extra value to the industry.

Pardon my cynicism, and that of the Greens, but when we look at this electoral amendment bill of 2019, it is exactly as Ms Haddad said, there is an important change about publication on election day but it is mostly an administrative bill that took a year to pull together. Unlike other members in this place, the Government has access to the Office of Parliamentary Counsel. It has whole government agencies at its fingertips. If this Liberal Government was serious about electoral reform, we would have had a bill in here last year. If this Liberal Government was serious about making sure there is transparency around donations in Tasmania, it would have delivered an electoral amendment bill that went to the core issues.

The Greens also made a submission on the interim report. We have made a number of recommendations which are all based on the evidence. We had the Attorney-General and the Premier this morning talk about how complicated it is to reform the Electoral Act. What rubbish. Every other Australian jurisdiction has managed to put electoral laws in place that deliver at least a measure of transparency. This is not a new area of law we are talking about. The Commonwealth Electoral Act has been in place for decades. It is clear that the heel-dragging on this issue again comes from the self-interest of the Liberal Party.

We support and would like to see - and we have some amendments we will be discussing today - the Senate Select Committee into the Political Influence of Donations recommendations for a fixed disclosure threshold of \$1000. We support public funding of election campaigns. The current rules would recommend the Australian average of about \$4.15 per first preference vote in 2018-19, indexed at an appropriate rate each financial year. Before we get the squawking from the conservatives about public funding of elections, it happens at a Commonwealth level and in every other Australian state. We are the only jurisdiction in Australia that does not have public funding. Public funding does not totally replace donations but it provides a measure of a level playing field.

Because the Greens do not take dirty money - we do not take corporate donations and would never take the kind of money that the Liberals took at the last election - we raise money through raffles.

A member - From a gambler.

Ms O'CONNOR - Are you talking about Mr Duncan Turpie, the organic farmer from south-east Queensland who donated to us, who also happens to gamble on horses? Is that what you are trying to desperately point out in order to salvage some of your pride in here today?

Mr Shelton - Isn't Mr Graeme Wood's donation to the Greens the biggest single donation to a party in Tasmania?

Ms O'CONNOR - No, you need to get your history right if you are going to try to sling dirt. Graeme Wood made a donation to the Australian Greens, and he made it as an individual. Unlike your donors, Mr Shelton, Mr Wood did not ask for anything in return other than the Greens to get a good vote. Talk about clutching at straws.

In our submission we stated our support for a cap of \$81 000 for individual candidate expenditure and \$810 000 for party expenditure in House of Assembly elections, indexing up. So people have a sense of what some parties spend, it is in our AEC return. We had an election budget of around \$400 000. That primarily paid for a campaign manager and some staff in electorates. I made a personal donation that was quite substantive. That was my family donating. We had raffles, we had dinners, we had emails going out to members. We would approach our loyal members who sometimes can make reasonable sized donations in the order of \$1000 to \$5000. That is the sort of money that comes to the Greens and none of it has those filthy brown strings attached.

We support the regulation of the political activities of third parties and associated entities. The most obvious examples of that at the moment are the third party that was the Federal Group in the last campaign; the Tasmanian Hospitality Association, which slung \$270 000 to the Liberals in the last campaign; and the Love Your Local campaign. Who are Love Your Local, Madam Speaker? We have never really got to the bottom of that, have we? Unregulated, undisclosed, undeclared, illegitimate, corrupting of democracy money.

We support a donation cap of \$3000 aggregate per donor per parliamentary term, and this has come out of the Senate select committee report. We strongly support banning donations from corporate donors and, at a minimum, donations from property developers, as they have in New South Wales, and the tobacco, liquor and gaming industries, and we support a ban on foreign donations.

The Australian Electoral Commission returns that came out on 18 February this year made it clear that the Liberal Party accepted at least one donation from a foreign entity, and that was a \$25 000 contribution from Vanderry Limited which, because of the way that purchase was financed, is owned by the Chinese Communist government because they own all the banks in China, so the Liberals accepted \$25 000 from a company which has a massive debt to the Chinese government.

Again, it is the weakness of this approach to electoral changes. Even the federal Liberals have moved to ban foreign donations, even Scott Morrison's government and the federal parliament has moved to ban foreign donations because they know it has a profoundly corrupting influence on the exercise of a sovereign democracy.

While I am talking about this, I hope members of the Labor Party understand they are complicit in this too at a federal level. The Labor Party has accepted vast sums of money from foreign interests. Former senator Sam Dastyari knows full well the consequences of taking money with strings attached and he got exactly what he deserved.

I would like to ask the Attorney-General why, at the bare minimum, there was not a provision to ban donations from foreign entities to reflect the change to Commonwealth law.

The change to the Electoral Act 2004 that relates to the publication of content relating to the campaign on election day is welcome. It is a reasonable reform that recognises that in an age of social media and the dissemination of news and information via various mechanisms, a ban on print

content on the day of an election is ridiculous. Now we will have a capacity for journalists to have their stories published on election day and I hope that new authority will be exercised carefully.

Madam Speaker, Dr Woodruff will be getting up to make a contribution shortly. We have a suite of amendments that we would like to discuss with the Attorney-General. We will be going into Committee and the minister's response to some of the issues we have raised will determine whether we proceed with that suite of amendments now. The question is, are we going to see good legislation come before the parliament next year after the review process, because we believe that is exactly what Tasmanians are demanding?

[4.00 p.m.]

Ms DOW (Braddon) - Madam Speaker, I rise this afternoon to speak on the bill and to commend my colleague, Ella Haddad, on her excellent contribution earlier this afternoon.

It is no secret that the public perception of politicians, political parties and our political process is not always glowing. It is no wonder, when you look at the example of political donations and the disclosure of those in Tasmania. Transparency and accountability in Tasmania are very important. They are even more important in politics and in public life as we are elected here under trust. The people of Tasmania deserve to know how much money is expended and donated to enable people to be here.

I come from a local government background. To me it is quite foreign and strict about advertising costs and having to declare those. As a first-time candidate this is about the principle of equity and people being able to participate in the democratic process by putting themselves up for election. Your ability to be elected should not be determined by the amount of personal wealth you have, nor the amount of money that is donated to the party you stand with, or to you as an individual. It is completely inequitable and makes it difficult for those people with good intentions to be elected on their first attempt if they do not have good name recognition or a big budget.

I do not know of any other job where you have to make a personal financial sacrifice to put yourself forward to be elected. We underestimate the cost of that to some people. Every-day people should be equally represented in this place.

It would be a much more equitable playing field if some of the suggestions in the submissions for reforming the Electoral Act were put into legislation in Tasmania. That might change the dynamic of this place considerably and would be a wonderful thing for Tasmania.

The member for Clark, Ms O'Connor, spoke a lot about the 'Love your Local' campaign. Where I come from that was prolific. Everywhere I drove it hit me in the face. It was on every pub I drove past, places where I wanted to go and have a meal with my family during the election campaign. It was always the topic of interest for people to talk about. An incredible amount of money was spent. It is important that people understand where that money came from and how much money was spent on that campaign.

With money comes influence. That can be used in good ways and bad ways. There is always the risk that when you see large amounts of money being donated to political campaigns there are undertones regarding particular pieces of legislation or issues of importance to local communities.

A review of the act is underway, but it is not complete. This is a preliminary piece of legislation. It is largely technical changes, administrative changes, but also in line with the upcoming Legislative Council elections during May. That is a good thing and it is a sensible thing.

We look forward to the second tranche of the legislation coming before the House and that good and thorough consultation and good regard is given to each and every submission made through that review of the act.

The amendments speak for themselves, largely around changes to the mailing system, deadlines around nomination periods and the like. They are all pretty benign.

A significant reform is around changes to the media blackout on polling day, particularly print media. This change is long overdue. It is important that voters have every opportunity right up to election day to have access to information to make an informed decision about the vote they are making.

Social media had a much greater focus in the last state election campaign than the previous one. It has changed the landscape significantly and it makes sense for this change to occur. I support that change.

I spoke earlier on about the importance of consultation and review of the act. I draw back to that 'Love your Local' campaign that was just so successful where I live in and around areas in Braddon. A story reported by ABC News on Friday, 9 March 2018 under the heading 'Tasmanian Hospitality Association to receive funding boost after Liberal election win' said,

One of the Tasmanian Liberal's biggest backers in the state election campaign has had its funding more than tripled.

The fiercely pro-pokies Tasmanian Hospitality Association (THA) will receive \$6.8 million over four years.

In the last term of Government the THA received about \$2 million in the same period.

The THA and the 'Love your Local' group campaigned hard for the Liberals against Labor's policy to remove poker machines from pubs and clubs.

I do not need to read on any more from that article. It highlights the power of that advertising campaign in my electorate, the money associated with that and the importance of reform.

I want to put on the record from the Australian Labor Party submission -

Tasmanian Labor believes a robust electoral system is an important part of any democracy; the community must have confidence in the systems in place to guarantee its integrity. Tasmanian Labor believes the current laws are manifestly inadequate and are indeed the weakest in the nation and they need to change to ensure public confidence in the political process.

Tasmanian Labor supports real time disclosure of donations to candidates and parties and a lowering of the disclosure threshold. Tasmanian Labor also supports expenditure caps for the election campaigns of parties and candidates.

I have spoken a bit today about my previous experience with that. In contrast I want to read from the Tasmanian Liberal Party's submission. My colleague, Ella Haddad, has spoken at length about this and I will just read a couple of paragraphs from that because they speak for themselves -

The Liberal Party supports the current framework for Tasmanian parliamentary donations, spending and disclosure laws. There has been no evidence whatsoever presented that the current system is failing and needs change. As a matter of principle, the Liberal Party will not support any changes to the system, which would discourage participation in the electoral process, nor would we support any changes to donations, spending and disclosure laws which would inevitably lead to increased litigation, a very unhealthy development for our democracy. Our elections should be decided in the ballot box not the courtroom.

There is an accompanying media release that reiterates the point. Ms Haddad pointed out the importance of the consultative process in the review of this act and that the position of the Tasmanian Liberals presents a difficulty for the Government in looking at the review. We hope that will not influence the decision-making process regarding the recommendations that come back to this place around the review of the Electoral Act.

[4.08 p.m.]

Dr WOODRUFF (Franklin) - Mr Deputy Speaker, I support this bill. I want to reinforce some of the comments made by Ms O'Connor about our disappointment at the glacial pace of reform the Government is taking in this area. It should have been clear to anyone looking at the commentary on the state election last year that Tasmania is in trouble. Our democratic systems are under threat. It is core business for parliamentarians to uphold our democratic institutions and to make sure we do everything we can to protect it. It was clear in what happened at and around the election last year that problems occurred through bracket creep, changing circumstances over decades, the availability of different forms of communication, world wide web, social media and the rapidity of information that can be moved amongst people in the community. These have all made different opportunities available for corporate entities that seek to influence people standing for election, so they might be more amenable to changing or focusing their thoughts in their work as parliamentarians to meet the specific interests of particular corporate donors.

People might wonder, why we should care that people are elected to parliament with very specific views. The Greens are elected by people who respect that we have principles and we do not change them. We have held the same position for the last four decades on the things we care about. The things that have given the federal Liberal Party so much grief in the last term of this recent Government have been things the Greens have been campaigning about for up to four decades; things like marriage equality. That is something the Greens started a national conversation about.

Ms O'Connor - It started here in Tasmania.

Dr WOODRUFF - Yes, and things about energy policy. It is only the Greens who have been talking about climate change. It is only the Greens, at the federal, state and local level, who have been talking about why we need action to bring down carbon emissions. Only the Greens have

created this really difficult space for the Labor Party at the federal level because they will have to make a decision about whether they are going to be upfront about the political donations they receive. They take donations from the coal industry. They take huge donations from the Minerals Council, as does the Liberal Party. The Labor and Liberal parties take huge rivers of money coming from coal interest. What a surprise, we have been locked in a state of paralysis for decades, incapable of acting on the most important issue of our time; climate change.

It does matter. We need to care about this. We have reached a tipping point where we do not function properly any more. Once democratic institutions people in the community have taken for granted, people are waking up and understand they do not have a say any longer. They thought they would elect us and that we would stand for something but instead, as Ms O'Connor said yesterday about the Federal Group and the money they put into the Liberal Party at the election last year, they won that election for the state Liberals in Tasmania, and they won twice, because now the Labor Party of Tasmania has buckled under the pressure from federal Labor and the pressure of corporate donors.

Just once, the Labor Party went out on its own against the position the federal Labor Party has taken around pokies and gambling and they will not do it again because their corporate donors got what they wanted. That is why we need to care about electoral reform. That is why the Greens stand for reform that will make sure we have real-time disclosure of donations, so people can see exactly who is donating and make their own assessment of whether they think that is going to have an influence on what a person does if they are elected to parliament. It is not that people should not unashamedly have policies, principles or want to achieve a certain outcome when they come to parliament, but we should all know that is what is happening. We need to know when gambling interests, foreign governments, tobacco companies or the rifle association are funding the campaigns of members of parliament. As a society, we look at those things and we think, 'they are toxic companies'. It is not healthy to have tobacco, firearms and gambling companies putting money into politicians' campaigns. It is not healthy; it is damaging to the body politic as well as to the individuals involved.

Real-time disclosure and a cap on donations, cumulative across the whole period of the term of government is necessary, so we do not have the ludicrous situation in which it is impossible to know where the \$3 million donated to the Tasmanian Liberal Party for last year's election came from. It came from undisclosed sources. The community will never know. From the point of view of someone in the Greens, we find this ludicrous that people would stand for parliament and not have the confidence of their convictions to make available to the public a list of the people who have put them there. What does it say about a person who stands as a candidate for election and who is not prepared to talk about who is standing behind them? I find that concerning.

We have seen what has happened in Tasmania; the outcome of some of the donations that have been made to the Liberal Party over recent years. Ms O'Connor has talked about pokies and the Federal Group. I will touch on some matters that have been so problematic for the electorate of Franklin. They relate to developments by foreign government-owned companies in Bellerive that have involved secretive dealings, a lack of transparency, and it appears that false statements were made about what those developments were to be used for. I am talking about Kangaroo Bay. I am talking about the gifting of public land to the Shandong Chamboard Petrochemicals Company from China, a Chinese government-owned company. That company was essentially gifted one of the most beautiful areas of land in the middle of Kangaroo Bay in Bellerive and a development was allowed to go ahead that totally contravenes the community planning scheme developed for that area - at twice the height. There will be no public space left in the middle of that development, not

even a transit, not even a way to ride a bicycle through. This is all about locking the public out of their own area.

It is a matter of fact that in 2015, the Australian Securities Intelligence Organisation warned political parties not to receive money from the Yuhu Group. In 2016, the Tasmanian Liberal Party took \$30 000 from the Yuhu Group after they had been warned not to do that. It is deeply concerning to observe this cosy, secretive relationship that has developed over such a short period, since the Liberal's came to government in 2014. It ramped up with the Office of Coordinator-General, specifically set up to conduct a secretive process to find ways to flog off public lands around Tasmania and to make special deals which the community do not get to have a say about with, in this instance, a foreign government-owned company. We are concerned about those relationships and we are concerned that people do not get to have a say.

In relation to the Electoral Act review that was undertaken, what we have here today is a situation that would have been fantastic if we had had it in place before the 2018 election. Mr Deputy Speaker, I believe you would be quite aware that one of the things the people of Tasmania would like to have been able to understand in the *Mercury* or on the television or in the *Examiner* or the *Advocate* on the Saturday of the election last year was that it had been revealed that the Liberal Party had a secret deal with the firearms lobby in Tasmania to weaken the gun laws for the convenience of shooters, farmers, sporting associations and a whole range of other lobby groups. The evidence is now on the public record that this had been a process that was in train for many months and we know that at least three weeks before the election a policy had been handed around, which we have talked about so many times in this place. It was only because the Greens had a copy of it sent to us and we released it a number of days before the election and made it available to the media that this ever came to light before the election and became the election issue it was for many people.

One thing I have learnt about my time in this place is that Tasmanians might be slow to react on many things but they are not slow to act on attempts to weaken our gun laws. Tasmanians understand, because of our history, that we will never weaken the National Firearms Agreement in any way. The Liberal Party policy that was taken to stakeholders and got their support three weeks before the election breaches the National Firearms Agreement in a number of very clear ways. It would extend the licensing of category A and B firearms to 10 years, which is twice the length that is allowed under the National Firearms Agreement which is currently only five years. It would have created a new category E licence which is explicitly prohibited in the National Firearms Agreement. It would have resulted in changes to storage offences so that under certain storage offence breaches firearms would no longer be confiscated, a clear breach of the National Firearms Agreement. It would have enabled employees on properties to carry and shoot a category C weapon even though they did not hold that licence themselves.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER - Dr Woodruff, I am sure you will connect it to the bill before us but I am struggling to understand the relevance between the firearms agreement and the electoral bill.

Dr WOODRUFF - The point is that on that Saturday of the election the details of this information were not able to be released to the media, on the very day that people would have been able to make a more informed choice. The information came out, from memory, on Friday but was not able to be put into print because of the ban on electoral material in newspapers that was in place then, which this bill seeks to change.

Ms Archer - Which we are reforming.

Dr WOODRUFF - That is right, Ms Archer, but if that had been in place then, Tasmanians would have found out the details about this, so we strongly support this amendment. It is a very important one.

Getting back to why we should care about political donations, it is not just about the detail of the Liberals' policy to weaken firearms laws that was concerning and relevant to today, the other part of it is the constant pressure of lobby groups to get politicians to change their position on something which is obviously so stinky from an electoral point of view. This was a secretive approach but it is also a matter of record that the firearms lobby is incredibly well funded. They have deep pockets and I have noticed, as has every other politician who has stood up against the tide to weaken gun laws, that you get trolled by tens of thousands of people, almost all American, so they put a lot of money and effort into focusing on politicians and people in positions of influence to get them to change their position. It is the case that in 2015-16 the federal Liberal Party received \$22 500 from the Shooting Industry Foundation of Australia. That is concerning. We need to have reforms that make that not possible. In a situation where we have strong community concern about the weakening of gun laws, we need to make sure those toxic lobby groups do not have access, day in and day out, to the offices of politicians in federal or state parliaments.

Mr Deputy Speaker, there was a commitment made by the Liberals about the firearms policy and that information could have come out on the election day last year had this bill been law at the time, but it is also something the Labor Party is up to its neck in as well. The Labor Party unfortunately had a very similar but certainly not identical policy to the Liberals. I want to speak to something Dr Broad said. He put out a media release earlier in the week talking about the Greens' 'false claim' that Labor had received a copy of the Liberals' proposed firearms policy in the lead-up to the state election. 'I can categorically deny this desperate and untrue claim by Cassy O'Connor', Dr Broad said. 'Tasmanians can be sure this did not happen and I call on Ms O'Connor to check her facts before perpetuating claims which are unsubstantiated'.

It is disappointing that a member of the firearms committee is contradicting the truthfulness of the evidence that was presented at that committee because it is on the public record and *Hansard* will confirm that a person who provided evidence to the committee, Mr John Jones, said, 'I also made the Labor Party aware of it three weeks prior to that date', and that date was the day before the election last year. 'And as a matter of interest', he goes on to say, 'I said to them, do you realise' - and I will not mention who - 'the Liberal Party have this document and it was freely available? I am surprised you weren't in possession of it. There was no secrecy.'

I want to put to bed this idea that Ms O'Connor has been making up anything about the Labor Party having information about the Liberals' policy well before the election and had been provided briefings by people who were supportive of that.

Ms Haddad - We didn't have the Liberals' policy before the election.

Dr WOODRUFF - Not according to the evidence of the committee. I encourage the Leader of the Opposition, Ms White, to do so if she wants to appear before the committee and dispute the truth of somebody else's evidence. She is free to do so. As it stands, on the record, the evidence stated that the Labor Party had the information about the Liberal's policy to weaken gun laws three weeks beforehand. They brought a similar, watered-down policy to the election themselves. This is why we need to be careful about our donations. This is why we need to be careful about where

the money flows. We need to be clear about having the information available on the day people are voting.

I strongly support this change and the bill before us today. It is disappointing this is all we have in this bill today. It is unbelievable we need to spend more time waiting to receive more details about what people think need to happen in electoral donations reform. There are a number of things that need to happen immediately, that is, real-time disclosure, a cap on the total number of donations, a cap on the total amount spent on elections and the public funding of elections. I look forward to continuing to argue, with Ms O'Connor, for those things to happen.

[4.32 p.m.]

Ms ARCHER (Clark - Minister for Justice) - Mr Deputy Speaker, I thank all members for their contributions. My thanks go to the department for their work on this. Members will appreciate the work put into this first tranche and the ongoing work in this reform. I assure members this is the first tranche. The second tranche will result following the final report.

I have methodically spoken to the review process, from when the Premier first announced the review of the Electoral Act on 3 May 2018. I have raised the terms of reference, which show we are also looking at state-based disclosure rules. I have mentioned through third party disclosures and the level of regulation and the impact of the High Court decision needing to be considered. It is the highest court in this land and it would be foolhardy not to consider the full ramifications of that decision. That decision directly relates to the issues of capping electoral expenditure by third party campaigners. It is a New South Wales case and it deals with third party campaigners, which is the subject of the final review. If it is something Tasmania wishes to do, this decision is highly relevant. Third party campaigners are differentiated from political parties or candidates. The issues potentially extend to limits on donations to third parties for the purposes of electoral expenditure as well. It is a decision that could have wide ramifications for our review. It is clear from the decision that careful analysis, research and evidence gathering is required to support and justify, as reasonably necessary, the formulation of legislation of policy that seeks to burden the implied freedom of political communication on governmental and political matters. They are words derived from the decision itself, not my words, and they are the crucial points to be taken into account when considering the review into our Electoral Act and associated laws.

I have also been through why we are dealing with the first tranche expeditiously. I confirm that not all requests from the Tasmanian Electoral Commission have gone into this first tranche. Those to be dealt with are only technical and administrative changes. Anything more detailed and needs thorough consideration and public consultation will be the subject of the final report. Components of the first tranche are those that are time sensitive now because of the Legislative Council election in May. There has been much public commentary in the media about the ban on newspaper advertising and the like.

Ms O'Connor - There has been a huge amount of public commentary about donations from the gambling industry.

Ms ARCHER - I am not disputing that there has been public commentary about other issues. A major stakeholder with an interest in something in this bill has also been keen for this problem to be rectified prior to the next state election, being a Legislative Council election. We have one every May because two or three members' seats from our upper House are to be contested. In the lower House, we have an election every four years. That gives us time to thoroughly consider this and have the public consultation required to look at these particular issues. The final report will be

released later this year. We will consider the report's recommendations and any further legislative reform. As is always the case when we release a bill for consultation, there will be consultation on an actual bill but that is a procedural thing we always do and we make it publicly available.

Turning to the issue of section 191 and section 196 raised by Ms Haddad, I am advised the amendments to these sections are more complex and it was thought more consultation was required. Both sections are dealt with in the interim report at pages 19 to 21, where specific consultation questions are posed within the report. The report includes questions for the public and other stakeholders to consider, including a specific model as to how section 196 should be amended. Those two sections will be the subject of the final report in the second tranche of reform.

I make the observation that in relation to the Labor Party, the Leader of the Opposition said on ABC radio on 8 February of this year that 'we' - meaning the Labor Party - 'would like to see what the community has to say about this and the direction they would like us to take the lead in parliament'. That is in relation to the issue of donations, third party disclosure and all of the other issues.

Ms O'Connor - That is cop-out. They are applying that to every area of public policy that matters.

Ms ARCHER - I welcome their support for this process. Ms O'Connor does not like to acknowledge the importance of the consultation we are doing.

Ms O'Connor - I wonder why it is so mixed and varied. You did not consult on the anti-protest laws in a meaningful way.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER - Order. Ms O'Connor, you have made your contribution.

Ms ARCHER - As members have acknowledged, this is something of considerable public interest so the public has a right to be consulted. The only time there is consultation with targeted stakeholders is when you have a technical bill such as the other one that is listed on the paper today because it does not have the wide-ranging ramifications or impact on the public. This is why I go on about public consultation of these types of measures.

The Electoral Act establishes our fundamental principles that underpin how our democratic system works, so major changes such as a lot of the recommendations or positions that members of this House have been putting today, need to be the subject of extensive consultation so that all Tasmanians, and not just members of parliament, can have their say on the issue. Yes, we are elected on their behalf but on this particular issue they deserve to have their say. It may well be that consistently they say the one thing, but they deserve to have their say on this.

Ms O'Connor - A two-year consultation process is heel-dragging.

Ms ARCHER - I will get to the allegation of heel-dragging in a minute because I want to deal methodically with the other issue raised by Ms Haddad in relation to a 2013 submission on an inquiry called by the then Labor government on electoral reform. The Labor Party's rules are different from ours, but the administrative arm of the Liberal Party does not dictate policy. Obviously they are a stakeholder and can make submissions, but Mr McQuestin's view is not necessarily the view of the Government, and it was in relation to a different reform six years ago.

Ms Haddad - I understand that but, with respect, it was a similar investigation.

Ms ARCHER - From my contribution today I hope members can see that we have called for an extensive review of the Electoral Act. I have said today this is the first tranche. I have not said it is the only tranche. This is the first tranche of reform.

Ms O'Connor - Yes, but like your colleague, Mr Rockliff, with the animal welfare amendments, you can make promises about a second tranche and they do not happen.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER - Order.

Ms Haddad - He did say in February 2019 that the current system is okay.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER - Order.

Ms ARCHER - I cannot help it that a High Court decision was handed down that was absolutely relevant to the entire review.

Ms Haddad - I agree with that. My question is about Sam McQuestin's 2019 comment.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER - Order, Ms Haddad.

Ms ARCHER - Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, I did not have the luxury of being able to interject during others' contributions.

Ms O'Connor - Under the Deputy Speaker you would have.

Ms ARCHER - An interesting observation, Ms O'Connor. As I have already said in my second reading speech, the bill is only a preliminary step.

As to Ms O'Connor's comment, I did hear a previous radio interview where similar claims were made in relation to heel-dragging amongst other things that were said.

Ms O'Connor - It was a good old spleen vent.

Ms ARCHER - It was a bit of a spray, you could call it that. When Ms O'Connor - what was it? - did the lolly.

Ms O'Connor - Did his lolly. Don't you know what that means? Kids.

Ms ARCHER - I had not heard that one till today so I was dying to use it.

I accept that the Greens have attacked this review from the outset. There has been attack on the terms of reference. They have attacked the process. Excuse me for thinking it is highly political. As a government we have committed to doing a review. We have made the point that it is important that we take this opportunity to listen to Tasmanians and ensure we have a robust, democratic and fair electoral system that reflects Tasmania today. That is what we have said publicly and it is what we are doing.

From the beginning, we have outlined the terms of reference and the process, including the interim report. At the outset the broad terms of reference were set, the public and stakeholders were given an opportunity to provide submissions and they are still able to do so until 15 April, which we extended because of the High Court decision. That is not dragging our feet. Yes, the Government has OPC and we have agencies. If members have looked, there is a significant amount of law reform going on at the moment. I am not making excuses, but there is a lot going on within our department and I admire their extraordinary efforts in managing to get all of this reform done, often juggling many reforms all at once. They are doing the best they can in the circumstances and I am sure will deliver a final report this year, as indicated during my contribution.

Ms O'Connor - The work of OPC reflects government priorities, so the Government has deprioritised electoral reform because it is not at the top of OPC's agenda.

Ms ARCHER - We have not deprioritised; I have explained the timeline. I am not going to say it again because people will get sick of me repeating myself, I am sure, but *Hansard* will reflect the process that we have undergone, the process that is continuing and my assurance to the House today and a media release said publicly that we will be releasing the final report this year.

I might also add that there was some sort of commentary by Ms O'Connor during that radio interview that I heard about - the High Court case - which is a little disturbing given that she had not read it at the time.

Ms O'Connor - I beg your pardon? Was that after we lodged our response to the addendum?

Ms ARCHER - I am assuming she may have since read it, but although it is a Unions NSW case, it dealt with your issue of third parties, so I hope there was not any insinuation that all third parties should not be dealt with in the same manner because I believe that if we are having third parties, everyone should be dealt with in the same manner.

Ms O'Connor - Absolutely.

Ms ARCHER - Good. That may have come across the wrong way over the airwaves.

I did not get a lot of specific questions.

Ms O'Connor - Foreign donations.

Ms ARCHER - Thank you, it was certainly not my intention to ignore that. Because it deals with the issue of donations and donations generally are being dealt with in the next tranche or reforms, that will come under that. I accept what Ms O'Connor says about foreign donations and what other jurisdictions have done, but we have not dealt with this as a piecemeal approach on donations. The issue of donations will be dealt with altogether in their entirety and have been the subject of public consultation.

Ms O'Connor - When are we likely to see legislation?

Ms ARCHER - I have said to the House today that the final report will be released this year and obviously there will be recommendations out of that. I do not make any apology for trying to get this right. It is significant law reform and as well as impacting anyone in this House, it is a matter of high public interest. We can all acknowledge that.

Ms O'Connor - That's why your terms of reference are so disappointing.

Ms ARCHER - I am not going to rush it. I do not know why Ms O'Connor is in so much of a rush when we have three years till the next state election and I think it is incumbent on us as lawmakers to get this right.

Ms O'Connor - Pardon my cynicism but we waited for the second tranche of animal welfare reforms for the whole last term.

Ms ARCHER - I have said to Ms O'Connor that foreign donations will be dealt with holistically as part of the final report. I think they are all the questions that were addressed to me.

Bill read the second time.

ELECTORAL AMENDMENT BILL 2019 (No. 3)

In Committee

Clause 1 - Short title

Ms O'CONNOR - Madam Chair, I have asked to speak on the short title because the Short Title of this act is the Electoral Amendment Act 2019. We are debating a small number of amendments, the majority of which are administrative. I wanted to talk about some of the amendments we would like to make to this legislation.

Dr Woodruff and I listened carefully to the Attorney-General's response. We have limited options other than to take the Attorney-General at face value on this issue. I will point out, however, that in the last term of the parliament the Animal Welfare Amendment Bill came into this place in late 2014 or early 2015 and it was an amendment bill that was designed to increase penalties, but also, in a narrow set of circumstances, to increase the powers of custodial inspectors to find out if an animal is being harmed. At the time, when we said there were a lot of other recommendations of the Animal Welfare Advisory Committee, the Government's own animal welfare body, that were not in this amendment bill, the primary industries minister at the time said, 'Fear not, this is just the first tranche'. We waited and waited for the second set of amendments that would have truly strengthened the animal welfare framework in Tasmania, on the advice of experts, including the Tasmanian Farmers and Graziers Association, who were members of the Animal Welfare Advisory Committee. The bill never came. This is why last year we tabled an Animal Welfare Amendment Bill, because substantive reforms to the Animal Welfare Act are required.

I believe, on the basis of my experience in this place, that Ms Archer seeks to be genuine about this.

Madam CHAIR - Ms O'Connor, this is about the short title -

Ms O'CONNOR - That is right.

Madam CHAIR - and the name of the bill. Could you please keep your argument to that?

Ms O'CONNOR - Yes, I am doing exactly that. I am talking about amendments, an amendment bill, the short title, the Animal Welfare Amendment Bill, and the Electoral Act Amendment Bill. I am doing exactly that.

Madam CHAIRMAN - This is about the name of it.

Ms O'CONNOR - That is right, Chair. If you or this parliament would like us to stay here all night and debate the amendments that we know need to be in the Electoral Act of 2004, we will do that clause by clause. I am trying to save the parliament time now by flagging our intent. We have drafted a suite of amendments - amendments that would deliver real-time donations disclosure - that would deliver a measure of transparency around donations, caps on expenditure and the like. We have a whole lot of robust amendments here that are drawn in significant part from the Electoral Reform Bill which passed through this parliament in late 2013 with the then Liberals in opposition kicking and screaming, who then blocked it in a more conservative upper House.

The reason I am up on the short title is because this is what the Electoral Act of 2004 needs. It needs this suite of amendments. It needs to have real-time donations disclosure. That is one reform that the Attorney-General could have delivered in this bill, because it is time sensitive. People who are donating to political parties between campaigns, the amount that they donate, the source of that donation, should be known in real-time, Madam Chair.

I wanted to raise those issues with the Attorney-General. We will bring a robust set of amendments in when the legislation arrives in this place. I hope it is early next year, because it is inexcusable that we are debating a set of amendments that are so wanting. It is inexcusable that nearly six years after the Parliament stated its will that the Electoral Act of 2004 should be amended to provide greater transparency, we still have no substantial reform of the Electoral Act.

Madam Chair, the Attorney-General made a number of comments in relation to the High Court decision -

Madam CHAIR - Are we relating to the short title?

Ms O'CONNOR - Relating to the short title. We delivered on 20 February this year, a response to the decision to extend the consultation, that is further delay the process. I simply urge the Attorney-General to have a look at our addendum because it deals with some of those matters that have been raised by the High Court. For example, we have constitutional law expert, Professor Anne Twomey, who stated that political expenditure caps and donation caps have yet to be directly tested in the High Court. Professor Twomey says they would most likely survive if challenged. We would strongly argue -

Madam CHAIR - This is not relevant. It is not relevant to the title of the bill. Can we please keep it to the title of the bill?

Ms O'CONNOR - I am on the short title of the bill in order to lay some matters on the record that are relevant to the amendments we are debating today and in order to try to be efficient with the parliament's time, Madam Chair.

Madam CHAIR - This is not a second reading debate.

Ms O'CONNOR - We can deal with this two ways, Madam Chair. Either there can be a measure of latitude about some of the responses we are putting on the record here, or we will go through this bill clause by clause tonight. I simply ask that you consider that, Madam Chair, before seeking to shut me down while I am responding to a number of the issues that have been raised by the Attorney-General.

We would strongly argue, Attorney-General, that avoiding the risk or perception of corruption and undue influence, as well as enhancing the prospects of a level playing field, would counter balance burdens on political communication. A threat of a High Court challenge on this matter is no reason for inaction. It did not stop you with the anti-protest laws, particularly given that expenditure and donation caps exist unassailed in jurisdictions across the country and, in the case of expenditure caps, in Tasmania as well, for local government and upper House elections.

Madam Chair, I got up on the short title because it is clear that the Greens in this place, along with Labor, are frustrated by this electoral reform process. I am talking on behalf of the Greens and we want to believe that this review process, despite the shrivelling, narrow terms of reference, will be robust and will be taken seriously. It will reflect the will of the Tasmanian people that there will be far greater transparency around our electoral laws in Tasmania.

We are frustrated on behalf of many Tasmanians. I simply say to the Attorney-General we are not going to be here for very long. We pass through this place and others will take our place. We want to be able to walk away from our work here knowing we did our best by the people of Tasmania. I hope you recognise that when you are looking at this review and the need for a much stronger, more democratic, robust and transparent donations disclosure framework in Tasmania. It will put a little bit of that polish back on your soul if you can be part of delivering something that is genuinely in the public interest and in the interests of a stronger democracy.

Clause 1 agreed to.

Clause 2 agreed to and bill taken through the remaining stages.

Bill read the third time.

MOTOR ACCIDENTS (LIABILITIES AND COMPENSATION) AMENDMENT BILL 2019 (No. 4)

Second Reading

[5.03 p.m.]

Ms ARCHER (Clark - Minister for Justice - 2R) - Mr Deputy Speaker, I move -

That the bill be now read the second time.

This bill proposes amendments to the Motor Accidents (Liabilities and Compensation) Act 1973 to clarify the power to make regulations relating to the Motor Accidents Compensation Tribunal.

The act establishes the Motor Accidents Compensation Tribunal, which resolves or determines disputes between the Motor Accidents Insurance Board and parties seeking or in receipt of

scheduled benefits under the act. The act also provides the power to make regulations in relation to the tribunal.

Concerns have been raised about the lack of clarity concerning the power to make regulations under the act. The Motor Accidents Compensation Tribunal Regulations 2009 are due to expire in June 2019. It is necessary to ensure that the power to make regulations is clearly set out to allow the tribunal to function effectively. This bill clarifies the power to make regulations under the act by amending sections 28 and 34 of the act. These amendments will provide clear powers to make regulations in relation to awarding of costs and prescribing procedures for hearings and determination of matters referred to the tribunal.

The bill also includes a doubts removal provision in relation to previous determinations or awards for costs made by the tribunal under section 28 of the act. The doubts removal provision set out in proposed new section 28(9) deems a determination or an order as to costs made prior to the commencement of the amendments to have been validly made.

This bill will provide greater clarity and certainty around the powers to make effective regulations for the tribunal.

I commend the bill to the House.

[5.06 p.m.]

Ms HADDAD (Clark) - Mr Deputy Speaker, I concur with the minister's comments that this is a straightforward bill. I have to say it is the first time I have seen a fact sheet which is possibly just a little longer than the second reading speech, but Labor will be supporting this bill and recognises it is an important piece of legislation that needs to be passed in order to allow the Government and parliament to make regulations in relation to the motor accidents legislation.

I am grateful to the department and the minister's office for a briefing I was given yesterday morning about the bill and wondered if the minister could put on the record what I heard in that briefing, which is that once the regulations that I understand expire in June 2019 are redrafted there will be a more detailed community consultation on those regulations. Also is it possible at this early stage for the minister to indicate whether she anticipates those new regulations might be similar to the existing regulations or might differ in any substantive way from the regulations which are in place at the moment?

[5.07 p.m.]

Dr WOODRUFF (Franklin) - Mr Deputy Speaker, the Greens are happy to support the changes that this bill seeks to enshrine and it seems as though it provides some resolution to the procedural matters that were not articulated in enough detail.

I also would like to understand from the minister what exactly will be changing in June 2019 when the current regulations expire, and also whether there would be any changes at all that might be planned in the regulations that will be made from that date.

I was not able to take up the opportunity for a briefing but I also had a question for the minister about whether there were any stakeholders who provided any feedback on this amendment bill and whether they were satisfied with the changes or there is anything outstanding which is going to be worked on in the near future or at some other point.

[5.09 p.m.]

Ms ARCHER (Clark - Minister for Justice) - Mr Deputy Speaker, I thank members for their contributions and keeping them very succinct. I will first deal with Ms Haddad's question. She asked if there would be consultation on regulations. As to the consultation that was carried out in relation to the bill, they were all satisfied with the bill. It was targeted consultation, as you can imagine with a bill like this. A draft copy of the bill was sent directly to the chair of the Motor Accidents Compensation Tribunal, the Solicitor-General, the Department of State Growth, the Department of Treasury and Finance and the Department of Premier and Cabinet. The bill has the support of the chair of the Motor Accidents Compensation Tribunal, the Solicitor-General and the department.

To answer Ms Haddad's question, consultation is more extensive for regulations. It is the much broader, longer list of legal stakeholders we typically consult with in all our law reform matters of a more technical nature, when we might not need to go to full public consultation. It is an extensive standard list of legal stakeholders and interested parties. If, however, there is anyone any party thinks is relevant, I am welcome and open to suggestions. This was identified as something needing to be done. It is one of these things we often act on when it is raised and has the support of the chair of the tribunal, and we consult with the broader agencies to see what impact it might have. It has that support.

In relation to the doubts removal provision, that is a standard practice we have in the Department of Justice. Even though previous decisions are likely to be valid, we like to have that doubts removal provision because it is that safeguard. That is there to be 100 per cent sure previous costs orders and the like are upheld.

It has been dealt with nice and quickly. I have remembered to thank my department people and all the staff who have worked on this. We are a busy department and I appreciate the work that is undertaken, particularly with these more technical bills. They come through and seem as if they have been relatively simple and easy to put together by way of their shorter length, but they are highly technical in nature and require the same amount of work and application. With that, I commend the bill to the House.

Bill read the second time.

Bill read the third time.

GAS (CONSEQUENTIAL AMENDMENTS) BILL 2018 (No. 42)

ENERGY CO-ORDINATION AND PLANNING AMENDMENT BILL 2018 (No. 57)

Bills agreed to by the Legislative Council without amendment.

GAS SAFETY BILL 2018 (No. 41)

GAS INDUSTRY BILL 2018 (No. 40)

Bills returned from the Legislative Council with amendments.

Quorum formed.

GAS SAFETY BILL 2018 (No. 41)

Motion by **Mr Ferguson** agreed to -

That the amendments be made forthwith.

GAS SAFETY BILL 2018 (No. 41)

In Committee

Mr BARNETT - An amendment has been moved in the upper House and the Government is supportive of this. I understand other members of the Legislative Council are supportive. It is Clause 106 on page 114 after subclause (3) to insert the following subclause -

- (A) An authorised officer or gas safety officer must be accompanied by a police officer when entering a place with the authority of a warrant.

This has been moved. Ivan Dean is a former police officer and commander of the Tasmania Police. My shadow would understand, as the former minister for police, having that extra security and support of an authorised officer or gas safety officer being accompanied by a police officer. We do not have a problem with that. It is not a burden. It highlights the importance and merit of that security and that person being accompanied by a police officer. We have to move those amendments separately and we support that.

Madam Chair, I move -

That the Council amendment to clause 106(3) be agreed to.

Mr O'BYRNE - The Opposition supports the amendment as moved in the upper House. It is not only a matter of security but ensuring the authorised officer or the gas safety officer can execute their task in a manner which is safe and legal so that it does not give rise to any further complications to the matter being resolved. We think this is, as the minister said, a minor amendment but, nonetheless, a very important amendment so that the action can be undertaken in an appropriate manner to ensure it can be resolved appropriately.

Dr WOODRUFF - Considering this is about gas safety, it is important that those details are ticked off on, so we support this. It makes a lot of sense to get the details right.

Council amendment agreed to.

Reported the Committee had resolved to agree to the Council amendments.

Resolution agreed to.

GAS INDUSTRY BILL 2018 (No. 40)

In Committee

Council amendments to clause 44 and 73 -

Mr BARNETT - Madam Chair, I move -

That the Council amendments to clauses 44 and 73 be agreed to.

Clause 44, page 67 subclause (2) after 'may' insert ', in writing.'. So that direction must be given in writing rather than verbally. That is making it clearer. Again, that amendment has been moved upstairs and we have no objection to that.

Clause 73, page 100, after subclause (3) insert the following subsection. Like the Gas Safety Bill, it reads as follows -

(3A) An authorised officer, or a gas officer, must be accompanied by a police officer when entering a place with the authority of a warrant.

As the member for Franklin said, the Gas Industry Bill is a very important bill, as is the Gas Safety Bill. This is all part of the Government's energy security objectives to ensure that those objectives are implemented. I commend those amendments and support them and will be happy if colleagues in this place do likewise. I am happy to answer any queries, if required.

Mr O'BYRNE - Madam Chair, I can indicate the Labor Party's support for these supplemental amendments and I thank the upper House for their due diligence.

Dr WOODRUFF - Madam Chair, the Greens are happy to support both of these.

Council amendments agreed to.

Reported the Committee had resolved to agree to the Council amendments.

Resolution agreed to.

PREMIER'S ADDRESS

Resumed from above.

[5.26 p.m.]

Mr BARNETT (Lyons - Minister for Primary Industries) - Madam Speaker, as Minister for Primary Industries and Water, Minister for Energy, Minister for Veterans Affairs and as a proud member of the Hodgman Liberal team, it is terrific to be able to stand here to support the Premier's vision and the strategy for a strong economy and a balanced budget. Tasmania's economy is at record levels in terms of our economic growth, there good news in terms of employment growth, with the unemployment level as low as possible.

I want to make a point that was made by John Howard during those years when I was in the Senate about the importance of good economic management. You need a strong economy to deliver good health, education, police and other services and you need to reinvest the dividends of a strong economy. You cannot reinvest those dividends if you do not have a strong economy, a growing economy and are able to properly balance your budget. That is a principle I have held to all of my political career - whether it be in the federal parliament or state parliament. It is important that we have a strong economy to be able to reinvest those dividends back into health, education, police, infrastructure and those important services that Tasmanians need and deserve. That is why it is so

important to have a framework, a vision, as the Hodgman Liberal Government has, for a strong economy. Of course, it will have its challenges. We have our challenges, but as the Premier has indicated in his Premier's Address just a day or two ago, Tasmania's economic growth is higher than other states and growing faster than it ever has over the past decade, at almost twice the national average.

We can be proud and pleased about that. It is something I am pleased about as a member of the Hodgman Liberal team, as part of a Cabinet to deliver on those plans. A strong economy means more job opportunities, more support for families. I am proud to be in charge of portfolios that are playing a key role in achieving this exceptional growth in energy, planning and across a range of primary industries and water. A very important and honoured role I have is Minister for Veterans Affairs. I will share more about those portfolios over the coming moments in this Chamber.

I am particularly honoured to be managing initiatives supporting our veterans, such as our community building, state RSL branches and sub-branches, maintaining and creating regional memorials like the new Soldier's Walk at the Hobart Domain. I was there this morning at the Hobart Cenotaph and put up a beautiful photo of the sunrise at the Eternal Flame. I had wonderful feedback on that photo this morning. I wanted to visit to pay my respects and to show honour to our veterans and their families. There are more than 6000 veterans in and around Tasmania and of course all their families and those connected. A wonderful part of Tasmanian history and heritage is the Hobart Cenotaph with the Remembrance Bridge now funded and supported thankfully by the Australian Government. I am looking forward to being there with Darren Chester in a few weeks' time for the official opening. It will be terrific. I will share more about it shortly but we are also seeking proper recognition of our heroic fallen hero, Teddy Sheean.

In terms of energy, Tasmania is not only playing its part but we are leading the nation as a renewable energy powerhouse. It is encouraging and positive to have that opportunity to give back and be generous in the opportunities going forward. Our part in the provision of energy in Australia is unprecedented and is well recognised by the Morrison Liberal Government and the Government's energy policies are a cornerstone in the strategy to strengthen our industrial development for years to come. As Minister for Energy I sometimes feel like I am standing on the shoulders of Eric Reece and Robin Gray, former premiers and ministers for energy, in terms of what they did in building industrial development and hydro-industrialisation in attracting industry, development, growth and jobs to Tasmania in the previous 100 years or more. It has been terrific and I am a proud Tasmanian to recognise the history and heritage and that contribution of decades past.

Now we are on the train heading forward into history where under the Tasmania First energy policy we can deliver for the rest of the nation. We are achieving our key objectives of being 100 per cent self-sufficient in renewable or clean energy by 2022. What a wonderful objective. We made that commitment prior to the election, we are delivering on that commitment and that is coming to fruition through the Cattle Hill Wind Farm development in the Central Highlands. I was there just a week or so ago with the trucks with the turbines and the 76-metre blades going through Bothwell. It was a wonderful day of celebration for the people of Bothwell and the Southern Highlands as those trucks went through. In fact there were three trucks required to get the base of the tower up the hill from Bothwell into the Central Highlands at Waddamana and into Cattle Hill. It was amazing. This is a major feat and a fantastic objective; \$300 million, 48 turbine wind farm development and it is something that as Tasmanians we can be very proud of.

Then we have Granville Harbour that is under construction, a \$250 million-plus development. Those two projects will get us just about to 100 per cent fully self-sufficient in renewable energy.

We are way ahead of the game when it comes to mainland states and most other countries in the world. Tasmania is a standout in terms of being 100 per cent renewable or clean energy and it is something to be proud of. Many other states are struggling to reach 30 per cent, 40 per cent or 50 per cent in terms of clean energy.

The other key objective is having the lowest regulated residential and business prices for electricity by 2022. That is our target. We have what the rest of the nation really needs - low-cost, reliable, clean energy and we have plans to deliver that through the second Bass Strait interconnector, the Marinus Link, that will allow Tasmania to expand the amount of renewable energy provided to the national grid, thereby not only increasing energy security but putting downward pressure on electricity prices.

John Tucker, the new member for Lyons from the east coast, mentioned in his first speech the importance of electricity prices and keeping them as low as possible because it deals with the cost of living and the cost of doing business. It is important, not just for rural and regional Tasmania but all Tasmanians. That is what we can deliver and what we are planning to deliver. That Marinus Link will enhance greater investment in wind and pumped hydro initiatives. I will talk more about pumped hydro shortly. Overall, do not just ask my opinion but this is the opinion and advice that came out with the report on the Marinus Link just a week or two ago, that is \$5 billion of investment into Tasmania and thousands of jobs.

This is very encouraging. This is the pipeline of prosperity that could be delivered to Tasmania all being well with those projects continuing to be implemented. Marinus will enhance greater investment in wind and pumped hydro and we now have the Australian Government's commitment of \$56 million to fast-track the Marinus Project. I am very thankful to Scott Morrison, the Prime Minister, and Angus Taylor for their wonderful support for Tasmania and that Australian Government commitment of \$56 million. Likewise, their commitment to work with the Tasmanian Government to underwrite the first phase of Tasmania's Battery of the Nation project involving pumped hydro project schemes. That is where the Hodgman Liberal Government would spend up to \$30 million through Hydro Tasmania to progress phase 1 of the Battery of the Nation project.

Madam Speaker, I mentioned those three shortlisted sites earlier today - Lake Cethana, Lake Rowallan in the north-west, the beautiful Mersey Valley, and then of course the Tribute power station on the west coast just south of Tullah. They are the sites that will undergo that assessment and business case and they are the frontrunners. By the end of next year we will know the frontrunner of those three which we hope will progress to being shovel-ready by 2021 with a multimillion-dollar investment and hundreds of jobs, direct and many indirect. The opportunities for Tasmania are fantastic.

Our energy strategy is comprehensive. It will spearhead industrial development for many years to come, just as hydroindustrialisation did years ago. We are not talking about a quick fix. This is a decades-on-decades plan and we can have a measured, sensible, professional approach and work on and implement that plan delivering investment here in Tasmania and jobs galore for Tasmanians.

It is very encouraging and part of our vision, as the Premier indicated in his address a few days ago. It is a clean, green strategy and because we know it will be delivering low-cost, reliable energy, we hope we would have the support of everyone in this Chamber for these objectives and business plans that we have on the table. I challenge the other parties in this Chamber to get on board and if they are serious about wanting to create a prosperous economic environment in Tasmania to commit

to this objective and these plans and say they are backing us 100 per cent because it is in Tasmania's best interests.

In addition to that we have Tasmanians needing assistance with everyday cost pressures and we are delivering more than \$40 million in concessional tariffs this year to lower people's electricity bills. We are investing \$6.25 million in renewable and efficient energy technologies on farms. We are also reviewing irrigation electricity tariffs to lower farm energy costs, and that is ongoing. We also have \$750 000 committed through the on-farm energy audit and capital grant program, and I have been on farms at Selbourne and elsewhere in recent times talking more about those projects; that is to review the farm energy use infrastructure, identify savings strategies and support capital works.

We have \$5.5 million for a new Tasmanian irrigation renewable energy program to incorporate the hydro systems. That is good news. John Tucker knows that and so does Mark Shelton, my colleagues from Lyons, because they understand the importance to rural and regional Tasmania of water and irrigation and why not have those energy-producing opportunities in and around regional and rural Tasmania? It is a fantastic thing that will reduce irrigation energy costs, we hope, and its aim is to ensure that those irrigation opportunities generate electricity and reduce those energy costs.

On that score, we have created the Farm Energy Advocacy Service to help guide our farmers through Aurora Energy.

To date I have not heard of an alternative defensible and sustainable energy policy from those on the other side but I would be interested to hear from them and I am encouraging them to do so and stand up and express what policies they have. They have a duty to do so but I would be thrilled if they would come on board 100 per cent and back all of these initiatives we have rolling out across Tasmania. It has been a busy time in the energy space.

I comment in terms of primary industry and water; one of the most productive and big contributors to the Tasmanian economy, the Tasmanian Lifestyle. Lyons electorate is rural and regional Tasmania to a tee. Nearly half the state. I love it. I was born at Hagley in the Meander Valley, raised on a farm and I know what it is like. We heard from our cocky farmer and friend from the east coast, John Tucker, today about his life story and his history. There are so many people who have many generations who have lived and worked on the farm or in rural and regional Tasmania. We all know people and we have connections. That is the life blood of much of Tasmania. It will be great having the wonderful advocacy of John Tucker in the months and years ahead, particularly for rural and regional Tasmania.

We have been steadfast on delivering on our target to grow the farmgate value of the agriculture sector to \$10 billion by 2050 and that is a great objective.

Government members - Hear, hear.

Mr BARNETT - We are getting hear, hear's from Mark Shelton and John Tucker because they know how committed we are. I do recognise and thank Jeremy Rockliff because he spearheaded this initiative some years ago and has been a wonderful advocate for our rural and regional communities in primary industry and Sarah Courtney is my former minister.

That is why we are investing more than \$150 million to grow a competitive, innovative, sustainable and profitable farm sector and we are doing it. A strong agricultural economy, a vibrant seafood sector delivers jobs and opportunities across rural and regional Tasmania.

In short, our agri-food plan is based on three planks of grow, make and protect. We are working with the Tasmanian farmers, big and small - agri business processors, food businesses and the rural and regional stakeholders across Tasmania including local government. We are working with them so we can continue to grow and make more products.

We have heard recently the Premier has come back from Japan as the minister for Trade and the focus of our new trade strategy is to collaborate across our horticulture, fruit, wine, seafood and other primary industry sectors to sell more of Tasmania's high quality and safe products to the world - develop new markets, promote our valuable brand, the Tasmania brand. We are proud of it and we want to do more with it. We are doing that to facilitate investment in local agri-business and create more jobs.

As it stands, exports are up 11 per cent only in the last 12 months. That is good news. What is so good about exports? Exports means more jobs. We are pleased with our export industry and the Premier's leadership and the minister for Trade is delivering.

We are making an investment year on year in strengthening our biosecurity system and I will have more to say about that.

We are increasing funding for Landcare and natural resource management programs and last week I was with Mark Shelton at the back of Westbury and we had a good time launching the doubling of this government's funding to Landcare Tasmania, short of the doubling of that commitment.

We are pleased to be working with Landcare Tasmania because they have thousands of volunteers. Hundreds of groups around Tasmania that they support and in terms of getting bang for your buck it is fantastic. I have been a big supporter since I was in the Senate of Landcare Tasmania and what they do.

Mr Shelton - Another sixth-generation agricultural family, the Mitchelsons.

Mr BARNETT - Yes, the Mitchelsons: six generations they have been at it and Ian Mitchelson was there with his wife and family - it has been fantastic to be supporting them and launch the Landcare Tasmania announcement in the last week.

I would like to mention our Weeds Action Fund. We have \$5 million in our budget for this, committed over the Forward Estimates. This is important because we want to kill off those pests and diseases and the weeds and the Weeds Action Fund will help us do that. I have just announced Ian Sauer - I congratulate him in taking on that role as chair for the Weeds Action Fund. He will be an excellent advocate for that fund and to ensure that over time there will be a change of culture in terms of weeds because it is everybody's problem, not just the Government's problem, not just the farmers' problem; it is everybody's problem, everybody's challenge and everybody's concern.

I am pleased to be working with the farmers, agri-business and processors to develop a white paper on the competitiveness of Tasmanian agriculture and we back the TFGA with a new Living Next Door to a Farmer Campaign. It was great to launch that not so long ago with Frank Archer

and Peter Skillern just north of Launceston. The Living Next Door to a Farmer Campaign will improve neighbourly relations and understanding of farming activities - that is important to farming and agricultural education.

We are investing in the future and indeed the fabric of our rural communities with increasing funding for Rural Business, Tasmania's counselling services and farm business mentoring and the rural youth and the Tasmanian Women in Agricultural Leadership Programs. We are investing in these programs because they are important and they are delivering on the ground results for Tasmania. We are delivering on our comprehensive Agricultural Research Development and Extension white paper, released in 2017 with \$28 million over five years to the TIA, the Tas Institute of Agriculture, and an additional \$7 million will upgrade our state-owned research farms - huge commitments and again I thank Jeremy Rockliff for his support. Likewise, in terms of Jeremy Rockliff, our Deputy Premier, minister for Education, we are continuing to develop the agricultural education framework and investing in that. We are investing more than \$16 million into our school farms, employing 10 new school farm teachers and upgrading infrastructure at school farms at the Jordan River School and Sheffield School. As a former student of the Hagley Farm School - a very proud former student - I visited there last month and met some of the new school farm teachers. It was terrific. I am very proud of the Hagley Farm School and what they have achieved. Thank you, Jen Butler, for that endorsement.

At the higher education level, we have extended our contribution to scholarships that encourage Tasmanians to study agri-business at the University of Tasmania and ultimately take on a career in agriculture. Dairies are a key part of that. It is the largest contributor to the farm gate value in Tasmania, worth over \$325 million per annum in 2016-17 and I am very pleased - I have just made a statement in the last 24 hours to say I am pleased that the price of milk has gone up 10 cents. That is important - dairy farmers and those who support our dairy farmers deserve a fair go. I am very pleased with that result. It is because of community pressure that the major chains and others have increased the price of milk in those supermarkets.

Confidence in the dairy industry has rebounded strongly since the difficulties of 2016 and now we have got new production records of over 900 million litres in the last years and we have extended the Stock Underpass Program to assist farmers to construct road underpasses and we have committed \$900 000 in dairy industry development over the Forward Estimates - it is good news.

A very strong and competitive red meat industry is a key part of the Government's plan to grow the farmgate value to get to that \$10 billion by 2050. Like the industry nationally, our meat sector is facing some challenges and we are working with the industry to address those challenges and the Government acted decisively following the JBS decision to close the Devonport City Abattoir. I could go more into that but we have established the Tas Red Meat Industry Working Group and I thank all those members for their support and appreciate their work to deliver a report and recommendation by 30 June as well as looking to the feasibility study which is well advanced, to identify ways to improve commercial viability of on-island processing options. We have committed \$1 million in this year's budget to meet industry development and we have \$648 000 for pasture and livestock productivity project improvement.

Biosecurity is important to Tasmania's reputation, the Tasmanian brand. As a premium producer of agriculture and seafood products, and a tourism destination, we rely on a rigorous and effective biosecurity system. We formed Biosecurity Tasmania to better support and protect our primary industries and our environment. We have invested more in biosecurity in each successive budget. I hope to be tabling the biosecurity bill in this parliament very soon. We have had a lot of

consultation with key stakeholders. Prior to Christmas, I proactively said let us put an exposure draft out and take feedback. We want to do what we can to improve it and that is what has been happening. That will be finalised tabled in this parliament soon.

The fruit fly problem has been tough but the fruit industry is worth \$154 million a year at the farm gate, three times more with processing. The fruit fly response last summer was the single largest biosecurity action of its kind in Tasmania. I acknowledge and sincerely thank all those involved. The Queensland fruit fly was successfully eradicated from mainland Tasmania on 9 January this year, assuming no further detections on Flinders Island. The response will be completed by the end of the month. We must remain vigilant and there is always a danger of incursions in Tasmania while the pest remains active elsewhere. We need to do everything we can to be in the best position possible to combat that. We want to do everything we can to promote our horticulture and fruit industries and that is what we are doing. The domestic fruit markets have been restored and the key export markets of South Korea, Japan, New Zealand, have been restored. There is more work to do. I recently announced a review into the Queensland fruit fly response by the highly regarded Mike Blake. We have done many good things well and if we can improve, that would be great.

In terms of GMO, I have recently announced a review of Tasmania's moratorium on GMO. Previous reviews have found no reason to change Tasmania's moratorium and the Liberal Government has strongly supported this position. That report will fall due in second half of this year.

Water is liquid gold, with 8 per cent of Tasmania's agricultural land irrigated and produces over 50 per cent of the gross value of Tasmania's agricultural production. We are working the Pipeline to Prosperity irrigation scheme, a third tranche, and that will help us achieve the \$10 billion a year agricultural target by 2050. That Pipeline to Prosperity, with a potential \$500 million long-term infrastructure program will, when fully implemented, deliver an estimated 3900 jobs and return an estimated \$114 million each year to the agricultural sector and our economy more broadly.

The Hodgman Liberal Government already has \$70 million in our Budget over the forward Estimates to support Tasmanian Irrigation to deliver that. Infrastructure Australia has identified it as the priority project. It means we are on the right track and we are encouraged by that. I have recently announced a new Tasmanian Rural Water Use Strategy that will guide Tasmania's future water management arrangements to ensure the state's rural water management framework reflects current best practice in the modern operating environment.

Tasmania has a world class wild-catch and farm seafood sector worth just under \$1 billion and the Hodgman Liberal Government is investing more in the years ahead. We are modernising fisheries management through the Fisheries Integrated Licensing and Management System, funding support for IMAS and so many opportunities, whether it be in abalone or rock lobster, and it is great to be working with some of those key stakeholders. In terms of salmon, likewise, sustainable industry growth. We want to support the industry's plans to achieve a \$2 billion per year growth target by 2030. I recently released that one-year review of the Sustainable Industry Growth Plan. I look forward to working with the industry to grow in a sustainable way.

I will conclude with a few remarks regarding the fires. In my electorate, an enormous debt of gratitude is owed to all our Fire and Emergency Services and volunteers for the amazing job they have done in fighting this season's bushfires and containing damage to property. A specific thank you to TFS, Parks and Wildlife, Sustainable Timber Tasmania, all those involved across

government and the volunteers. To my own department of Primary Industries and to all those involved including at TasNetworks, I thank them for the fine work they did and their terrific support. Across the Lyons electorate, in the Derwent Valley, Maydena, Central Highlands and the Huon Valley, it has been fantastic. I offer my sincere thanks to those involved.

[6.21 p.m.]

Dr BROAD (Braddon) - Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise to speak about the state of the state. I have been listening to contributions from members of the Government and it is striking that it seems like there is a failure to recognise they have been in Government for five years. It remains almost as though the same talking points are in place from five years ago, leading into the 2014 election. They continue to blame Labor, it is all our fault, yet they have been in power for five years. The Government, and the Premier gave his state of the state address and flashed around a flashy bit of printing of the second-year agenda. This is a visual representation of what the Government really is - there is a lot of gloss but not a lot of substance.

The Government can be summed up in two things: minding the shop, they have been accused of this; and kicking the can down the road for the last five years. They are not making tough decisions, simply minding the shop and taking the benefit of economic good times. Even before 2014, five years ago when the Government came into power, GST receipts were up, government income was up and that trajectory continued. The Australian dollar dropped to lows of around 70 cents, a huge drop that made Tasmania's exports, in our export-orientated economy, far more competitive. As Mr Tucker, our new member for Lyons, would understand, it made things like imports of potato chips from the US uncompetitive because the Australian dollar dropped so much. Big companies had no more incentive to import potato chips from the US and Canada, making a resurgence in our potato industry. We have seen \$37 million from McCain to upgrade their facility in Smithton. This has nothing to do with the Government and everything to do with where the Australian dollar is at.

The Government has been a beneficiary of economic good times. We are in a position where those economic good times are coming to an end. What has the Government been doing? It is obvious from the mid-year financial update that the Government has been spending more than they have been earning. How have they been getting away with it? They have been getting away with it by doing a pea and thimble trick, taking money out of the budget by pretending that Health is going to cost \$100 million less, then right at the end of the financial year, putting that \$100 million back in. As a result, there is no surplus but they are again reporting in the following year there is going to be a surplus.

Time is up, the economic good times have passed and we are looking, with the mid-year economic financial update, at \$343 million in debt. There was no debt. This was the other myth the Government is peddling, that they walked into Government with a debt-laden economy. They did not. There was no net debt. Labor managed to navigate through the global financial crisis and put Tasmania in a position of no net debt. Jim Bacon repaid the state's debt racked up by Liberal governments of Gray, Groom and Rundle over those years. It took him until around 2006 to pay off that debt. Now we are on the verge of a state going back into the red and yet the Government still claims we are in economic good times. What we are in is economic mismanagement and that is what the Government needs to 'fess up' to.

How are they getting away with it? The surplus has gone. The \$161.9 million surplus that the Treasurer crowed about in his budget has now been whittled down to \$7.3 million in the midyear

update and that has not taken into account the cost of the fires. The fires are going to cost more than likely in excess of \$50 million, so this year there is a distinct deficit in the budget, not a surplus.

Debate adjourned.

ADJOURNMENT

South Arm Peninsula - Bus Services

[6.01 p.m.]

Ms STANDEN (Franklin) - Mr Deputy Speaker, thank you for my first opportunity to rise in this place on the adjournment since the resumption of parliament. Since it is my first occasion I will start by expressing my most sincere condolences to the families, friends and all of those affected by the brutal murders of the innocent people in the horrific terrorist attacks in Christchurch last Friday.

I want to move now to an urgent issue concerning the people in the South Arm peninsula regarding changes to bus services affecting that community that occurred in late January without community consultation. I am in possession of a petition with some 246 signatures. It is not in the form of the House so I seek by indulgence to table it here on adjournment.

The signatories object to halving of the number of buses into and out of the peninsula on weekdays; the cancellation of all buses into Gellibrand and Rifle Range roads in Sandford excepting one school run on schooldays; the cancellation of express bus services and the inclusion of Rosny Park, resulting in very long bus trips for those going to South Arm and Opossum Bay; the cancellation of a number of daytime weekday services which prevent the elderly people from that community getting to and from appointments and shopping promptly within business hours; and the removal of an evening bus service on weekdays preventing people being able to work overtime or have evening socialisation.

I met with a community representative who took the initiative to put together this petition on 29 January and wrote to the minister to outline those concerns. His response of 20 February simply drew my attention to a briefing that was being offered to the Opposition members on 25 February, so I attended that meeting.

On speaking with the constituent, I suggested that she contact the department with advice that the department secretary had provided in January and to also contact the council. She had particularly good initiative and an eye for detail and had outlined an alternative bus route proposal and wanted to talk with the council as well as the state Government about the possibility of a park-and-ride facility perhaps based at Lauderdale.

In response to the 25 February meeting the department simply said they were actively reviewing what had been raised. That the constituent had provided a quite detailed proposal for a service restructure and the department was working on it to better scope that out and cost it and expected that at least some of the services that had been changed to schooldays only would be re-established to all new services, although they noted that this was not a simple or quick process.

That seemed quite hopeful, but then on 2 March I heard from the same constituent who said after the meeting with the council that the earliest funding could be budgeted for such a concept as an interchange or any other capital works would be July 2020. She said:

The whole bus network has been maximally vacated by all the locals that were reliant on what we had. What we are left with really doesn't work for anyone - except students/children - who have no other means and who have plenty of time to waste sitting on public transport.

She goes on to say:

It's going to be a big task to get everyone back onto buses down this way, as people have made alternative arrangements (returning to using cars) and many would now have rented carparks in the city or opted into a car pooling arrangement (like I have with other three others) such that to undo the new travel arrangements would take some working through also.

She further wrote to me 12 March to say:

I have all but given up on having the bus service to the South Arm Peninsula rectified/restored, after meeting with State Growth and with Clarence Council, I feel there was nothing more that I could do.

But I was reminded today by some fellow passengers that the situation remains dire - that there are people now confined to their homes or locked out of the region for many hours, and there are many people who have resorted to car use, there are many people getting to work late every day, risking losing their jobs and there are many people still really angry and seeking immediate reinstatement of the old bus timetable.

She goes on to ask me if we could continue to raise these issues on behalf of the community and this is why I rise this evening, Mr Deputy Speaker.

She concludes by saying:

Our community remains desperate for these decisions to decimate our services, to be reviewed and I don't feel there is any more that I can do as a citizen.

She has gone to extraordinary lengths and I again urge the minister and his department to review this situation. They indicated that there was some possibility of reinstatement of these services at the end of this term but as this correspondence outlines, the issue is that people are resorting to their cars now and that behaviour change may not be easy to unravel. I urge action now.

Leave granted.

Bushfires - Effective Response Recommendations

[6.07 p.m.]

Ms O'CONNOR (Clark - Leader of the Greens) - Mr Deputy Speaker, this morning in parliament in response to a Dorothy Dix question from the member for Lyons, Mr Shelton, we had

some information come out of the part-time Parks minister and Premier, Mr Hodgman. This is almost three months after the fires first started in Gell River in the south-west, but as a result of those thousands of dry lightning strikes that struck this state in the summer months which we all know, although the Premier could not bring himself to say it this morning, are a consequence of accelerating climate change. What we learned from the Premier this morning is that about 95 000 hectares or around 6 per cent of the Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area has been burned.

We know, according to the part-time Parks minister, that approximately 42 600 hectares or 3.4 per cent of other reserves managed by the Parks and Wildlife Service has also been burned. The Premier says that early analysis indicates that around 84 per cent of the vegetation within the fire boundaries of the TWWHA is fire-adapted and we know that means a substantial percentage of the vegetation inside the TWWHA is not fire-adapted because it is King Billy or Huon or pencil pine, or rainforest which does not respond well at all to bushfire.

I want to take the opportunity on the adjournment tonight to lay out some of the recommendations that have been put to Government to respond more effectively to bushfires in the future, recommendations that have not been adopted by government and I think this needs to be laid on the record.

The Tasmania Fire Service union and authors Simon Pilkington and Alex Dean presented to Government an excellent and cost-neutral proposal for a more effective and rapid response, particularly to remote area fires. The recommendations put forward by the union include: investing in initial attack and sustained attack by establishing four personnel at a career station who are part of the on-shift numbers with go bags and pagers who are ready to respond quickly to any wildfire using on-ground vehicles or aircraft as required; increased training for fire fighters over and above the current standardised training, including aerial firefighting skills such as hover entry and exit, helipad construction and sling loading, as well as remote skills such as line locater, remote first aid and tree felling; a wildfire-ready doctrine that embeds initial attack and sustained attack into firefighting practices and to establish a tripartite 10-year fire walled budget for firefighting resources.

That is something every member in the House would support. After the devastating January 2016 bushfires, which caused profound scars in our wilderness, the Government commissioned Dr Tony Press, who at that time was at the Antarctic Climate and Ecosystems Cooperative Research Centre, to undertake a study which is titled 'Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area Bushfire and Climate Change Research Project', a research project to investigate the impact of climate change on bushfire risks for Tasmania's wilderness area and appropriate management and firefighting responses. Of Dr Press' recommendations in 2016 these are the ones that have not been fully supported by government and we believe these are the ones that go to the nub of our response in future to climate related extreme bushfire events.

Dr Press recommends that the Tasmanian fire agencies should keep abreast of and incorporate into preparedness and response planning emerging technologies for predicting and detecting lightning strikes and ignitions.

It is clear that we do not have the technological tools at our fingertips that we need as Tasmanians who love this beautiful place.

Dr Press recommends that there be investment in infrastructure, which includes identification and evaluation of options for installing new automatic weather stations in the TWWHA and nearby

areas to improve weather and data records for the region; that there be remote area sensors for monitoring local rainfall and soil moisture and early detection facilities such as fire watch installations; that firefighting equipment be available to fire agencies in different regions of Tasmania. That is remote firefighting equipment obviously.

Dr Press continues: that there be improved communication facilities, to enable better communications between agencies and for remote firefighting teams; and investment in facilities and equipment to enhance aerial firefighting efforts.

We know that the Parks and Wildlife Service, Tasmanian Fire Service and Forestry Tasmania fire fighters had at their disposal some of the aerial equipment that is required, but clearly not enough.

Dr Press goes on to say that there needs to be a regular review of operational practices, fire suppression techniques and technologies and techniques used in other jurisdictions and determine their efficacy for Tasmania including in the TWWHA. Particular attention should be paid to early intervention techniques and technologies such as early detection and rapid attack and continuing to investigate methods and equipment for extinguished ground, that is organic soil fires, through things like spike and pump combinations. Finally, the only supported in-part recommendation by Government that Dr Press made was that the Tasmanian Parks and Wildlife Service and other fire agencies should establish protocols for rapid assessment of the impacts of major bushfires in the TWWHA and resourcing of immediate priorities for recovery action.

We want the state of Tasmania and the Government of Tasmania to get it right and we are prepared to work constructively to make sure we do not have another fire season like the last one.

Time expired.

Tasmanian Honour Roll of Women

[6.14 p.m.]

Ms HADDAD (Clark) - Mr Deputy Speaker, I want to talk about a lovely event I attended last week and to recognise incredible contributions recognised at the Tasmanian Honour Roll of Women lunch in Launceston. It is a lunch that is held bi-annually in conjunction with International Women's Day.

The honour roll ceremony serves as a moving and permanent tribute to Tasmanian women and organisations who have made a lasting contribution to reducing gender inequality in Tasmania. It was a lovely thing to attend the lunch in Launceston. There were several members of parliament there, including Labor Leader, Rebecca White, Deputy Leader, Michelle O'Byrne, Cassy O'Connor, Sarah Courtney, Elise Archer, Michael Ferguson. Jacquie Petrusma, the Minister for Women, was the host of the event. A good smattering of the Chamber here were in attendance at the lunch.

I put on the record my absolute love and admiration for Glynis Flower, who was admitted to the honour roll last week for her contribution to community. I had the pleasure of working alongside Glynis Flower for many years at Women's Health Tasmania, which used to be called the Hobart Women's Health Centre, where I served on the board for five years, three of them as chair. When I was asked to think about Glynis I was always struck by her humbleness and how self-effacing she was about her own skills and experience. I learned so much from Glynis in the time I spent there,

not only in terms of how the community sector works but also how government and the health system worked as well. I enjoyed the privilege of her mentorship and her friendship for many years. I still do.

Every time I told Glynis I was grateful to be working with her and that I was learning so much from her she would tut, tut and say, 'Don't be silly, what could I possibly be teaching you'. She was so wrong. She did so much at Women's Health and at Neighbourhood Houses Tasmania for many years before that.

She fostered people's careers in a caring, loving and gentle way. She helped board members like no other CEO I have known, and I have served on many community sector boards. Together we made sure we encouraged and fostered the careers of young women who were interested in volunteering on a community sector board for the first time, to equip them with excellent skills in governance and administration.

Retiring was a tough decision for Glynis. She loved the place and the place loved her. Incoming CEO, the equally impressive and awesome Jo Flanagan said her first two weeks in the job, where she had a handover period with Glynis, were mostly spent witnessing people falling into Glynis' arms and crying, so loved was she by all who worked at, volunteered or used the services of the Hobart Women's Health Centre, now Women's Health Tasmania. Big shoes to fill indeed.

Glynis' impact on all who knew her is a prime example of what should be and has been recognised by the Honour Roll of Women in Tasmania. I put on the record my absolute admiration for all of the work that Glynis has done over many years.

Break O'Day Community - Lack of Medical Facilities

[6.17 p.m.]

Ms WHITE (Lyons - Leader of the Opposition) - Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise tonight to table a petition on behalf of the residents and ratepayers of St Helens and the Break O'Day community. The petition does not conform with the Standing Orders of the House so I take the opportunity to table it with the permission of members.

I will read out the content of the petition. The residents and ratepayers of St Helens, the Break O'Day community draws the attention to the House -

The Break O'Day community has suffered the ongoing issue of lack of accessible specialist, medical and allied health facilities in the municipal area.

We are currently also having difficulty accessing regular general practitioners at our local medical facility and are relying on the employment of locums. However, we trust that this situation will soon be resolved.

The more pressing and long-term problem is the lack of access to such services as physiotherapists, psychologists, psychiatrists, cardiologists, oncologists, optical, ultrasound facilities and other specialist medical practitioners.

We are an ageing population with a median age of 55 and many residents are in need of specialist care and are required to travel in excess of 300 kilometres round trips to access such medical care.

Many of our residents are unable to drive themselves so rely on community transport, which is an extreme physical hardship for our aged and infirm, with many of our younger residents struggling with the lack of available specialist care.

With an aging population, we believe that in order to maintain our population and to prevent the need of older residents to relocate to the larger cities we need to be able to access these facilities.

With the new St Helens Hospital nearing completion, we urge the State Government to, with a degree of urgency, find some additional funding to increase the services available at this new state-of-the-art facility.

Your petitioners therefore respectfully request the House to increase funding for our regional area so that this new facility may be able to include the following specialist services such as physiotherapists, psychologists, psychiatrists, cardiology, optical, oncology, ultrasound facilities and other specialist medical practitioners.

I have also been provided with a letter signed by concerned Break O'Day residents that was provided to the Minister for Health, Michael Ferguson, on 11 March this year that goes into further detail. The minister would have had a copy of this provided to him. I note that since this petition was signed the matter with general practitioners has not been resolved for community members in St Helens.

The letter goes on to say that it is making it extremely difficult for people with ongoing health issues to secure continuity of care, as each doctor has a different idea on treatment, if they even obtain a grasp of the health issue of the patient in front of them. Building doctor-patient relationships in order to provide appropriate ongoing care has been made almost impossible with the Ochre Corporate Management System of 15-minute appointment slots. Most doctors are here for short periods of one, two weeks or less in some instances.

This issue needs immediate attention or intervention. We have been assured by the Ochre CEO that the problem was in hand and they had full-time doctors ready to take up positions in late 2018 and early 2019. This has not occurred. These petitioners and the members of the community who have signed this letter are calling for the Government to support the community access general practitioner services as well as all of the specialist services outlined in this petition. I seek leave to table that petition.

Leave granted.

Christchurch, New Zealand - Shooting Tragedy

Firefighters - Insurance Provider

[6.21 p.m.]

Dr BROAD (Braddon) - Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise to add to the condolences already expressed in this House about what happened in Christchurch. Describing it as a tragedy is wrong. We should be describing it as an outrage because it is an outrage. It hits home because it is so close to us. We

have heard time and again about these sorts of events all over the world, but it impacts us especially when it is close and it brings back memories of the tragedy of Port Arthur some 20-odd years ago.

We have at least 50 innocent victims dead, and there are a number of people in hospital with serious injuries. For some time now, I have been mulling over how we are going to prevent outrages like this every happening again. How can we stop people going down the same path? We can discuss issues such as access to weapons, avoiding hate speech and so on, and it is obvious that words do matter. Words in this place matter. Words in every parliament matter, and words spoken in little echo chambers online also matter, probably more. How are we going to stop individuals or groups using their twisted ideology to create hate and atrocities like we have seen in Christchurch?

We have seen it all before. We have seen it in a hundred different ways. We have seen various groups attacked. We have seen it in malls, primary schools, churches, synagogues and now a mosque. We have seen it on streets. We have seen people use knives, guns, trucks, planes and this has to end. What can we do as a society to prevent this from happening? I look at the words of the Prime Minister of New Zealand, Jacinda Ardern, and I agree that one thing we can do is never mention the perpetrator's name. Never give them the fame they are desiring.

I remember vividly, I was in Europe and about to board the plane to come home. I had been away for a year. I was staying with a friend of mine in Belgium and on the front page of their paper was a picture of the Port Arthur perpetrator. When I worked out the times, they had the picture of the perpetrator and details about that event mere hours after it happened. It really struck me that across the other side of the world, within hours of something happening in Port Arthur, his photo on the front page of a daily paper in Belgium. That has been something I have been mulling over. That is what we need to stop.

The Prime Minister of New Zealand, Jacinda Ardern, said she will never speak the perpetrator's name. I also think we need to go further as a society and never print their image, so they are always called 'the terrorist' and never given the fame they crave. That is the only way to break the chain, I believe. It needs to be in a form of self-censorship. We need to not share their ideologies, not go through their life histories, not be talking about their childhoods, not be talking about their words.

Ms O'Connor - Hear, hear.

Dr BROAD - We need to completely ignore them and focus instead on the victims. We need to prevent more victims. The way we do that is by not promoting their ideology, not promoting their name, not promoting their image and not giving them the fame they feel they deserve. They should wither away in obscurity and not become famous and that is what we need to stop. We need no name, no image, and that has to be our function. We need to take it upon ourselves and we need the media to self-censorship. The last thing we need is people talking about their ideologies, talking about manifests, promoting their videos and showing them.

All we are doing by promoting their names, their faces, their images and their hate is promoting it more. I fear we are seeing this growth, especially in right wing extremists. There is potentially a shadowy group out there, in cyberspace, fomenting hate, much the same way that Al Qaeda and ISIS have done on line and this needs to stop. We need this multi-pronged approach, but the thing we can do as a community and in the media, is to not promote their pictures, never mention their names and never show their image. I believe that will make a difference.

Ms O'Connor - Hear, hear.

Dr BROAD - In the brief time I have left, I stand with my firefighter colleagues in their call for removal of Allianz as the insurer of choice for firefighters. We have seen Allianz treat firefighters with disrespect. We have seen the circumstance and the relationship with Allianz breakdown so much we have had Rob Boost, an injured firefighter, the situation being so bad his colleagues and his family had to create a crowdfunding platform to raise the money for pain management. It is not right. Speaking with firefighters all around the state, retaining Allianz as the insurer of choice is a line in the sand they are not willing to cross.

It is shameful this situation has been left to perpetuate. Allianz has been rolled over for another 12 months and is being used in the wage bargaining negotiations. Having appropriate insurance and an appropriate insurer should not be part of a wage negotiation. It should be something that everybody receives.

Firefighters should be put into the same scheme as police and other first responders in the Tasmanian self-insurance fund. They should not be with Allianz because Allianz have not treated firefighters appropriately. Firefighters are so outraged by this they have sent a letter to the Chief Fire Officer, Chris Arnol, under the file name of 'Ineffective Leadership', pointing out that the decision to roll over insurance with Allianz for another 12 months is a line in the sand so bad that they are expressing no confidence in Mr Arnol. The Government needs to take this very seriously; they need to reconsider this and they need to make sure the firefighters are appropriately insured and Allianz is given the hoick.

Time expired.

St Thomas Anglican Church - Potential Sale

[6.28 p.m.]

Ms BUTLER (Lyons) - Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise to talk about another potential Anglican Church closure. Last week, I attended a community meeting at the Tea Tree community hall to discuss the sale of St Thomas Anglican Church. It is the one on the corner on the main road, you will see it when you are heading down to the Coal Valley. This was the second meeting since the announcement by the diocese that our St Thomas Church would be sold. Both meetings had about 50 people attend and, in short, there is community support to keep that Tea Tree church attended and functioning.

It is very sad that on 10 March, that Tea Tree church was deconsecrated by the Anglican Diocese. On the same day, the church in Gagebrook was also deconsecrated. The difference between the Gagebrook church being deconsecrated and the Tea Tree church being deconsecrated is that it is quite appropriate for the Gagebrook church to be sold. There is not a community, spiritual or heritage will for that church to be maintained. It is appropriate that be sold and the funds be provided to meet the redress scheme needs.

However, with the Tea Tree deconsecration, there was an elderly lady who had been christened in that church, married in that church, and she was sobbing at the chancel as it was being deconsecrated. This was a lady in her 80s and it was hideous to watch. She is also concerned about whether she will be buried with the descendants of her family at that church. It was another harrowing account.

I have here some of the history about the Tea Tree church and it is a rich history. The land was originally donated by a Mr Joseph Barwick, who happens to be the great-great-great-grandfather of the former Speaker of the House, Michael Polley. It might surprise members to know he was an Anglican, not a Catholic. I have an excerpt here from the *Mercury* dated 7 May 1881, and it gives you an example of the deep heritage value of the Tea Tree church. It reads:

The new church in this district was opened on Monday last, May 2nd, by Archdeacon Davenport assisted by the Reverends Canon Mason, Grammell, Fawkes and JK Wilmer, encumbered in the presence of a very large congregation, numbers not being able to get inside the church.

The building is of wood, and it gives the dimensions of it, which is quite small in itself and is a really pretty church.

The church has been prettily decorated for the opening ceremony by the ladies of the congregation, assisted by Mr J Eisen. We must not omit to mention that the site on which the church stands was the gift of Mr Joseph Barwick, who also together with Mrs Barwick showed great hospitality to all the numerous visitors who were present on May 2nd.

There is this rich history and deep connection with this community to that site. They are exploring options at the moment of what they can do to try to purchase the property. The site itself has 50 available gravesites but it has graves that are really close to the church itself, so you are not going to be able to subdivide it; it is all one. They are entering into negotiations at the moment.

I provided them with advice that they should hold their ground and we will see what the outcome is, but it is heartening to know that the Tea Tree community is really interested in saving their heritage. It was also heartening to know that the actual burial site itself was not deconsecrated, it was just the church, and that gave a lot of solace to some of the local community people who have that deep connection to the place.

This is just another example of the horrible plight that many of our rural communities have faced since the diocese made this announcement. We know that a lot of the properties that were listed on the plan A first site have now been changed to the plan B one, so we are finding we are getting complaints from church halls and so forth that were not on the original plan list because apparently there is not going to be enough money raised from the original list. We know that a third of the money raised will go to the redress scheme and the other two-thirds will go to services and ministries, and we still do not know what that means.

There are still many questions in the air. No church has been saved because it has been the right thing to do and the diocese felt obligated to do the right thing by the community or heritage. Every church has been saved because of money and the amount of money, raised by communities to purchase them, and I believe that is what this whole thing has been about.

The House adjourned at 6.33 p.m.