

Tuesday 28 May 2019

The President, **Mr Farrell**, took the Chair at 11 a.m. and read Prayers.

RECOGNITION OF VISITORS

Mr PRESIDENT - Honourable members, I welcome grade 8 students from New Town High School, who are joining us in the Chamber. Members, could you please put your best interests on show for these students and show them what we can do in the Legislative Council.

SPECIAL INTEREST MATTERS

New Town High School

[11.03 a.m.]

Mr WILLIE (Elwick) - Mr President, I welcome students from New Town High School accompanied by Assistant Principal Sally Isles to the Chamber. It is a pleasure to have you here and I hope you enjoy your time.

As members know, New Town is the only public all boys school in our state. It boasts a student body of approximately 750 boys from grades 7 to 10 and next year the school will also cater to year 11 students.

New Town High School first opened as the Hobart Junior Technical School in 1919. The school has been through many changes across the years, including relocation to its current site and the name change to New Town High School in 1962.

New Town High School has a reputation for quality education and a diverse range of educational experiences. The school prides itself on providing for individual needs and has a particular focus on preparing its boys for lifelong learning and future employment opportunities.

New Town High School has a consistent record of academic excellence and boasts high-achieving alumni, including eight Rhodes Scholars, three of Tasmania's sitting judges and a host of political representatives, one of whom has been a member of this Chamber for 16 years. I am speaking of the member for Windermere, Ivan Dean.

Today every New Town High School boy is given the opportunity to succeed. The New Town High School boy of today is instilled with maturity and skills to pursue their chosen pathway. This is emphasised in principal Dave Kilpatrick's 2019 principal report where he notes -

Our school purpose is very straightforward and our game plan to achieve this is simple and targeted. We are working with parents, carers and the wider community to Develop Good Young Men who are ready to achieve a Year 12 Qualification or Equivalent.

Approximately 95 per cent of New Town High School students continue to years 11 and 12. The school aspires to raise its percentage of boys who achieve a year 12 qualification to above the

national average. The school is equally committed to assisting students who wish to pursue a career pathway via an apprenticeship.

Today's students recognise their fortune in being part of New Town High School community and take full advantage of the opportunities presented. The 26 students in the Chamber highlight this fact. The students here today make up the 2019 New Town High School Student Representative Council. Being a member of the SRC reflects a positive attitude, respect for teachers and peers and a shared pride in one's school and its community.

New Town High School SRC has established its area of focus for 2019 and is delivering a wide agenda. This includes volunteering for Loui's Van, promoting the health and wellbeing of students with a lunchtime sport program, social and co-learning opportunities with Ogilvie High School and My Education planning days, of which today's visit to parliament is a feature.

I hope the students enjoy your experience and recognise that we, as your elected members, come from diverse backgrounds and experiences, yet we share a common desire for a better Tasmania. Even as adults we remain willing and ready to learn, embracing the opportunity to develop our understanding of the world and each other. It is fair to say this year's New Town High School SRC is a particularly impressive group of young men. Ms Isles has informed me that in past years the council was formed with fewer members, all of whom served throughout the school year. Because of the enthusiasm and commitment from applicants this year, the decision was made to give all applicants a rolling position on the council.

Given the significance of this year, it is probably a good thing the SRC is bigger because this year marks the centenary of New Town High School. It is an exciting time for students and staff, past and present, and celebrations have well and truly begun. These celebrations reflect on 100 years of continuous education and emphasise the importance of opportunity, showing aspiration and being prepared for the future.

One particular highlight of the celebrations was the great debate held earlier this year. The great debate saw current students Luke Van Emerick, Charlie Pilkington, Evan Stone and Luca Cartledge take on Pearce, Porter and Estcourt JJ. The great debate was a particularly important part of the centenary celebrations, serving as the launch for the Old Scholars Association. The association has taken the lead on centenary celebrations and in future will participate in New Town High School's student mentor program. I was unable to attend the debate but heard that Charlie, Luke, Evan and Luca wiped the floor with our respective judges. I had the privilege of teaching Luke in grade 6 at Mount Stuart Primary School. Evan also had to put up with me as I enjoyed teaching with his teacher, Janet Swift, a fellow grade 6 teacher and a lovely person.

Many other activities are planned for the remainder of the year, including a cricket game captained by former student and Australian player Roger Woolley; an official anniversary dinner; and the eagerly awaited unveiling of the New Town High School hall of excellence. I hope the member for Windermere will be nominated for inclusion. Perhaps he has even nominated himself. I again welcome New Town High School students to the Chamber and thank them for joining us today. I am genuinely excited that now more than ever young people are interested in engaging in politics. Young people add a valuable opinion and with 113 000 children and young people in Tasmania, it is certainly in our best interest to engage with them.

I wish you the best of luck for the remainder of the school year. You are very lucky to be part of the New Town High School community. As with its earlier students before, I trust you will have

a happy and meaningful future ahead, and, as the New Town way says, it is developing good young men.

Civics and Citizenship Education

[11.10 a.m.]

Mr FINCH (Rosevears) - Mr President, I think the member for Elwick has had a sneak preview of my speech because today I want to talk about the subject he is on about, although not specifically about New Town High School. Our democratic system is weaker than it should be because of a widespread ignorance of the electoral and parliamentary processes. This has not been helped by the way politics is portrayed in the media and even less so because of a glaring gap in the way most education syllabuses around Australia are enforced.

Entering adulthood without an understanding of our political system is seldom corrected. People lose interest in how politics works and are unlikely to take the time to learn.

The time to give Australians an understanding about the role of parliament is at school. I commend the work done by our education officers, one of whom is here now - Aurelie Charenton and Kimbra McCormack, who do a splendid job.

When researching for this speech, I asked about the numbers of visitors who toured Parliament House over the past 12 months. Students visiting on a sitting day to watch the debate - 1191; and students sitting on a non-sitting day, either to tour or do the House of Assembly role-play - 3478. In total almost 4700 students visited. That figure does not include the Tasmanian Youth Parliament or students reached during the school outreach program. That is a wealth of connection to younger people. Our education officers are to be congratulated.

Hugh Magnus is in the Chamber today. We all received an email from Hugh and his comments on the disturbing situation, as he views it. To refresh members' memories of his email, I quote -

Today I am writing to you on behalf of students Tasmania-wide, to address a major problem in our education system.

Recently, it has come to my attention that there is another subject listed in the Australian Curriculum that we are not taught at school, mainly Civics and Citizenship.

Civics and Citizenship is the subject that deals with educating us about how our country is run. This includes how laws are made and passed, how people are elected to parliament, the role of the High Court, the responsibilities of the Parliament of Australia, and the functions of different systems of government.

The decision by the Department of Education to not make Civics and Citizenship a compulsory subject for years 9 and 10 is so extraordinarily problematic; one wonders what government in its right mind would do such a thing? To take away the next generation's understanding of how our country works shows a serious lack of responsibility on your part. The 2016 National Assessment Program for Civics and Citizenship shows that almost two out three grade 10 students don't

have the basic knowledge to be informed and capable citizens of our country. With politics being ever more important, a lack of understanding is a colossal problem.

This is resulting in a new generation of ignorant people who couldn't tell you what the terms 'House of Representatives' and or 'Senate' mean, let alone the roles of a Legislative Council or a Cabinet. Already this being shown: the political apathy and ignorance at my school -

At Woodbridge District High, I might point out -

and many others that I've visited is overwhelming; people just aren't learning about the importance of voting and making sure they know what's going on with the running of our country.

I call on you, for the sake of the next generation, to please make sure Civics and Citizenship be enforced for students in years 9 and 10 at all schools in the state, to ensure the next generation has a strong sense of political literacy.

I hear you, Hugh Magnus. Thank you very much for your email and for highlighting this to our parliament; I thank you for your contact. I am confident all members of this House would like to see a much higher degree of the understanding of our political processes.

Health Forum, Sorell

[11.15 a.m.]

Ms HOWLETT (Prosser) - Mr President, I also welcome students from New Town High School. I hope you have a very enjoyable morning here this morning.

In March in conjunction with the Menzies Institute for Medical Research and Sorell seniors, I co-hosted a health forum to discuss stroke and the associated risks at the Sorell Community Health Centre.

We are very privileged to have an organisation such as the Menzies Institute in Tasmania. The aim of that institution is to advance human health and wellbeing by contributing significantly to knowledge on preventing and treating diseases including multiple sclerosis, cardiovascular disease, obesity, hypertension, stroke, cancer, arthritis, motor neurone disease, inherited eye disease, mental illness, dementia and osteoporosis.

The forum's guest speaker was Associate Professor Seana Gall, a cardiovascular specialist from the Menzies Institute. Dr Gall is a senior research fellow who studies heart disease and stroke as well as investigating ways to improve management of cardiovascular diseases once they develop. Dr Gall is currently involved with several public health boards, including the Tobacco Control Coalition, Cancer Council Tasmania, and the Stroke Foundation Health Promotion Advisory Committee.

More than 70 people attended the forum to hear Dr Gall's highly informative lecture, followed by a very informal Q&A session and a morning tea.

The lecture highlighted what a stroke is, how it is caused, what factors increase the likelihood of a stroke occurring and also what lifestyle choices a person can make to decrease their risk of having a stroke.

The forum was an eye-opener for many of the people who attended it. It had everyone thinking and talking about what changes they could make to their lives to mitigate their risk of having a stroke, and what other lifestyle factors they could amend or implement to increase their general wellbeing.

I thank the Sorell school for seniors and the Sorell Community Health Centre for hosting this forum, and for assisting me in organising the event.

This forum was a first in a series of Menzies Institute health forums that will be rolled out across the Prosser electorate over the coming year. Each forum will discuss a different type of health-related subject to raise awareness of people living throughout Prosser regarding health risks and what they can do to keep themselves in better health.

Prosser is a large rural electorate and statistics suggest that Australians living in rural and remote areas tend to have a shorter life, higher levels of disease and injury, and use fewer health services compared to people living in metropolitan areas.

There are a number of reasons for this. Decentralisation in rural and regional areas is an issue resulting in healthcare services being more thinly spread when compared to metropolitan and suburban areas. Tasmania's geography also means that even a relatively short distance on a map can actually be quite a long drive. This can make seeing a healthcare professional regularly difficult for someone living in a rural or regional area.

Regional Tasmania also has a higher age demographic than other areas in the state. One way we can help improve health, not just in regional areas but also across the state, is through education. I hope that through the Prosser health forums people in the electorate will learn how to live a healthier, happier and longer life.

I encourage anyone living in the electorate to contact me if they would like to have a forum in their community.

Frederick Mace - Tribute

[11.21 a.m.]

Ms ARMITAGE (Launceston) - Mr President, on the corner of Westbury Road and Mace Street in the northern community of Prospect Vale sits a white house with a green roof. For the past 65 years this house was the home of Mr Frederick Mace, a pillar of Prospect Vale. It is no coincidence that Fred Mace lived on Mace Street. As one of the trailblazing farming families in the region, it was only natural that the legacy of the Mace family be enshrined in the name of one of its oldest streets.

Fred Mace moved to Prospect in 1933 with his parents and siblings when he was 11 years old. He was born at Toosey Hospital, Longford on 22 March 1922. In 2013 Fred, then aged 91, was invited back as an alumnus for the 100th anniversary of Summerdale Primary School. The juxtaposition of the school's rich heritage with its present students speaks to how deeply Fred's life

and legacy is rooted in the Prospect region. Fred told *The Examiner* at the time that he recalled walking through bush and cutting through paddocks to get to school as a lad. Fred's life was full of hard work. In an interview with the Facebook page Humans of Launceston, he said he had always worked and he worked hard seven days a week without any real holidays.

As a boy he had special permission to go to school two days a week so he could work with his dad, Frederick Leroy Mace, on their five-acre pig farm near the school. When he was 14 he left school and began working full-time as a farmer, seeing to 90 or so pigs and tending to the market garden and the hay crops. This is where his expertise and inherent knowledge of farming crystallised.

In 1947, aged 25, Fred bought his own farm and 33-acre plot of land stretching from the present-day Prospect shopping centre to Silverdome. Fred paid £750 of his hard-earned money for the property, living by his creed of 'If you cannot pay for it, you cannot have it'. A combination of magic Tasmanian soil and his farming know-how allowed Fred to grow award-winning vegetables over the years, such as metre-long carrots and pumpkins so large it took six grown men to lift them.

Being so occupied with his farming love came a little bit late for Fred. After a brief courtship he married Lola in June 1952 and moved into a shack on the property that is now 6 Mace Street. Two sons, Maurice and Ross, followed not long after. The Mace family continued farming and connecting with their community. Fred also loved participating in local footy. He was a life member of the Hagley Football Club, volunteered as an official timekeeper and won best clubman in 1995.

Standing by his creed of showing respect for your neighbours and friends, working hard and giving a helping hand to those in need, Fred also volunteered as a maintenance man at the graveyard in Westbury Road, where many of his ancestors rest. Fred kept the Mace family Bible dating back to 1835, highlighting just how important he viewed family and connection to place.

Aside from one incident in his 20s when Fred and his mate Herbert Rudd were required to stuff a punctured tyre with big clumps of grass on the way back from a trip to visit St Marys, Fred lived an entirely law-abiding life. He was never once booked by the police. Luckily no-one cottoned on to the patched-up tyre on the slow trip back to Launceston. Fred's record remained untarnished.

Fred's 33-acre block of land was partitioned and a number of blocks sold to convert into housing developments in Prospect when it was really taking off as one of Launceston's major suburbs. The Mace land forms an important part of Prospect, geographically and in spirit. In 1980 Fred sadly lost Lola to ovarian cancer and missed her deeply from then on. Still living on Mace Street Fred and Lola's sons continued to help out with the house and to keep him in high spirits. Being a father to two and grandfather to Maurice and Jenny's three boys, Daniel, Gavin and Andrew, and to Ross and Susan's three daughters, Rebecca, Pamela and Sarah, plus great-grandad to Koby, Rubi, Lucas and Poppy, Fred loved being a dad, grandad and great-grandad as he watched his family grow and his community flourish.

We sadly lost Fred Mace on 10 April this year at the age of 97. What is striking about Fred's legacy is how adaptable he was to change throughout his life, but how steadfastly he stood by his beliefs and his community. I believe that so long as we remember Fred's words and deeds, his character will continue to permeate throughout the community, giving us pause to reflect on Fred's life and deep mark on Prospect Vale - the place it was then and the place it is today.

Poker Machines

[10.26 a.m.]

Mr GAFFNEY (Mersey) - Mr President, I appreciate that not many members read *The Advocate*, though some do. An article in yesterday's *Advocate* is pertinent to every member of this place. It is on a topic we would be familiar with, especially having Returned and Services League - RSL - branches in our communities.

One section of my special interest speech is a couple of minutes of what was in the article and then a couple of minutes' reflection on other things I have learnt.

The heading is 'RSL pride in no pokies' -

After a rocky couple of years, business seems to be booming for the Burnie RSL. Many walking in now might not recognise the place - gone is the invasive bleeping of a room full of pokies, the general air of emptiness common to so many clubs across the country.

Instead the bar is all warmth, wood and chatter, just small hints of a dramatic overhaul the club has undergone since a controversial move to shut down the poker machines in 2015.

RSL president Adele Britton said the decision to pack in the pokies and start the Burnie sub-branch from the ground up has been one of the best and most contentious moves the club has ever made.

The move was preceded by a six-month closure in 2014, after which then RSL president, Frank McKechnie, led a committee decision to run the club wholly and solely on volunteer power.

'We just couldn't afford the wages,' Ms Britton said. 'When you are looking at an RSL, if it's not gaming, you need two people in there all the time. That's what was happening here in Burnie. Their trading hours I think were from 11.00 a.m. to midnight almost every day. There was only three or four people coming in, and they would just sit in these corners of the bar. Now we can make it a family place, a place where people feel welcome.'

Ms Britton said the decision had received some backlash at the time from older members, but had pleased others who saw the club return to its original purpose.

'They couldn't see the bigger picture,' she said. 'We've gone back to our grassroots. We didn't want that added addiction here in the club. Any person that walks in that door, they are greeted, it doesn't matter who they are, anyone is welcome here.'

Four years on the success seems to be growing. The club is now open for drinks three nights a week, including a new trial to expand the business to include meals on Thursday nights as well as Wednesdays and Fridays.

'We seem to be doing the right thing, we've still got the doors open,' Ms Britton said. 'We can still do it all, on volunteers besides, the cook, who gets a portion

of all the meals we sell. There's a lot of stuff gets done in this place. It's very humbling, I've got big shoes to fill in this place, huge shoes.'

Reading that reminded me of my role as Chair of the Joint Select Committee on Future Gaming Markets and a submission we received from Professor John Mangan. John's qualifications include the following -

- Doctor of Philosophy, University of Lancaster
- Master of Arts, University of Lancaster
- Diploma of Education, University of Queensland
- Master of Economics Studies, University of Queensland

His submission, which was about 40 to 50 pages long, included a section about removing poker machines from hotels and clubs. He states -

The goal of governments, once a decision is taken to allow gambling, should be to devise a gambling structure that minimises social harm while at the same time securing economic benefits.

In essence, this means devising a system where the reduction in problem gambling is the unequivocal goal of public policy because it is this form of gambling that produces most of the social costs and reduces any nett economic benefits that may accrue.

The Allen Consulting study (2014) found that 'consistent across cost estimates the poker machines tend to be associated with higher participation by problem gamblers'. It is in this context that the plan to relocate poker machines to casinos takes shape and becomes rational economic and social policy from a state-wide perspective.

The principal aim behind the suggested relocation of poker machines is to reduce the social harm associated with poker machines without causing long-term harm to the Tasmanian economy or infringing the rights of Tasmanians to gamble. If successfully implemented, such a move may benefit State revenue by both increasing economic activity and therefore repatriated GST revenue as well as reducing the deadweight loss to society resulting from problem gambling and from the monopoly status of the current industry.

Empirical evidence shows that the extent and intensity of use of poker machines is influenced by a number of locational features including:

- The size of the facility and in particular the size and relative importance of non-gambling areas
- The density of gamblers in the room
- Controls on gambling machine limits and on ready access to funds via ATMs
- The density and prevalence of gambling locations
- The distance people need to travel to use poker machines
- Incentives and inducements to gamble.

Removing poker machines out of hotels and clubs and restricting them to casinos has an impact on most of these gambling triggers. In general, casinos have large non-gambling areas, allowing patrons to be relatively free of a direct gambling pressure should they choose to do so. By contrast, in many hotels in particular, patrons find it difficult to be away from a gambling environment and are therefore more likely to engage in impulse gambling. Similarly, because of reduced space, people in hotels and clubs tend to have more direct contact with other people gambling, which also influences their level of gambling. Removing poker machines from hotels and clubs would reduce the number of venues with poker machines in Tasmania from 100 to 2 (on current numbers), significantly increase the distance to travel and effort required to engage in gambling on poker machines for many Tasmanians, and thereby reduce the incidence of impulse gambling on the machines.

For all these reasons the suggested shift in the location of poker machines would move gambling away from being a random, quasi-impulse act to a planned activity, with a subsequent reduction in those elements of problem gambling that are spurred on by location and ease of access. A submission by Federal Hotels to the Tasmanian Government (1993) seems to agree with this concept. In their submission they claimed: 'We believe the proliferation of machine gambling throughout Tasmania offering direct access to the majority of Tasmanians would be a disastrous for a large number of businesses which compete for their share of declining disposable income.'

How quickly they change their mind. The paper continued -

TASCOSS (2016) expressed similar views when they recently argued:

'The two casinos are located in areas that require a conscious decision to travel by car or public transport to that destination whereas machine in hotels and clubs will be easily accessed by a large number of people in the suburbs, some of whom cannot afford to gamble.'

I will continue to raise the issue of gaming in this place before we commit Tasmania to another 20 years of disastrous policy decision. While I am suspicious of the Government's relationship with certain players in the pokie space, it was unfortunate the Labor Party did not choose the more sensible approach in its reduction of poker machines before the last election. Perhaps even more unfortunate is that the Labor Party has decided to go against its non-populist approach from Federal, Tasmanian Hospitality Association and so on to dismantle their stance on poker machines. That is such a pity.

COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP - APPOINTMENT

Mrs HISCUTT (Montgomery - Leader of the Government in the Legislative Council)(by leave) - Mr President, I move -

That the following members be appointed to committees.

Parliamentary Standing Committee of Public Accounts

That Mr Willie be appointed to serve on the Parliamentary Standing Committee of Public Accounts.

Parliamentary Standing Committee on Subordinate Legislation

That Ms Webb be appointed to serve on the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Subordinate Legislation

Joint Standing Committee on Integrity

That Ms Armitage be appointed to serve on the Joint Standing Committee on Integrity

Joint Library Committee

That Ms Armitage be appointed to serve on the Joint Library Committee

Mrs HISCUTT (Montgomery - Leader of the Government in the Legislative Council) - Mr President, I move -

That a message be transmitted to the House of Assembly acquainting that House accordingly.

Motion agreed to.

LEAVE OF ABSENCE

Member for Huon

[11.35 a.m.]

Mrs HISCUTT (Montgomery - Leader of the Government in the Legislative Council)(by leave) - Mr President, I move -

That the honourable member for Huon, Mr Armstrong, be granted leave of absence from the service of the Council for this day's sitting.

Motion agreed to.

COMMUNITY, HEALTH, HUMAN SERVICES AND RELATED LEGISLATION (MISCELLANEOUS AMENDMENTS) BILL 2018 (No. 58)

Third Reading

Bill read the third time.

APPROPRIATION BILL (No. 1) 2019 (No. 21)

APPROPRIATION BILL (No. 2) 2019 (No. 22)

Noting of Budget Papers

Resumed from 23 May 2019 (page 38)

[11.37 a.m.]

Mrs HISCUTT (Montgomery - Leader of the Government in the Legislative Council) - Mr President, we were all present in the other place when the Treasurer delivered his second reading speech on the Budget so I will confine my comments to ones from the people of Montgomery.

Most of my comments will relate to agriculture. Montgomery covers bits of both Braddon and Lyons. Cradle Mountain took my interest to start with. The Budget will have a vast impact on tourism and agriculture. That is also in the Lyons electorate.

I will talk about kindergarten to year 12 at Penguin District School, the \$10 million upgrade for the Burnie youth foyer, the \$8.3 million Burnie Court complex upgrade and the Burnie Ambulance Station. I will also tell members about the Agricultural Centre of Excellence, Freer Farm, the coastal pathways project, and the Ulverstone cultural precinct revitalisation, which is worth \$2.5 million. Drug and alcohol rehabilitation beds will go into Ulverstone.

On the Lyons side of Montgomery, there is the \$3 million school farm redevelopment at Sheffield School as well as inland fisheries.

I will confine my comments to budget paper 2, volume 1. On page 16, Communities Tasmania, there is funding of \$2.5 million in 2019-20 to revitalise the Ulverstone cultural precinct, including the development of a science centre and a planetarium.

This is a very exciting development for Ulverstone. It combines three or four different areas in one central area. The Central Coast Council is moving forward with the Ulverstone Cultural Precinct Project. ARTAS architects have been preparing the draft schematic design for the development of this vibrant community and cultural hub.

This multifaceted community facility will house a visitor information centre, history museum with a research library, a new science centre and planetarium. It will include art gallery spaces, a café and special purpose workshop areas suitable for woodcraft and other activities.

The area was formally known as the Ulverstone History Precinct project and sat at 48 Main Street, Ulverstone, and anyone who knows Ulverstone knows it is up by the clock memorial. The precinct was home to the history museum, research library and the North West Wood Craft Guild. The site showcases important local history information, artefacts and collections that provide important educational resources to the community.

Following the adoption of the site's master plan in 2017 and as a result of funding from the Australian Government's Building Better Regions Fund and the Tasmanian Government, the council commissioned ARTAS Architects to prepare a schematic design for the Ulverstone Cultural Precinct Project.

The question is what happens next. This phase has seen key stakeholders working with the design team to develop draft schematic designs that include all the elements and deliver the earlier vision. An integral part of the schematic design phase is that the design will continue to evolve and change as feedback is considered and incorporated. This hybrid form of public building has no single use or single facility, reflecting and embracing the diversity of Ulverstone and the north-west coast. It is incorporating the visitor information centre, the museum, the research library, a science centre, planetarium and studios. This exciting facility will be a place of making and learning, a place for public gatherings, a flexible and experimental space for events, celebrations and collaboration. The council has done considerable consultation with the community to take the community with them in this project and have information displays at different areas around Ulverstone and Penguin, so everyone is aware of what is happening. They have display stands at a number of places around the two major towns.

There have been numerous community forums - I have been involved in a few of them - and many others have attended these forums. Community members have asked how they can become involved. There is plenty of information telling the community how they can help or have input, and there is also contact details for people looking for more information. You certainly cannot accuse the council of not consulting on this very important project within our municipality. There were a few comments about the clock memorial where the RSL gathers for Anzac Day and other memorial features. The clock sits right in the middle of the roundabout; the precinct is going to be very close and concerns have been expressed that there would not be enough room on Anzac Day. That issue has been addressed and everybody is quite happy with that project as it proceeds.

Housing services and Communities Tasmania - Tasmania's Affordable Housing Action Plan 2019-2023 represents stage 2 of Tasmania's Affordable Housing Strategy and builds upon the work the department is doing to increase the supply of houses across the spectrum. In the 2018-19 Budget the Tasmanian Government announced an investment of \$125 million for this plan, bringing the total investment in affordable housing to almost \$200 million over eight years. In recognition of the increased demand for affordable housing, \$20 million of funding has been brought forward across 2019-20 and 2020-21 from 2022-23 to provide additional supply to assist current housing market conditions. The plan is focused on addressing the immediate demand for social and affordable housing and the supply of new homes delivered through a range of initiatives. The new action plan builds on the action plan for 2015 to 2019 which remains on track for the delivery of 941 new affordable lots and homes and 1600 households assisted by the end of June 2019.

Part of this funding of Tasmania's Affordable Housing Action Plan involves a youth foyer in Burnie. Excuse my ignorance, but I had to search for what a youth foyer entails - there are quite a few things in a youth foyer. I was impressed; when this gets going, it will be very good for the Burnie area in particular. Foyers are integrated learning and accommodation settings for young people, typically aged between 16 and 24 years, who are at risk of or are experiencing homelessness. Foyers provide a point-in-time service that enables young people in transition to develop and achieve educational and employment pathways, exiting in a sustainable way from welfare and service dependence.

While there are programs in both the education and homelessness sectors that seek to support young people experiencing disadvantage with their education or accommodation across Australia, there are almost no fully integrated service models focused on education and employment outcomes.

The key to the model lies in the provision of stable accommodation for up to two years in a supported, congregate living environment. For young people unable to rely on family support in this critical development stage, foyers provide the time, the personalised attention, the mentoring, the coaching and access to opportunities needed to lead fulfilling, independent and productive lives.

A youth foyer is much more than a supported accommodation facility or welfare program. Utilising an advanced thinking approach, foyers seek to tap into the goals and ambitions of young people and nurture their talents while building skills for life. At heart, the foyer model is based on the life-changing proposition that the most constructive thing we can do for young people is to ensure they become educated, employable and empowered so that they can build better lives for themselves and achieve genuine independence.

Burnie is an excellent place to put a foyer because Burnie has been identified as one of the towns with more disadvantage of younger people, a lot of that being intergenerational. The youth unemployment rate in Burnie has dropped significantly over the last few years, but it is still very high. This will be a valuable asset to the community when it is developed.

Seeing as we are on the Budget, I feel compelled to add to my contribution a few of the better comments made about the Budget. I will start with the Tasmanian Chamber of Commerce and Industry's Michael Bailey. I will not read all of the comments. On the ABC in Hobart on 24 May he said -

What we have here is a Budget that keeps the economy moving, it keeps infrastructure moving, it keeps people working and brings more people into work.

The Burnie Chamber of Commerce and Industry has said basically the same thing. There are also comments from Daryl Connelly from the Cradle Coast Authority, who welcomes the Government's investment in roads, health, tourism, education and other areas of importance along the coast.

I will disperse these comments through my contribution as I go along.

Moving on to Education, on page 54, we are talking about a significant rebuild. Two new schools will be built with \$20 million allocated to building a new primary school at Legana, commencing in 2021, and \$30 million towards a year 7 to 12 high school at Brighton, commencing in 2021. Significant rebuilds will be undertaken at the Penguin District School with \$20 million commenced in 2018-19.

I refer to the Penguin District School website and its e-newsletter to get some information on that. The principal has invited me there to have a look at what is happening. I will run that past the minister for Education first to make sure that is okay -

Ms Forrest - You have to do that too, do you? He never refuses me, though, I must admit.

Mrs HISCUTT - He never refuses, but he does like to know who is going into the school. Penguin District School principal Mat Grining, in his e-newsletter talking about the school development, said on Tuesday, 21 May -

The Project Working Group has been meeting more frequently, as the architects are requiring detail and feedback to inform their high level master plans. On

Tuesday, teaching staff had their first look at draft sections of the school with opportunity to visualise the functionality and flexibility of teaching spaces.

We have been very impressed with the responsiveness of the architects and their ability to listen, carefully consider ideas and then translate these into draft plans.

The school's website has quite a bit of information, which is good because it is keeping the community informed of what is going on. The Penguin District School website says -

What are we doing?

The Tasmanian Government will undertake a \$20 million redevelopment of Penguin District School, providing new state-of-the-art learning facilities for students birth to Year 12. The redevelopment will bring together the primary and secondary school on the existing secondary site, delivering a combination of new building and upgraded existing facilities. Redevelopment of the school is one of the largest public works ever undertaken in Penguin.

This is going to be a boom for Penguin, not only for the school and for the community, but a lot of workers in the area.

The redevelopment will revitalise the school, strengthening and growing existing community partnerships and providing greater learning opportunities for the benefit of future generations of learners and the community ... construction is expected to commence in 2020

Not far away -

This report has been provided to 6ty°P/L, the architects engaged to develop the concept master plan. A second phase of consultation will commence in mid-2019, providing opportunity for the community to view the draft concept master plan.

The Penguin District School Community Engagement Phase 1 Outcomes Report has a link to the Department of Education. Going through some of the executive summary on the feedback received from the community, they had extensive community engagement, inviting many different sectors of the community to the school to talk about what they thought might be good to happen with the school -

The initiation phase of the Get Involved campaign for the redevelopment of Penguin District School ran for six weeks and concluded on 30 November 2018. Community engagement was initiated to achieve six specific objectives and the campaign included advertising, direct mail-outs, an online survey, community workshops, project reference group, one-on-one engagement and group representations. A total of 108 surveys was received and 37 attendees participated in the community workshop during the consultation phase.

A high degree of community input with this project.

A project reference group comprising representatives from the DoE, Central Coast Council and community and sporting groups was established and met for the first time during Phase 1 ... There appears to be strong support for the redevelopment of the Penguin District School, both from within the school and the broader community, with the majority of respondents expressing positive sentiment about the project. The majority of those who responded to questions about buildings and facilities said they wanted the redeveloped school to have flexible and accessible spaces (disability-friendly) and strong integration between indoor and outdoor areas. Sustainability, provision for specialised learning and support rooms, and effective heating and cooling were also important.

The Penguin District School has a strong sports focus and the majority of those who said they wanted new sports facilities and requested a new indoor multi-use space to be used as basketball/netball courts and easily converted to other non-sports uses.

A majority of those who responded to questions about new approaches to teaching and learning wanted the school to focus on resilience and preparation for post-Year 12 working environments.

Establishing school-based apprenticeships and work experience partnerships with local businesses was seen as an important function of the school, and when asked about the future use of any redundant land or buildings, the majority of those who responded to this topic wanted it to be converted to community facilities and/or public spaces.

It is interesting to talk about what to do with the old building. My eldest son was one of the first intakes in the new building, so I can tell you exactly how old the old building was.

Still on the same section of Education. Funding totalling \$7.3 million is being used to support a revitalised network of school farms across the state. This includes allocation towards school farm infrastructure at the Jordan River Learning Federation and the Sheffield School, which has had a school farm since 1960. The income stream from the dairy operation covered the farm's running costs but was not enough to fund significant improvements. This money will be welcome. This would enhance the learning experience and provide an opportunity to integrate the technology used in today's dairy industry.

The school farm has introduced a year 11 and 12 agricultural program, which has the potential to play a greater role because it is the only school farm with a dairy operation. Sheffield could provide the dairy model for the agricultural courses. The 165-acre Sheffield School farm milks 130 cows and runs a small Murray Grey beef stud, which is part of its strong cattle handling program. When the boundary realignments were done, one of the first things the former member for Western Tiers, the honourable Greg Hall, said to me was, 'Listen here, Monty, make sure you support the cattle handlers up there at Sheffield'. So I have made that my mission in life. I turn up to a lot of their functions and displays.

Still on schools, funding of \$3.2 million has been allocated in 2019-20 to the second year of a three-year \$6.8 million program to provide infrastructure upgrades at Launceston College, Molesworth Environment Centre, Hellyer College and Ulverstone Primary School.

Ulverstone Primary School will need to be looked at very soon by the Education department. It is full and cramped for space. People are having a difficult time getting in. The school is an interesting shape. It is like a U-bolt with a bit in the middle. The bit in the middle is a cemetery. The school is one side and there is small grassed area connecting at the end, and the children play on the other side. Tom Reilly, from the parents' group, is currently working through that, but it is a very interesting shape with a cemetery in the middle.

Rob Mallet, from the Small Business Council, said it was a 'fantastic budget'. Tourism Industry Council Tasmania's Luke Martin said -

Easily the best tourism budget in Tasmanian history. Investing in our pressure spots, delivering on election promises and stimulating investment in regional destinations.

The Master Builders Tasmania's Matthew Pollock commented -

The budget again showed a record commitment to infrastructure investment of \$3.6 billion. This will boost jobs and ensure the building industry keeps growing'.

The Tasmanian executive director of the Property Council of Australia, Brian Wightman, said -

The 2019-2020 State Budget's significant investment in infrastructure is necessary to meet the challenges of our growing state and leverage the opportunity for a more prosperous and liveable Tasmania. This Budget is easing congestion, and supporting the immediate supply and affordability of Tasmanian homes.

Moving to Health, I had a wonderful time on the weekend reading through the budget papers to the point I had to have a reality check on how much I was enjoying it.

Ms Lovell - I found it quite depressing.

Mrs HISCUTT - I thought that for a moment, too. On Health, page 107, under 'Drug and alcohol rehabilitation beds in Ulverstone', it says -

Commencing in 2019-20, \$2.4 million is provided over three years for additional community-based drug and alcohol rehabilitation beds in Ulverstone, which forms part of the boost to Health in the North West.

Over the page, it talks about ambulances and the Burnie and Glenorchy ambulance stations. The 2018-19 Budget provided funding of \$12 million over three years to build state of the art ambulance stations. There will be \$6 million on an ambulance superstation in Glenorchy and \$6 million in Burnie -

The new Burnie station will provide greatly improved facilities, including dedicated staff meeting facilities, a bigger garage to ensure that service vehicles do not have to park outside, and better parking and disability access.

There will be an investment of \$6 million to build this new state-of-the-art Burnie ambulance station. Currently, with 12 ambulances based on site who responded to over 4 000 callouts last

financial year, the service is desperately in need of an upgrade and better service to the community. The station also operates as a patient transport service point for the region with more than 1500 non-emergency transfers a year and is also the training facility for all north-west regional ambulance staff. That will be a very welcome contribution.

I also note in Justice an upgraded Burnie Court complex -

Funding of \$15 million over four years from 2020-21 has been provided to upgrade the Burnie Magistrates Court and Supreme Court Complex. The upgrade works will enable the long-term continuation of magistrate and supreme court services in Burnie; improve safety and amenity for court users; improve disability access; enable the essential functional requirements of a modern court facility, and ensure the building is fit for purpose.

These upgrades will ensure that the Burnie Court Complex can continue to provide efficient and effective access to justice and service the region well into the future.

I went to the courts a while ago when I was sworn in as a justice of the peace, and I must admit that it was very old and was very much like a rabbit warren. I am glad someone took me in and showed me back out again.

I also noted that the metal detectors were not particularly good, mainly because I stepped through with an artificial hip and it did not go off unlike an airport detector that would pick it up. I am glad money is being spent on getting the upgrades done there. The department is already engaged an architect and is currently working with stakeholders to develop the final scope of upgraded works for the court complex.

I have moved on to Primary Industries, Parks, Water and Environment, where biosecurity risk management and truck and machinery washes took my attention -

Funding of \$510 000 over four years was provided in the 2018-19 Budget to support Biosecurity Tasmania's continued collaboration with industry groups and farmers to plan for and manage post-border biosecurity risks and to support on-farm biosecurity hygiene strategies.

Capital funding of \$2 million was also provided from 2018-19 for a network of truck and machinery wash down stations to be delivered in partnership with farmers, agribusinesses, non-government organisations and local government. The network of wash down stations will contribute to improvements in biosecurity and farm hygiene.

This section includes capital and recurrent funding. I imagine the recurrent funding is because the Powranna washdown facility has a well-designed big sump into which all the washdown goes and an excavator can dig it out. I am sure that would be the recurrent funding.

I rang couple of truck drivers to see what they thought about the washdown station. There was a lot of fanfare when it was bought on, and then it was not going, and a few months later still it was not going. One fellow told me he thought it was pretty good, except sometimes he gets there and it is not going.

I talked to another truck driver who said they cannot run the water in while they are cleaning out the sump.

The other truck driver told me it had really good pressure, it was really well laid out, and he was really happy with it.

Ms Rattray - They had to replace the pumps and put two new pumps in because they were not running very well.

Ms HISCUTT - They had a few commissioning problems. I believe it is sorted now and truck drivers are reasonably happy. Is that your feedback, member for McIntyre?

Ms Rattray - Certainly they are a lot happier than when it was first commissioned.

Mrs HISCUTT - That is true.

Moving on to the Cradle Mountain experience. Cradle Mountain is something I am very excited about. Cradle Mountain is at the far extreme of Montgomery and takes me an hour to reach from my home, so just down the road. An hour is nothing.

The Government has a vision that will take the iconic Cradle Mountain to the next level. The unprecedented investment in the region by the Tasmanian Government of \$56.8 million and the Australian Government's commitment of \$30 million aligns with the Cradle Mountain Master Plan.

I remember seeing Ian Waller, who was part of Cradle Coast Authority regional tourism years ago, present the Burnie Chamber of Commerce and Industry with a lovely vision of how this could be. I am glad to see that is coming to fruition with this master plan, because we definitely need something there.

The initiative, originally announced in 2016-17 Budget and increased in 2017-18, is for \$21.8 million to deliver the Cradle Mountain visitor experience.

It is a world-class destination and ecotourism product, consistent with the Cradle Mountain experience master plan. Anyone who has not seen the master plan should have a look because it really is quite exciting.

The project is revitalising visitor facilities at the existing gateway to Cradle Mountain outside the national park. That includes a new commercial and retail precinct, car parking, shuttle bus transit stations, and significantly improved visitor facilities.

It goes on to talk about Dove Lake. Dove Lake brings back quite pleasant memories for me, having been a marriage celebrant in a past life. The first marriage I did was on the banks of Dove Lake. It was an absolutely beautiful setting. Dove Lake is iconic and is within the World Heritage Area. The people had come from England, and it was the place they sought to be married.

This project will redevelop the existing car park and viewing area to create an enhanced visitor experience. Works have commenced at the gateway site, with construction scheduled for completion between 2019-20.

The development will serve as a catalyst and stimulus for existing operators and new private sector investment, and, importantly, will respond to growing visitation and demand.

A further investment of \$35 million was provided through the Cradle Mountain experience initiative in the 2018-19 Budget to facilitate development of the Cradle Mountain cableway. This will ensure visitors have all-year, all-weather access to Dove Lake.

As part of this commitment, funding of \$5 million will support the development of a sensitive and appropriate iconic tourism experience in partnership with the private sector on crown land adjacent to the World Heritage Area.

These strategic investments will ensure the visitor experience of Cradle Mountain matches the spectacular natural beauty of the area. It will further build the Tasmanian brand and will increase investment in the Cradle Coast region, boost the visitor economy, and create jobs.

I will move on to growing our world-class inland fisheries. I am part of the Penguin branch of the North West Fisheries Association; even though I cannot catch fish, I still persist.

The Tasmanian Inland Recreational Fishery Management Plan 2018-28 guides the management of recreational fisheries and supports the work of the Inland Fisheries Service. A range of initiatives commenced in 2018-19, delivered in conjunction with the IFS, to support participation and growth in Tasmania's trout fisheries and the vision to have sustainable, vibrant and healthy inland fisheries.

The initiatives include the Anglers Access Program, funding support for the Anglers Alliance Tasmania and the freezing of trout fishing licences at 2017-18 prices for four years.

Funding is also included for upgrading amenities at high-visitation trout waters in preparation for the World Fly Fishing Championships in 2019. Just before I touch on the fly fishing championships, the Penguin branch of the North Western Fisheries Association has a rearing unit at Motton. The branch has been trying for a long time to work with IFS to get permission to put fingerlings into streams and waterways. The IFS has been resistant to that. They stun the fish and when they come to the surface they count numbers. The IFS has decided there are already enough there. The feedback from the fishers is they would like to see more fish.

Mr Dean - I raised the numbers of fish here a few times.

Mrs HISCUTT - Yes. The Penguin, Wilmot and Ulverstone branches are of the opinion that they have the volunteers and the facility at the North Motton rearing unit to do it themselves. We are still working with the IFS. The IFS is happy for the group to stock dams. It reckons the biggest issue is transport and the biosecurity concerns with transporting fingerlings. The IFS would have to do that transport itself, but we are still working through why we cannot do the waters and streamways.

Mr Dean - Are you aware that the Fly Fishing Museum at Clarendon House was closed off during the championship this year because of works that need to be done? They do not have the funding to do it.

Mrs HISCUTT - I did not know that. There you go.

Mr Dean - Did you know about that?

Mrs HISCUTT - No, I did not know about that. I have looked into the World Fly Fishing Championship, which I would like to touch on now. It is very exciting for north-west Tasmania.

I went to the IFS website, first to get some information, and then on to the World Fly Fishing Championship website.

Mr Dean - I will do that in my speech.

Mrs HISCUTT - Good. This is from the IFS website -

The World Fly Fishing Championships 2019 is coming to Tasmania this year between 30 November and 7 December.

The event will provide a world focus on the Tasmanian trout fishery and is expected to lead to an increase in angling tourism.

Teams from up to 30 countries will compete bringing an estimated 800 anglers and support crew.

Competitors will fish in three lakes and two rivers.

The Government is supporting the event, to ensure it is one to remember. This support includes proposed temporary regulation changes for the competition waters that aim to keep any disruption to a minimum.

They mean disruption to the fish -

The Inland Fisheries Service is progressing the following temporary regulation changes that would apply to the following locations:

I will read these into *Hansard* so that anyone who is interested will know -

- The lake venues of **Little Pine Lagoon, Penstock Lagoon and Woods Lake** will be closed to recreational fisheries for the duration of the event, from **midnight on Sunday 1 December to midnight on Friday 6 December 2019 inclusive**.

I think they are all in the member for Derwent's electorate.

- The competition sections of the river venues will be closed to recreational fishing, from **midnight on Sunday 24 November to midnight on Friday 6 December 2019 inclusive**.
 - The **Mersey River downstream of the Olivers Road ... bridge to Hoggs Bridge ...**
 - The **Meander River downstream from the Huntsman Lake dam to Barretts Bridge, Long Ridge Road ...**

The competition sites along the Mersey and the Meander Rivers ... will close seven days before the competition starts. This decision was made as the river venues are small and accessible and wild fish take some time to resume normal behaviour after disturbance from angling efforts. Fishing along the non-competition sites will be unaffected.

It is only where the competition will take place -

These temporary regulation changes are designed to balance support for the Championship and the potential disruption to recreational anglers. Consultation was undertaken with the Anglers Alliance Tasmania -

I remember that conversation during one of the meetings I went to. We also consulted with -

Trout Guides and Lodges Tasmania, individual angling clubs, tackle industry and individual anglers to ensure all parties were involved in this decision.

I looked at the website for the World Fly Fishing Championship to see how big this was. Bear in mind that in 2018 it was held in Trentino, Italy. Glenn Eggleton, the international organiser, had some opening comments -

On behalf of Fly Fish Australia Inc. and the Organising Committee for the 39th FIPS-Mouche World Fly Fishing Championship I invite you to travel to Australia to participate in the championship. The competition will be held in the State of Tasmania (the island state to the south of mainland Australia). Tasmania provides a wonderful opportunity to fish for wild trout in a spectacularly beautiful pristine environment.

The timing of the championship coincides with the anticipated mayfly hatches. The website talks about getting to Tasmania and it cites Launceston - the member for Launceston will be pleased to hear this - as being the host city for the event. It talks about travelling by car to Tasmania. I have to read that -

All vehicles in Australia (including Tasmania) travel on the LEFT HAND SIDE of the road with a maximum speed limit of 110 kilometres per hour.

...

Care must be taken whilst driving especially between dusk and dawn as many wild animals are moving about at this time.

If you are travelling by car from mainland Australia to Tasmania via the seaways TT-Line ferry (www.spiritoftasmania.com.au) is available. Be sure to book early as this is a popular and busy sea bridge to Tasmania.

They talk about pre-event help and assistance, and they have a link there to local guides and hosts who will offer their services to these people.

Going to commonly asked questions, I will not go through them all, but I found a couple interesting. One question was, 'Are there any information sources on Tasmanian Flies and fishing?'

They listed a heap of them, all with links, which was good. Another question was, 'Do the competing countries have to bring their own National flag and National anthem?', and the answer was, 'Yes this is a mandatory requirement'. They will have their flags as they go.

'What will the weather be like?' It says, 'Come prepared for a European Spring and plenty of sunscreen'. I thought that was pretty good.

Good luck to the World Fly Fishing Championship. I think Tasmania has a bit of a coup there. I will read a couple of other things from the website. I thought members might find it interesting.

It says -

Tasmania has vast reserves of World Heritage protected wilderness which include forests, moorlands and alpine landscapes. Some of the oldest trees on the planet survive in Tasmania. They sit in contrast with the lowland farming areas reminiscent of classical English countryside. Many historic buildings and bridges from our early settlement era remain intact and in use today.

You can see this is directed at a lot of European countries. Competitors will be fishing in a pristine environment for wild trout - that is, trout that have never seen a hatchery. While fishing anglers are likely to see a variety of unique wildlife - wallabies, wombats, echidnas and platypus, to name just a few.

The website gives links and information on the lakes and the two rivers. It is a good website and helpful to anyone who is coming to the championship.

Noting 100 DPIWE staff to move north. The costing here includes capital and recurrent funding. I will not read it all -

An initiative of \$1.8 million over four years from 2018/2019 is facilitating the movement of 100 positions in the Department from Hobart to the North and North West through staff turnover and voluntary incentive programs.

The north-west coast is the engine room of this state, where the money is made and the agriculture is grown; to have the staff move to the area seems a sensible move -

Additional capital funding of \$600 000 across 2018-19 and 2019-20 is supporting capital works and fit-out of Prospect/Mount Pleasant and Stony Rise offices to support the move of the positions to the North and North West.

I spend time in the Stony Rise facility. When I go there, there is hardly a car in the car park. Eventually, after ringing the bell, you come through the door and there are not many people there. At morning teatime you might see six or seven people. I am sure there are more people, but it feels vacant. It feels big, so obviously the building has plenty of capacity to house more people.

Moving on to the Next Iconic Walk -

This 2018-19 initiative is investing up to \$20 million over a five year period to deliver Tasmania's next iconic multi-day hut-based walk.

Feasibility and survey works will be undertaken initially to determine a preferred location for this significant visitor attraction.

It is anticipated that construction will commence in 2020-21 following detailed planning, design and approvals.

The \$20 million investment indicates how seriously the Tasmanian Government takes the investment tourists bring to our state and the money they spend here.

This iconic walk is a very good walk from Mount Montgomery in the Dial Range right through to Cradle Mountain. It is undeveloped and is only for the hardiest of the hardy to reach. I am part of the local tourism association group and Amarlie Crowden, the lady who operates Kaydale Lodge, had done a mammoth effort putting a submission together about a trek from Leven Canyon through to Cradle Mountain. The little bit from Leven Canyon through to Penguin would have been an appendix to this. Unfortunately, Amarlie's submission was not quite completed in time because she became overly busy - Kaydale Lodge has a beautiful garden requiring high maintenance. Hopefully, when the next round comes, I might be able to encourage Amarlie to take this up. It was a very good idea.

On-farm energy and irrigation audits -

The On-Farm Energy and Irrigation Audit Program of \$750 000 over three years from 2018/2019 provides subsidies to assist farmers to reduce their energy charges. The program provides access to audit grants to engage qualified professionals to review farm energy use, infrastructure and systems, and identify savings strategies and capital infrastructure grants. This initiative is being led by the Department of State Growth.

Many farmers think they are doing the best they can in the most productive way but you do not know what you do not know until you have had an audit. If farmers can save a bit of money, it will be very helpful for them.

Recreational fisheries is related to Marine and Safety Tasmania. These figures contain capital and recurrent components. These initiatives commenced in 2018-19 and are providing support to recreational fisheries. Funding of \$450 000 has been provided to enable the purchase and installation of four new fish aggregation devices to provide new fishing options for recreation fishers. This is led by MAST.

In addition, funding of \$2.2 million will deliver improvements to parking facilities at a number of key locations for recreational fishers. I presume that is for all lakes, waterways and fishing areas. Lake Lea has a new boat and car parking area to use while you are on the lake. It has been reported that tourists use it to park their campervans and spend a night or two there.

When the fisher people go in with their boats and cars, they find those areas are full. The Anglers Alliance is investigating the best way to move forward with that. A further \$620 000 over four years is provided to continue the support provided in 2017-18 for the Tasmanian Association for Recreational Fishing. This is more about marine fishers.

The 2018-19 Budget provided \$3.6 million over two years for the construction of the new visitor centre at the Royal Tasmanian Botanical Gardens. I always look forward to its annual report. I am a keen gardener but cannot get there as much as I want to.

Taking agriculture to the next level also includes capital and recurrent funding. I will comment on a couple of things. The range of initiatives to take agriculture to the next level in the 2018-19 Budget and over the forward Estimates include support for industry development across dairy, red meat, horticulture, wine, hemp, apiary and organic agricultural sectors.

Hemp is a new crop. A few hemp crops were grown in the Gawler-Penguin area. I keenly watched them as they developed. Tasmania produces 66 per cent of Australia's hemp seed. The state's crop is worth almost \$5 million at the farm gate. A crop costs a farmer \$1300 a hectare and pays back about \$3 a kilogram.

The laws were changed in 2017 to allow hemp seed to be sold as food. Farmers began to take the crop more seriously when that happened. Hemp Association of Tasmania president Tim Schmidt said the number of growers jumped from 29 last season to 49 this season. It is a very quick crop to grow. York Plains grower Stewart Burbury said, 'You water it, you go out and look at it and it's grown eight to 10 centimetres in a day'. So it is a very quick growing crop.

The hemp crop takes about four months to mature and it comes in at just under two metres. The seed heads are harvested, dried and dehulled. Hemp seeds have a mild nutty flavour and are increasingly finding their way into breads and breakfast cereals. Australian Primary Hemp in Geelong has contracted just under 400 hectares from Tasmania in 2019. It is chasing as much as 2000 hectares from the state, which is nearly the industry's entire crop. We are jumping from 400 hectares to a possible 2000.

First-time grower Mr David Taylor said -

It is about finding the right window to grow a cash crop in between poppies and potatoes.

It is an alternative crop, another tool in the toolbox.

For the agriculture industry in Tasmania economically it gives another option for growers out there and it gives them access to new markets of the mainland.

The Tasmanian hemp crop is worth about \$5 million. The international food market for hemp seed is estimated at \$1 billion annually. There is some money to be made by farmers. The growers' representative also said, 'Production will far exceed last year's average of 1 tonne a hectare'.

When I heard this, I rang Chris McKenna, a grower up the road from me in the Gawler-Penguin region, to get his opinion on how his crops went. He said one paddock did better than the other and reckoned this was around agronomy use. He grows for a New South Wales company called Ecofibre Limited, which is based in Brisbane and as part of the Ananda Food Pty Limited has links into the United States of America. If we can start to supply the US market, it will be a huge coup for Tasmanian farmers.

Mr Dean - Is it a better cash crop than poppies?

Mrs HISCUTT - Not at the minute, no. But wait - Mr McKenna tells me there seems to be a bit of a shortfall in the agronomy skills here and he puts this down to trying to run it from interstate. He says it is not insurmountable and that, as the crop grows, those agronomy skills will be refined. He says that when things start running smoothly, yields will have the capacity to increase significantly per hectare. He says that based on his two crops, one crop was managed better than the other. He sees this as a big growth crop. Currently he producing one tonne of dry seed per one hectare and he is sure this can increase.

Mr McKenna is pleased with the crop as another demand on acreage, which makes it more competitive with other crop demands - 'Demand on ground drives price in agriculture.'

That is right: if there is a demand on the available ground, prices will start to go up.

A few more comments from the Tasmanian Farmers and Graziers Association CEO Peter Skillern, who said -

Agriculture has been a winner in today's State Budget. Commitments to irrigation infrastructure are crucial ...

He also said the concern with quad bikes is to be highly commended and also commented about the biosecurity investment.

Fruit Growers Tasmania president Nic Hansen is pleased with the biosecurity aspects of the bill.

The executive director of Master Builders Tasmania, Matthew Pollock, says -

This new funding for TasTAFE will provide for an additional 230 places and go a long way to addressing skills shortages in the construction industry over the medium term.

The Masters Plumbers Association of Tasmania commented about the supply of local tradesmen, saying that demand is good.

Colin Riley of the Police Association of Tasmania welcomes the \$6 million to be spent over the next four years to update residential accommodation for police officers and their families in remote locations -

We also welcome strong support for the progress towards establishing a full time core SOG ...

Taking agriculture to the next level and about support for regional communities. We have spoken about Tasmanian Women in Agriculture many times, a fine and worthy group of women who are supporting other women in the agricultural sector, as I am sure the member for McIntyre will agree.

The budget paper mentions Rural Youth Tasmania. They certainly deserve some support. We talk about stock underpass programs. I will speak more about the stock underpass programs for members' information. It is very difficult to get cattle across your property when it is dissected by roads and you have to manage the traffic. In April 2017 the Tasmanian Government announced a

program to support improved farm and road safety and increased farm productivity across the livestock sector.

Crossing cattle across roads is a significant issue for many dairy and livestock farmers. The Government has been working with the TFGA, DairyTas and local farmers and councils to develop a practical approach to address the issue. Just up the road from where I live on the north-west coast there is the Berry Patch, where 600 or 700 people work at the height of the season. Buses and cars go up that road all the time. Sometimes there are so many cars that they are almost tailgating each other up the road to get there. I remember moving a mob of cattle across the road one day and I could see - and I do not want to say it but I will have to say it - poor drivers, people who are not used to driving on the left-hand side of the road, coming down the road while you are trying to cross these cattle, and seriously, you are standing in the middle of the road waving your arms around saying 'Whoa, whoa!' because they are very myopic about where they are going. Our farm does not warrant it because we do not do it enough, but if you are dairying, you are doing it all the time. You need to do something.

The Government is now providing grants for up to one-third of the cost of constructing an overpass, to a maximum of \$80 000, to help this program. The Government took the initiative and developed a set of standard drawings for a modular stock underpass system to eliminate most of the design costs. That was half the problem: that the farmers had to get an architect in to design what they were going to do with the road. The Government has a standard set of designs that can be adapted to most underpasses.

The modular components can now be bought directly from precast concrete fabricators in Tasmania, so you can pick your design off the website and then you can pick the concrete fabrications that you need.

The Tasmanian Government already fully funds stock underpasses where a new road alignment splits a property. That is a very good initiative that helps a lot of farmers who have to get their dairy cattle across the road.

In that section, I will mention the \$7 million over three years to modernise Crown and Tasmanian Institute of Agriculture research farm assets to make them the centre of excellence for practical research and demonstrations. It mentions Freer Farm which I have a bit of a liking for because that was where I did my four-year apprenticeship. Freer Farm was where you went to be taught those finer points. I spent many a happy day there. There is \$5 million towards this. On that point, Freer Farm is not that far from the Burnie Community House. Its manager, Tracy Edington-Mackay, is very active in supporting the community house. She approached the managers of Freer Farm to ask whether she could borrow a little bit of land, you might say. On this bit of land the farm allows them, she takes some of the community to grow produce. They look after it, harvest it, and they even bring it back and sell it or distribute it to where it is necessary. Tracy has made a very good initiative and I congratulate her on that.

On community houses, I note the budget papers on page 16 include funding of \$45 000 for the peak body to support the 35 houses across the state.

I will move on to State Growth in the budget papers. Another thing that took my attention was the coastal pathways project. In the 2019-20 Budget the Government has allocated \$4.8 million towards the next stages of the North West Coastal Pathway project, linking the existing sections of the pathway between Sulphur Creek - very close to where I live - and Latrobe. This matches the

funding provided by the Australian Government and the local government municipal areas of Central Coast, Devonport and Latrobe. This is going to be a great initiative when it is done.

I would like to update members on what is happening there. Some members may remember the Strategic Infrastructure Corridors (Strategic and Recreational Use) Bill 2016.

We had many briefings. I will only touch on the ones in my electorate, which were well received. The North West Coastal Pathway plan provides guidance for local councils, government agencies and the Cradle Coast community in regard to the development and maintenance of a shared pathway between Wynyard and Latrobe. The funding in the Budget is only for the Sulphur Creek to Latrobe area, but it is only part of the big picture of the coastal pathway. The plan has been made possible by a grant from the state Government and financial contributions from five local councils - Wynyard-Waratah, Burnie City, Central Coast, Devonport City and Latrobe.

I will refer to the briefings from the general managers from Burnie and Wynyard on their plans for the coastal pathway. I told them how proud I was of the way they had worked together to further this pathway. The project was directed by a steering committee comprising members from Safer Roads for Cyclists Tasmania, Communities, Sport and Recreation Tasmania, the Department of Infrastructure, Energy and Resources Tasmania, the Department of Health and Human Services, local councils and the Cradle Coast Authority. It was a mammoth combined effort and they have come up with a very good plan and program.

The North West Coastal Pathway plan outlines alternatives for constructing approximately 110 kilometres of shared walking-cycle pathways to connect the communities of the north-west coast of Tasmania. This will be marketed in Melbourne to encourage Melbournites to jump on the *Spirit* and bring their bikes over here for the weekend. It is a great opportunity for this pathway.

Tasmanians have the second lowest participation rate for exercise and physical activities nationally. About 71 per cent of north-west coast Tasmanians do not undertake 30 minutes of exercise per day, which is contributing to the poor health outcomes. That is a terribly high figure and I am glad this coastal pathway will help a little bit.

Recently completed sections of the pathway have been received with great enthusiasm by the community and are already in high use. I was at a meeting with the Central Coast Chamber of Commerce and Industry recently when Andrew Leary, an enthusiastic cyclist, presented to them. Andrew pushes this plan at every opportunity. I am not sure that the chamber can help him in any way other than to give him support, but it will do whatever it can to help.

The North West Coastal Pathway plan has applied a design model assuming three use cases for the path. They are: providing community access to local places, providing recreation and exercise, and providing community connectors linking towns and cities.

The placement of the route has been designed where possible using some of the following criteria: location within the current road reserves or rail corridors; avoidance of location on private land, which keeps you away from conflict; a maximum distance away from vehicular traffic; and location to maximise existing pathways and connections. It is good to use what is already there and not reinvent the wheel. It also includes alignment and placement to encourage community activity, particularly family and use by children. On the pathway already I see children on dink bikes with their parents or walking along, and it is really good to see.

Each council will stage the pathway sections according to its own project and capital funding priorities. The following recommendations for staging are provided in terms of overall north-west coast pathway functions. I will not read them all, but there are a couple I want to highlight. Community access pathway sections - Somerset to Wivenhoe, Penguin to Heybridge, Devonport to Latrobe and Goat Island to Leith-Forth, which is the far eastern extent of my electorate. Once the community access paths are in place, efforts could be concentrated on creating a community connection path - that is, between Leith and Devonport, Wynyard and Somerset, Heybridge and Burnie, and Goat Island to Penguin.

Estimated cost per linear metre of different path types and construction materials have been identified in the plan. Estimates are preliminary only and vary from \$100 a metre for adapting an existing roadway to \$7500 per metre for a 2500-millimetre suspended and/or partially supported concrete bridge path with a maximum span of 20 metres. As with all quality projects, each pathway section development should be considered within its own unique settings.

Mr President, over the Forth River there is a heritage-listed, disused railway bridge that is a great connector for this pathway. TasRail has built a new bridge further to the south of this bridge. This bridge has been handed over to the council for these purposes.

Mr Valentine - Did they accept it with open arms?

Mrs HISCUTT - They accepted it, but then there was a bit of an issue because they needed some more money to upgrade it. We are working through that.

The issue at the minute is that the coastal pathway comes in one end and the other end gets there to meet it but it has to cross the existing railway line. They have to work a few issues through with TasRail before they can connect the dots.

The total asset lifecycle cost for the pathway has been calculated at just over \$60 a metre over a projected asset life of 40 years. This includes capital expenditure of \$26.4 million to construct the pathway and an annual cost of \$832 000 to maintain, operate and renew the asset. This Budget has \$1.68 million for this year and \$3.12 million in the forward Estimates.

It says the pathway should comply with the Austroads *Guide to Road Design - Part 6A, Pedestrian and Cyclist Paths 2009*. I found this one of particular interest. It said -

... of the North West Coastal Pathway should comply with this standard. It is noted that Tasmanian Railways requires an additional standard of fencing beyond that of the Austroads standard.

I thought that was very interesting and I wonder why it is necessary. I might look for the answer.

The plan also proposes locations for support facilities such as public toilets, bike racks and lockers, drinking fountains, viewing points and public showers. I was in Penguin a while ago talking to a lycra-clad fellow whom I knew, who said, 'If that pathway was in place, I'd do this and I'd do that'. He was talking about accommodation, cafes, boutique breweries and all those things along the pathway. I said to him, 'Well, do it'. We will wait and see what he comes up with. He is a man who probably has the means and know-how to do it, so we will see what happens there.

The various path types identified in the plan have advantages and disadvantages in terms of capital cost, maintenance and carbon footprint. Consideration of all these factors will be important for councils in planning development of the pathway sections. That is a very exciting and enthusiastically supported project in those councils across the coast.

Still on State Growth, we have the Tasmanian Government's free wi-fi service that I spotted in the budget papers. Funding of \$600 000 over four years has been committed to continue the Government's investment in free public wi-fi services in key hotspots around the state, including key tourism locations. The Wilmot tourism association is keen for this to come. I have also talked to the local tourism association, the Coast to Canyon group, and everyone is in support of it. The only comment they would like to make is, 'Get on with it.' We look forward to this happening.

Before I move to the Tasmanian Irrigation - TI - contribution to tranche 3, I will make a few more comments from people who have made good comments about this budget.

Housing Industry Association executive director Stuart Collins says they have welcomed funding for TasTAFE to train more construction apprentices. The Tasmanian Transport Association executive director Michelle Harwood speaks about welcoming the commitment to improving roads, bridges, rails and infrastructure for key freight corridors. Master Builders Tasmania has reiterated that the payroll tax rebate is critical in assisting building businesses to take on new apprentices and develop their skills.

There are comments there from *The Australian* and *The Advocate* editorials and from editorials in *The Mercury*. *The Mercury* editorial on 24 May 2019 says -

Mr Gutwein also deserves support from taxpayers for his decision to impose a 0.75 per cent efficiency deficit on the public service. Despite what the unions might claim, it's hardly the end of the world. In the private sector, most managers would be pretty happy if the number crunchers from head office came knocking and asked you to ONLY cut 75 cents in every \$100 from your budget next year.

As part of the Government's tranche 3 irrigation taking agriculture to the next level, \$70 million has been allocated to a third tranche of irrigation schemes over the Budget and forward Estimates period. A commitment has also been made by the Australian Government to allocate \$100 million towards tranche 3 as part of the National Water Infrastructure Development Fund.

The capital costs of irrigation schemes are shared between the community and the private sector. The public funding contribution recognises the regional communities in which the schemes are located will gain a general socio-economic advantage from increased activity and employment over time. I can attest to this with all the berry pickers I spoke about. They have to have somewhere to live, somewhere to eat, have their hair done and buy fuel - and that is a good thing. It has come about by the allocation of the Dial Blythe Irrigation Scheme output for the Berry Patch up the road.

Private capital contributions are made through the purchase of tradeable water entitlements to a particular scheme by the beneficiaries of the scheme. Operating costs are met with an annual charge on water entitlement holders. Some people have mentioned that the annual charges and the operating costs are a little bit high but as we speak that is being addressed by Tasmanian Irrigation that has been having a closer look. Then you hear about the farmer who sets his irrigator up, turns the tap on and says it is worth every dollar. There are a couple of ways of looking at this.

Tranche 1 projects have been done. Tranche 2 projects are done or almost completed so I will talk about tranche 3 projects.

Tasmanian Irrigation has conducted a study of existing infrastructure schemes across Tasmania to explore potential interconnectivity, enhancement and modernisation of irrigation schemes. The project also explored development of potentially new schemes that may enhance economic development by the movement of water at its highest economic use.

Tranche 3 builds on Tasmanian Irrigation's successful delivery of tranche 1. Ten schemes were done between 2010 and 2015, done in their entirety and with an ongoing commitment to development to deliver tranche 2. In 2016 to 2019 there were five schemes.

In May 2016, after extensive investigation and consultation, TI identified eight concepts which will enhance Tasmania's productivity capacity and which it believes warrant further investigations. It has listed 10, with five being listed as a priority.

The priorities of those 10 - phase 1 - will be on the Don Irrigation Scheme, the Sassafras Wesley Vale Irrigation Scheme augmentation, and the Fingal, Northern Midlands and the Tamar irrigation schemes.

We all know that nothing grows without water. If Tasmania can make itself water-secure with these irrigation schemes in agriculture, we will certainly be a long way in front.

I found these little 'glossies' quite handy.

I am sure other members will talk on other things. I have been sticking to the things I found of interest for Montgomery. There are many more interesting things in this Budget and I am looking forward to hearing what other members have to say. My emphasis was on the agricultural side of things, which shows where I come from.

I might go through a few other things before I leave the lectern.

The president of the Traffic Management Association of Australia, Stephen O'Dwyer, was pleased with this Budget. He said it is fantastic to see the investment in infrastructure in Tasmania and said that it will reflect positively on opportunities for the traffic management industry. Travelling down from the north-west coast, as the member for Murchison can attest, was a real pain for a while, but it is getting a lot better. I notice we now have to go through two big underpasses at the Perth bypass, which is very good to see.

RACT executive general manager Stacey Pennicott says the Budget sets out a funding path for a number of key commitments, including delivery of the Hobart Airport interchange. That has been a bit of a bane for a long time, but the money is in the Budget now.

The president of Roads Australia, David Stuart-Watt, said it is good to see \$1.6 million being committed to crucial projects like the Midland Highway upgrade and the Bridgewater Bridge as essential rail infrastructure.

The CEO of the Australian Logistics Council, Kirk Coningham, talked about the \$1.6 billion investment in transport infrastructure also. The council was very pleased with that.

Civil Contractors Federation of Tasmania had made some good comments about infrastructure projects.

The Tasmanian Salmonid Growers Association is very pleased with the biosecurity funding in the Budget.

The Tourism Industry Council of Tasmania's Luke Martin talks about the West Coast Wilderness Railway, which has been allocated funding for its upgrade. An editorial in *The Advocate* talks about the West Coast Wilderness Railway.

The Commissioner for Children and Young People, Leanne McLean, issued a media release saying she is very pleased with the needs-based model that focuses on the individual needs of children. She is looking forward to seeing how that will pan out.

An editorial in *The Examiner* talked about the needs-based disability funding of \$34 million, and how that was a good thing.

The founder of the Tasmanian Disability Education Reform Lobby, Kristen Desmond, also talked about the needs-based funding model for students. That was a bit of a winner in the Education department.

The Tasmanian executive director of the Property Council of Australia, Brian Wightman, talked about the decision to allocate \$40.5 million for the next four-year action plan as a timely response to housing stress.

The Master Builders Association also commented positively about housing and the new funding of up to \$68 million.

The Tasmanian executive director of the Housing Industry Association, Stuart Collins, made good comments about the \$20 000 grants for first home buyers. That will be welcomed by the HIA because it will keep its industry alive and well.

Sitting suspended from 1.00 p.m. to 2.30 p.m.

QUESTIONS

Suspended Students - Total Proportion

Mr WILLIE question to LEADER of the GOVERNMENT in the LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL, Mrs HISCUTT

[2.31 p.m.]

This is a bonus question. I did not actually ask it, but will ask anyway. As of end of March 2019 can you please provide information relating to the following questions -

- (1) The total proportion of students suspended at 126 primary schools?
- (2) The proportion of students at each of the 29 secondary schools?

- (3) The proportion of students suspended at each of the 25 district schools which are combined primary and secondary?
- (4) The proportion of students suspended at each of the senior secondary schools?
- (5) The proportion of students suspended at each support school excluding early childhood Intervention Service centres?

ANSWER

Mr President, I thank the member for Elwick for his question. I will go through the answers and then table them.

- (1) Students suspended at primary schools - 0.7 per cent of enrolled primary schoolchildren have received a suspension. A full breakdown by local government areas is provided in this attachment. Please note that because of the small cohort of students in some schools, providing complete data could lead to the identification of individual students.
- (2) Students suspended at secondary schools - 4.3 per cent of students enrolled in secondary schools have received a suspension. The breakdown is in the table.
- (3) Students suspended at district schools - 2.8 per cent of students enrolled in district schools, combined primary and secondary, have received a suspension. Again, the breakdown is in the table.
- (4) Students suspended at senior secondary schools - 0.3 per cent of students enrolled in colleges and senior secondary schools have received a suspension.
- (5) Students suspended at special schools - 0.3 per cent of students enrolled in special schools have received a suspension.

A full breakdown of this information is in the table. I seek permission to table this attachment and have it incorporated into *Hansard*.

Leave granted.

Document incorporated in *Hansard* as follows -

The proportion of students suspended as at the end of March for 2019 by Local Government Area

Local Government Area	Number of schools	Proportion of students suspended
Break O'Day (M)	2	1.9%
Brighton (M)	5	7.3%
Burnie (C)	11	1.5%
Central Coast (M)	8	2.4%
Central Highlands (M)	2	1.1%
Circular Head/King island (M)	7	1.6%

Clarence (C)	19	0.9%
Demerit Valley (M)	6	5.2%
Devonport (C)	9	1.5%
Dorset/Flinders (M)	7	0.6%
George Town (M)	2	2.8%
Glamorgan/Spring Bay (M)	4	1.3%
Glenorchy (C)	12	2.5%
Hobart (C)	16	0.5%
Huon Valley (M)	7	2.5%
Kentish (M)	2	1.7%
Kingborough (M)	10	1.5%
Latrobe (M)	5	1.1%
Launceston (C)	23	1.3%
Meander Valley (M)	6	0.4%
Northern Midlands (M)	6	0.2%
Sorell/Tasman (M)	4	3.7%
Southern Midlands (M)	4	2.8%
Waratah/Wynyard (M)	5	1.2%
West Coast (M)	4	4.6%
West Tamar (M)	5	1.0%

Notes

1. Figures only include Government Schools.
2. Where an LGA only has one school it has been combined with an adjacent area:

Flinders has been combined with Dorset
Tasman with Sorell
King Island with Circular Head
3. Proportion of students is based on enrolments as at Census 1 for 2019.
4. Number of schools doesn't include Ashley School or the Early Childhood Intervention Service.

Tasmania Police Complaints Handling Process - Abacus

Mr DEAN question to LEADER of the GOVERNMENT in LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL, Mrs HISCUTT

[2.33 p.m.]

My question relates to the new or revised complaint handling process by Tasmania Police - Abacus. Will the Leader please advise -

- (1) How do the operations of Abacus differ from the previously used system?
- (2) During the time Abacus has been in place, have there been any positive results in the acceptance of complaint handling by police?

(3) What benefits have been derived from this new process?

ANSWER

Mr President, I thank the member for Windermere for his question.

- (1) Abacus is far broader ranging than the former system and deals with all conduct complaints and compliance issues. Abacus provides greater clarity on the procedural fairness rules that must apply, greater definition around the balance of probabilities and a clearly articulated process for managing complaint matters and internally raised matters. It also empowers managers across the organisation to make decisions promptly and to have greater accountability for their staff. Abacus engenders greater cultural acceptance of ethics and integrity by providing members with an opportunity to voluntarily disclose any breaches of the code of conduct an officer may have committed.
- (2) The first 12 months of Abacus have seen 85 per cent of complaints made in that period finalised. This reflects a significant turnaround in the timeliness of finalisation. Level 1 matters are able to be managed with minimal paperwork and are less adversarial than the previous complaints management system. Level 2 matters require a proportionate inquiry, rather than a significant investigation. Investigations are only conducted for level 3 matters.

Anecdotal evidence from both the public and police officers suggests that the pragmatic approach taken under Abacus is beneficial for the community, the organisation and individuals.

- (3) The central aim of Abacus has been to provide a timelier and more transparent system for managing conduct complaints and compliance matters. The timeliness of complaint investigations has been a significant issue historically, and Abacus was intended to enable a proportionate response that still satisfies procedural fairness obligations.

Abacus is intended to be better for both the public and for police members, with a focus on continuing professional development and organisational learning. Incorporating conduct issues has created an opportunity for better management of performance or behavioural issues that do not arise from complaints - e.g. timely submission of files, discipline issues. Abacus has enhanced welfare considerations for police officers subject to an Abacus matter

Family Violence - Increased Reporting

**Mr DEAN question to LEADER of the GOVERNMENT in the LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL,
Mrs HISCUTT**

[2.36 p.m.]

I asked a number of questions about the annual report and received some answers about some of these areas I am now asking questions on, so I apologise to the police for the extra work involved in putting some of this back together.

Over the past five to six years, and probably longer, police have been saying the continual increase in family violence offence statistics may not be a bad thing because it may mean more victims are now reporting these crimes. Will the Leader please advise -

- (1) What evidence is there to show the current revised strategies are having any impact on decreasing family violence offences?
- (2) What studies, review, investigations or other actions are the police undertaking to determine whether this crime is increasing or decreasing?
- (3) Do the police have any evidence at all to support their notion that the increase could be due only to the willingness of more victims to now come forward and report the crime?

ANSWER

Mr President, I thank the member for Windermere for his question.

- (1) The Government takes family violence incredibly seriously and is actively working to eliminate this scourge on our community. Responding to family violence is a complex issue which requires a coordinated response across multiple sectors. Safe at Home is the Tasmanian Government's integrated criminal justice response to family violence and has been imbedded in this state since 2004.

One of the aims for Safe at Home is to reduce the incidence and severity of family violence in the longer term. While police may be the first port of contact for the reporting of many incidents, police alone cannot prevent and reduce family violence.

The sustained focus of the Government and Tasmania Police on family violence has led to a reduced level of tolerance by the community and victims around incidents of family violence, which continues to impact reporting. The work being undertaken around family violence continues to raise community and victim awareness and confidence in both Tasmania Police and the family violence responses and services that comprise Safe at Home.

This will also have an overall impact on reporting. The reduction of incidents of family violence may take some time to realise and to see the effectiveness of current strategies. Based on police statistics it cannot be said with certainty that family violence is decreasing as police only have information on reported incidences. As the member for Windermere noted, if victims are now more willing to report family violence, statistics may increase even if violence is going down.

Our best view on the extent of family violence comes from the Personal Safety Survey conducted by the Australian Bureau of Statistics, most recently in 2016. This survey is considered to give the most comprehensive look at the extent of family violence in Australia. However, it still relies on respondents being open about family violence, which for many people remain a difficult topic.

The 2016 survey indicates family violence has remained relatively stable since 2005. It found 1.6 per cent of women in Tasmania aged 18 years and over had experienced family violence by a cohabiting partner in the previous 12 months, while in 2005 the figure was 1.8 per cent. The source of those figures is the ABS - 4906.0 Personal Safety Australia 2016, Tasmania Table 2.1.

These figures appear comparable given the sample error associated with the survey. However, they may still be affected by victims not feeling able to report family violence.

- (2) In February 2019 the Safe Families Coordination Unit employed a data analyst to interrogate the data around family violence, to identify any emerging trends and to ensure the police response to family violence is best practice and evidence-based. This will allow Tasmania Police to better understand the prevalence of family violence across the state.
- (3) We know family violence is under-reported to police. However, police are being called to many more family arguments before any violence has occurred. Police are also being called to more incidents classified as low risk while the number of high-risk incidents has remained relatively stable. This indicates victims are more willing to contact police before the violence escalates to dangerous levels. The Personal Safety Survey 2016 showed that nationally police were only contacted by 17.4 per cent of females experiencing violence by a current partner and 35.4 per cent if violence was by a previous partner. These figures indicate that if victims are more willing to come forward, police involvement in family violence incidents is likely to increase in the future, even if strategies to decrease the prevalence of family violence are successful.

APPROPRIATION BILL (No. 1) 2019 (No. 21)

APPROPRIATION BILL (No. 2) 2019 (No. 22)

Noting of Budget Papers

Resumed from above.

[2.42 p.m.]

Mrs HISCUTT (Montgomery - Leader of the Government in the Legislative Council) - Mr President, I wanted to note that neighbourhood houses in Tasmania were very pleased with the addition to their current funding.

The president of the Law Society of Tasmania, Evan Hughes, noted the allocation towards the Legal Aid Commission and the Director of Public Prosecutions.

Mr President, this Budget is a steady-as-she-goes budget. I note and welcome this Budget which will keep the momentum going in Tasmania.

[2.43 p.m.]

Ms SIEJKA (Pembroke) - Mr President, I welcome the new member for Nelson and congratulate the Leader on her return and you for becoming the President of this place. My Labor colleagues and I were all very relieved when we realised you would continue to drive the Labor bus - it is welcome news. I do not think that has been noted yet.

Like other members, I was present when the Treasurer delivered this year's Budget. However, I think I might have listened to a different speech to the Leader. Since the Budget's presentation, I have had inquiries and received comments from members of my community and stakeholders across a number of areas. Much of this commentary related to the progress of 2018 state election commitments that are still to progress and details unknown, and people wanting information on whether a budget allocation had been made for financial commitments related to strategies and implementation plans.

Other inquiries from stakeholders related to the two shadow portfolios I am responsible for - disability and ageing, which will be the focus of my reply today. Last year, in my budget reply speech, I spoke about the need for transparency. Transparency is a vital component of all the work done by government and leads to accountability and good governance, which gives our constituents faith we are acting in their best interests. We know open government is the best approach to governance. We know there is a positive relationship between transparency and improved outcomes, yet this Government continues to act in a way that is counterproductive and undermines accountability and transparency expectations.

As a public institution, it is expected the government exists to serve the community, and it should therefore be open and expect public scrutiny. It should not withhold information. However, we have seen in this Budget, and over the course of the past year, a government comfortable with misleading and confusing Tasmanians with numbers and words, and one certainly at ease with not providing Tasmanians with clear information about how their money is spent in between budgets.

Until recently, we heard about how Tasmania is in a golden age. Now we have a situation where the Tasmanian people for the first time in a decade are facing a \$1.1 billion debt in four years and yet we are still not even close to having adequate services for our community.

There is no other outcome to arrive at other than this is simply poor financial management. What has happened to this so-called golden age, and why has poor financial management resulted in a budget that has blown out?

I acknowledge that there are aspects of this Budget that some Tasmanians will be satisfied with, but it is important to bring attention to the Government's priorities and the continually widening gap in our community between the haves and the have-nots. We should always look after our most vulnerable, most disadvantaged and most at risk. Regardless of the circumstances someone is born into, everyone deserves the same access to having their needs met in health, housing and education.

Further, we should invest in our communities and in our people. A healthy and strong population would, after all, ensure growth in the rest of Tasmania's sectors.

A budget is an opportunity to enhance our community. This Budget is not enabling this to happen. It is prioritising infrastructure, which is important, but it is doing so at the expense of many Tasmanians struggling every day with the cost of living. These are Tasmanians who are unable to find affordable housing, who are homeless, and who are being told they have to wait for current public housing tenants to die to reach the front of the housing waitlist.

Last year, in my budget reply speech I said that a budget should not be either/or. A balance needs to be achieved between growth and development with helping Tasmanians and propping them up when they need a hand. It is time this Government realised ignoring these problems does not make them disappear. Ignoring these problems does not mean they do not exist.

This Government's mentality, when it comes to vulnerable Tasmanians, is dangerous, demeaning and disempowering. More than infrastructure needs funding.

It seems these comments are only more meaningful with the benefit of another year. When it comes to the most vulnerable people in our community, those living with disabilities are among those for whom we must do our most to ensure their needs are met. Unfortunately, this is not the

case. Tasmania has the highest rate of disability of any state in Australia. This includes the highest rate of autism, cerebral palsy and multiple sclerosis. These rates are only likely to increase.

While we have over 10 000 people eligible for support on the National Disability Insurance Scheme in Tasmania, upwards of 80 000 to 90 000 Tasmanians living with disabilities are not eligible for the NDIS and rely on services provided by Tasmanian disability support service organisations.

While the NDIS has proved to be a life-changing scheme for some, many more in our community who are not eligible for it, who never will be eligible and who we are failing - Tasmanians not eligible for the NDIS, who are living with disabilities - still require support for their daily living to participate in the social and economic life of our community.

Tragically, the state Government has chosen to cut the funding contracts for 18 disability service organisations that provide vital services for people living with disabilities, their families and carers as of 30 June, leaving people who are ineligible for the NDIS without adequate support services.

These specialist organisations service people living with disability across Tasmania. Many of these organisations rely on core funding from the state Government to operate. Others receive very small amounts of state funding which only covers their overheads, such as insurance costs for their volunteers.

Many of the people these organisations service are not eligible for any other support, such as through NDIS, because of the nature of their disability. These organisations include Autism Tasmania, the ParaQuad Association of Tasmania, the Epilepsy Association of Tasmania, TADTas, Brain Injury Association of Tasmania, Guide Dogs Tasmania, the Spina Bifida Association of Tasmania, Tasmanian Acquired Brain Injury Services, and a number of others.

Under the bilateral agreement with the federal government, the Hodgman Liberal Government has a clear and undeniable responsibility to provide services for Tasmanians living with a disability who are not eligible for support under the NDIS.

Dividing a considerably reduced amount among these services will not enable many of them to continue operating. Encouraging them to apply for grant-based, time-limited, nationally competitive project funding is not the answer.

If we are going to share feedback from stakeholders, the state manager of the NDS has voiced serious concerns about the state of disability services across Tasmania, after the sector's concerns were ignored in the Budget.

Will Kestin, the state manager, said -

The governments approach of handballing the responsibility for all things disability to the NDIS will have devastating repercussions for a sector where 44% of providers made a loss last year and one in ten providers are seriously considering closing their doors.

There is no 'choice and control' for people living with a disability if participants in the scheme have no services to choose from.

But there is more. Adding to this, there is no new investment in employment programs to help people living with disabilities find work or into Australian disability organisations and enterprise organisations. We all know what fantastic work they do in providing employment opportunities for people living with disabilities.

Another area in which people living with disabilities will now find themselves at further disadvantage is for the approximately 1400 people who access the Taxi Subsidy Scheme. This scheme has now been capped, making it much harder and potentially more expensive, once their cap has been reached, for people living with disabilities to participate in daily life or even to attend medical appointments.

In a short-sighted move, there has been no increased investment into public transport access for people to counter the taxi subsidy cut. Recent investments have not proven fruitful.

We have all seen the news regarding the issues with Metro's new accessible fleet.

Accessible tourism is another area ignored in the Budget. This is yet another way in people living with disabilities are not enabled to participate in activities that many of us take for granted, further isolating this segment of our community.

The Government has a target of 20 per cent of new public housing being built as accessible. It has brought forward \$20 million for this housing.

Disability advocacy groups have argued there is an urgent need for considerably greater investment. It would be very difficult to disagree with them.

In regards to the workforce, the disability sector is one of Tasmania's most rapidly growing industries. Stakeholders have argued for investment into workforce planning, developments and strategies. Despite the disability sector needing 5500 workers for the successful rollout of the NDIS, and despite an estimated nine CEOs of major Tasmanian disability organisations changing in very recent times, according to the NDS there is no investment in this area.

The Royal Commission into Violence, Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation of People with Disability is noted in the Budget; however, there is no planning for this, no dollars set aside for what will require some investment.

All these decisions will further isolate people living with disabilities. One stakeholder said to me that the Government and the minister should be ashamed of how this Budget treats people living with disabilities. This is a 'bad news' budget for people living with disabilities and for their families, carers and the workforce that has helped them. If the area of disability is a 'bad news' budget, the area of ageing or older people in this Budget is a 'do the bare minimum' budget.

It is positive to see the announcement of \$850 000 in the Budget for continued work to prevent elder abuse through the development and implementation of elder abuse prevention strategies. In Tasmania it is estimated that despite acknowledged under-reporting of elder abuse, between 3000 and 5000 older Tasmanians aged over 65 experience elder abuse. It is clear much more needs to be done. I look forward to seeing the next stage of the elder abuse strategy and remain hopeful it will include the capacity to work towards and, hopefully, even introduce safeguarding legislation.

Stakeholders in the area of older people have also raised concerns about the need for greater public housing as well as with disability and health investments, particularly preventative health. Council on the Ageing Tasmania has previously highlighted the risk of poor health outcomes for older women due to greater financial and housing insecurity, particularly in the rental market. It is a bare minimum budget for older people, despite our ageing population. There is very little for older Tasmanians in this Budget.

Other Budget commitments are watched closely by members of the Pembroke community, such as the progress of the Bellerive-Hobart ferry. Despite this seemingly being an infrastructure budget, there is little in the way of infrastructure progress to see. It is concerning that the state Government would need to inject significantly more funding to deliver the River Derwent ferry service it has promised to build. A report that cost more than \$100 000 has found that only a peak hour service between Sullivans Cove and Bellerive would be possible from current Budget allocations. This is not what the community is expecting.

Questions regarding this and the other issues I have raised will no doubt be discussed this week, as well as next week in Estimates. It is essential to ensure these initiatives are closely monitored, along with the Government's wider financial priorities, to ensure that the community's expectations are met. None of these meets the community's expectations. I look forward to hearing the debate progress and other members' reflections on this Budget.

[2.55 p.m.]

Ms FORREST (Murchison) - Mr President, this Budget is a disaster. I am not saying the Government has engineered the debacle, but it has presided over a growing calamity that blind Freddy spotted at least a year ago. I guess they hoped for a miracle. Unfortunately, the gods do not hand out miracles willy-nilly -

Mr Willie - The Prime Minister believes in them.

Ms FORREST - We were hit with the GST writedown instead. We should have learnt from the GST writedown experienced during the 2007-08 global financial crisis. Gross national product may slow a bit, but the determinants of the GST pool may slow even more. In addition, our own state revenues do not always grow according to projections. As we have seen with conveyance duties, governments past and present have budgeted as though things will only get better.

We have experienced slower wages growth and slowing house prices. Nationally, house prices have fallen, the wealth effect that underpins part of consumption has turned negative. This contributes to less than expected consumption which underpins the GST pool. We cannot say all of this is just bad luck. We all know there are ups and downs that simply need to be factored in to policy settings. They are not.

We are still getting the tired old rhetoric about the government surpluses. How long do we have to put up with this nonsense? The Treasurer's surplus does not include the effect of the record infrastructure spend. He boasts about the record infrastructure spend, but then he does not include it in his surplus figure. This record infrastructure spend has been promised every year, but the spending required to make it happen in each year's budget is not included in the calculation of the government surplus. How misleading is that?

I acknowledge and note that the Treasurer includes all the capital grants in his surplus figure when they are received. That is, when the money comes in. However, when the amounts are

provided to some of the government businesses, such as the irrigation grants that are contributed to Tasmanian Irrigation and the rail grants that go to TasRail, this money goes in as equity contributions. Hence they do not have any impact on, or reduce, the supposed surplus.

To borrow the Prime Minister's words, 'How good is that?'

Of course, some funds go into government businesses as operating grants. These do affect the surplus calculation. However, those that go in as equity contributions do not. These account for a significant portion of the grants to government businesses. Once again, to borrow that phrase from Mr Morrison, 'How good is that?'

There are other outlays, such as repayment of the housing debt to the federal government, that are not included in the Treasurer's calculation, further distorting and seeking to hide the reality. It is important to remind ourselves what the role of this Government is. The government is a service provider. The government's job is to provide services to Tasmanians. To provide these services, it pays operating expenses. Spending money on delivering services is what is needed to run the joint. The government also invests in new infrastructure and provides capital for government businesses. It also has to pay some financing costs, although at this stage we do not owe that much to third parties except in regard to the unfunded superannuation liability.

It is simply misleading to exclude the amounts spent on investing, meaning the spending on infrastructure. We are not running cash surpluses. This year the estimated outcomes show our overall cash deficit will be \$380 million. That is assuming the estimated outcomes are right, and they rarely are - the situation might end up being actually worse. Over the next four years we will run cash deficits totalling \$1.2 billion - not \$560 million of surplus as Mr Gutwein has tried to tell us.

People on the street are slowly cottoning on. I have been asked a question along the line that the Treasurer has admitted we will have to go into debt - how come if we are running surpluses? To which I have to say to these people, they are not real surpluses. The Treasurer has not included all his outlays. Those are the outlays for infrastructure, which we are basing this Budget on, as the member for Pembroke mentioned. People used to think I was the one who did not understand, but people are slowly realising now that is not me. It is the Treasurer who is telling the porkies, as he has done all along with Health funding.

He repeated the line on page 3 of his Budget speech that -

the ongoing challenge of the unprecedented increasing demand in our health system demonstrate how a surplus provides a capacity to deal with challenges.

What a load of absolute garbage! The only reason the Treasurer is allowed to manufacture a surplus is that he underfunded Health in the first place. He then used the existence of the surplus to reassure us he can fix the problem he created. I am reminded of the arsonist who joined the fire service to help extinguish fires he started himself.

It is actually worse than that because there is no surplus. It is sophistry at its worse: a misleading assertion based on a false premise. Anyone who advances this bogus proposition is preventing the community from coming to terms with the dire situation facing us. How is the Government going to tackle the problem?

Plan A is always to raid the GBEs. The Motor Accidents Insurance Board will have \$50 million removed next year. MAIB's profits arise partly from the good management of that organisation, but also because of the level of premiums paid by Tasmanian motorists. MAIB profits are simply taxes by another name. One cannot be critical of using taxes to help pay for government services - that is what they are for. It would have been difficult for TASCORP to hide from the government raiding party seeing the Secretary of Treasury is also the Chair of TASCORP. Nowhere to hide.

TASCORP was always going to be the source of funds because the Government maxed out its internal borrowings and would have to find some other pocket to pick. This Government, in fact all governments in the recent past, have looked to borrowing internally from accounts with balances to help pay for the operations of government. It is not new and I am not saying there is anything wrong with it. Robbing Peter to pay Paul - and in the Government's case it is Peter who is robbing Paul - is how you do it. After a while, in 2020-21, Paul will be completely destitute. Peter will have pinched the lot by then so Peter will have to ask TASCORP for a line of credit. Peter has a good working relationship with TASCORP because on 30 June each year Peter gets a loan from TASCORP for an amount equal to everything he has borrowed from Paul.

When the financial accounts are made up at 30 June, all the rightful balances are restored to all of Paul's bank accounts, but there is a borrowing owed to TASCORP. The next day on 1 July, Peter once again mugs Paul, borrows all the money and repays TASCORP the amount he borrowed only 24 hours earlier.

Mr Valentine - Magic.

Ms FORREST - It just saves having to pay interest to TASCORP. Peter is only charged interest for one day. I am not suggesting this is wrong as this practice has been going on for years. Rather, I am explaining what happens now to balance the books at the financial year and how this will need to change in 2020-21. The time will come, sometime in 2020-21, when the funds needed to fund spending will be in excess of what can be borrowed internally. The Government will have to set up a line of credit with TASCORP. When the internal borrowings need to be repaid so the funds can be spent as originally intended, the line of credit will be used. Ever heard of getting another credit card to pay off the existing one? I think that is how it will work; the Treasurer did not overwhelm us with too many details at this early stage about how this is going to work.

TASCORP fortunately has a lot of money invested at any one time. It borrows more than it needs at any time, so it is never caught short if it has to refinance any loans to government businesses or to smooth and match expected interest received from borrowers to the interest it has to pay to its lenders. TASCORP is a well-run organisation.

For the next year, 2019-20, the Government has asked TASCORP for a \$39.5 million dividend. Initially I was unsure where this was going to be taken from and needed to be sure the Mersey Community Hospital money account was not about to be raided. Of course, this would have been against the law we passed in this place when we received the \$730 million from the feds to run the Mersey and that is supposed to last 10 years. Some optimist claimed that at the time it might last 12 years. At last year's Estimates I was left with the impression it would run out in nine years, and then what? After closer inspection of TASCORP's financials, I guess that the dividend will be paid from TASCORP's retained earnings, which were \$82 million as at last 30 June.

Again, I am not suggesting there is anything inappropriate, but it does not fix our problems and could ultimately create other challenges further down the track. However, back to the decision to

take a dividend from TASCORP rather than borrowing the money from TASCORP, which always has extra cash ready in case it is needed. It usually has it ready for infrastructure investment in government businesses that borrow.

If it were a loan the Government sought from TASCORP, it would earn interest as the general government would have to pay that interest. Receiving it as a dividend means the general government does not bear the cost, TASCORP does. The Government does not pay any interest; TASCORP loses some of the balance in its investments, less interest earned. This is Peter taking money from Paul to prop up his budget and is the best result for the government in terms of how the government's bottom line looks. The Government will get a dividend, TASCORP will have slightly fewer assets and hence will wear the cost via slightly lower returns. This way TASCORP carries the costs rather than the Government - a win for Peter. However, in the context of the total state sector it makes no difference. It is just a question of who bears the cost: the general government or TASCORP. Doing it this way, it is TASCORP.

Over the forward Estimates, TASCORP will have to pay more dividends. Up until now, it has not had to pay the level of dividend required by other GBEs. When the dividend is paid, TASCORP will pay slightly less by way of income tax equivalents and its profits will be less due to the extra dividends paid to the general government. The extra dividends will not be enough because a line of credit will be needed sometime in 2021.

The story of TASCORP dividends is simply one of cost shifting to TASCORP. A choice between dividends and loans is just a cost-shifting matter and it makes no difference to the state as a whole, nor does the shift to the Bass Strait Islands to Hydro Tasmania. An immediate cashflow boost to the general government followed by subsequent lower returns from Hydro Tasmania - same thing. There may be sound commercial reasons for this change and that is a matter to discuss next week, but it may well be yet another way of getting a short-term boost for the general government and the bottom line.

It is quite extraordinary that without special dividends from MAIB and TASCORP, in 2019-20 the cupboard will be completely bare by June next year. The internal borrowings would have been equal to everything that was supposed to be in the cupboard, about \$930 million. By the way, Mr President, that is more missing than when your party left office in 2014; then there was only \$290 million missing and now there is \$930 million. It seems we have done a full circle to the past when this Government came to power and criticised the management of the hay in the barn by then premier and treasurer, Ms Giddings, only to do the same themselves.

This is a matter more broadly understood and reported now, making it harder for the Treasurer to hide from the truth. The media are reporting the reality more clearly, and I am disappointed the Leader did not refer to some of these comments.

In an article in *The Advocate* published late on budget day, 23 May, one of the editors, Anthony Haneveer, said a forecast operating surplus of \$57 million meanwhile will be attacked as only being made possible due to a raid on government business enterprises and state-owned companies.

In 2019-20, the Motor Accident Insurance Board and the Tasmanian Public Finance Corporation will be asked to pay special dividends of \$50 million and \$39.5 million respectively. Both are in addition to the standard year-to-year dividends they and other GBEs pay.

Likely to be an ongoing cause of friction is the demand in this Budget for government departments and agencies to find savings. The Treasurer says the efficiency dividend required of the public service will be modest. It will represent three-quarters of 1 per cent of its total spending. This totals \$450 million in unallocated savings that must be achieved over the next four years, beginning with \$50 million in the coming year.

We are entitled to be sceptical about whether these savings can be achieved without, as Mr Gutwein maintains, impacting on frontline services. Conversely, not achieving such savings is identified by Treasury as one of the risks to the Budget outcome.

Treasury says it will require committed action to identify and implement the savings measures and that is a big part of the problem. Mr Gutwein says the savings will come from expenditure such as consultants, travel and advertising, targeted vacancy control and natural employee attrition, without affecting essential services. In other words, jobs will go.

Worse, the Budget only provides for the Government's previous public sector wages policy of 2 per cent pay rises and the Treasurer says any increase above this will need to be funded through further savings.

It is clear this Budget has many strong headwinds and no real plan to address them. We simply are not seeing any genuine focus on the revenue side. It really is time the Treasurer showed some leadership and called for a nonpartisan approach to reviewing the other side of the Budget, as a reliance on ill-defined efficiency measures, cost shifting and a raiding of government businesses and the perennial pushing back of so-called record infrastructure spending to make ends meet, is unsustainable.

The other critical point is there is often significant cost associated with some of the Commonwealth grants we receive. This is particularly concerning around election time. Particularly in the recent federal election, both parties could not throw enough money at us, trying to buy or, as they would suggest, win votes.

This is another area where people are becoming much more aware. We saw millions of dollars being promised by all sides of politics, from small community organisations desperate for funds to large infrastructure projects. Some promises were re-announced funding commitments, many of these in the glossy budget flyers, so there is not much new there.

Most of us now realise most Commonwealth grants flow to, or via, the state Government and are taken into consideration when the Commonwealth Grants Commission decides the annual split up of the GST pool.

Some grants act to reduce the GST to which we would otherwise be entitled and are little more than GST in advance. We know our GST grants are general purpose grants, and as a state spend it how we wish.

If we receive extra specific purpose grants in one year, unless it is fully quarantined - and most grants are not, as that would potentially undermine the Federation and upset our neighbours to the north - it will be clawed back through reduced GST in subsequent years.

It is really important we understand this. A lot of these grants are clawed back. It is effectively GST in advance. Effectively we swap a specific purpose grant for reduced GST in the following

three years. It is not obviously immediately because of the three-year lag. We do eventually pay for the gift and reduce the money available to use at our discretion.

These are grants for a particular purpose. It reduces the amount we receive through the GST which is what we can spend on the things we believe we need to do for our community.

A specific grant for a particular project in a particular region inevitably leads to less GST money being spent in the rest of Tasmania. A free lunch often means a neighbour has to miss a meal or two. We need to realise this is what it is, that a massive infrastructure promise of grant funding not quarantined, and most are not, in one part of the state means we have less GST, meaning we have less money spent overall in the part of the state not the beneficiary of the other grant. We should demand to be told how each grant will impact on our GST when it is announced - this is something both Estimates committees should pursue next week when looking at grants, particularly infrastructure which is where most of them are. Which ones impact our GST and which ones do not? Not many are quarantined, but there are some.

Irrigation grants under the water for the future scheme will have zero quarantining and will all be clawed back. Some grants are only clawed back 50 per cent and these include major road and rail funding - the Midland Highway, for instance. In that case we only end up paying for half the gift of the funding to start with. Some other grants are fully quarantined, such as grants to the Roads to Recovery scheme, which have no impact on our GST relativity. Full clawback also occurs with major hospital infrastructure grants such as the \$340 million to assist the Royal Hobart Hospital rebuild and the Commonwealth grants to the local north-west regional hospitals, both the Mersey and the North West Regional. Most of the Royal Hobart Hospital money was received years ago and has since been repaid with subsequent GST reductions. In reality this means the Government is now trying to fund one of the biggest infrastructure projects in the state's history from current earnings and it simply does not make sense.

We can now see why we need to start borrowing funds to complete the work, but we do not know how these borrowings and the interest payments will be met. We need to be informed by the Treasurer how the ordinary ongoing operations of government - funding health, education, public safety, justice et cetera - can be properly funded when a huge amount is being extracted to pay for an asset with a life of 30, 40, 50 years-plus. Why are we using current funding to fund it? We used all the capital we had, most because some time has passed has been clawed back through less GST, and now we are trying to fund it to complete the work. It is like trying to pay for a house from three years earnings. There would not be much left if you were trying to do that and put food on the table or nurses in the hospital.

The Commonwealth Grants Commission estimate of the GST split up is how the system works in a federation. A system of horizontal fiscal equalisation, as it is called, is designed to ensure each state and territory has the same capacity to provide the same average standard services to its residents. As members would know, the system has recently been reviewed at the behest of Western Australia. The result was a political fix and we will face a number of challenges in coming years as a result of this outcome and at the moment Western Australians are doing very nicely.

The Budget is effectively a spending plan not accompanied by a funding plan. An infrastructure grant from the Australian Government is not a funding plan for a long-life asset if it is all going to be clawed back in a few years via reduced GST allocations. The Treasurer has acknowledged he will need to borrow and go into debt to manage over the coming years. Records are set to be broken and each year this Government will borrow from either internal borrowings or

borrowings from TASCORP a total of \$1.22 billion over the next four years. This all has to be repaid.

Take the case of the Tasmanian Risk Management Fund: there will be \$313 million in the account by the end of the forward Estimates for insurance for the Government, the Government being a self-insurer retaining the money. The Government is advised by the State Actuary on how much to set aside rather than pay to an insurance company. By 2023 there is supposed to be \$313 million in the fund, but there will not be any. Imagine if you guys had done that when you were in government, Mr President. Oh, you did a bit, didn't you? The scorn and ridicule from Mr Gutwein would have been free-flowing, very vitriolic and no doubt quite persistent. Mr Gutwein was quoted in *The Mercury's* editorial the day after the Budget was handed down as saying -

'Surpluses were an important element of our responsible financial management',
so the government has cash on hand to deal with emergencies, to sandbag the
economy in uncertain times.

That is absolute garbage. In 2020-21 there will not be any cash on hand to deal with emergencies, to 'sandbag the economy in uncertain times'. There will not even be enough to cough up when an insurable event occurs. The money is supposed to be there to pay for insurable events. It will not be there. If a private insurance company, or one that is publicly listed, operated like that, a period of respite and reflection at Her Majesty's pleasure would be the likely outcome for those responsible.

While the infrastructure planning is welcome, the Government has a woeful record when it comes to infrastructure spending. In the completed five years since it came to office, it has spent \$508 million less on infrastructure than was budgeted.

The 2018 year is seared in my memory. The infrastructure underspend was \$174 million. That is just in that one year. The budget was \$610 million, the actual as per the final accounts was only \$436 million - \$174 million less than what was budgeted. How can we be sure the Government will not cut infrastructure spending, as it has done every year since 2014, especially with demands in other areas, including health, showing no signs of slowing?

I bet the bookies would take bets on the Government spending what it says it will on infrastructure. They would be happy to. Mr President, you are a betting man. What odds would you would like on that - 10 to 1, 20 to 1? You could write your own ticket - 100 to 1, if you like. There is almost no chance of a payout. The only reason there is a heap of infrastructure ready to be built is because of all the project deferrals that have occurred since 2014.

How will it be possible to manage a sudden increase in work, if we are to do it? I commend the Government, if they can do it. It is not just the workers, but State Growth, the responsible department. This department suffered more than any other department as the result of Mr Gutwein's cuts after the 2014 election.

I hear from sources that the Department of State Growth is outsourcing the management of its contracts. That is another question for Estimates next week. If the department cannot manage its own contracts, and has to outsource that, what is going on? That is one for Committee B.

Mr Valentine - Is this outsourcing outside of government or outsourcing to Crown Law? Or maybe not.

Ms FORREST - No, it is the project management I am talking about.

Mr Valentine - Okay.

Ms FORREST - Crown Law will not do project management.

Mr Valentine - I thought you said contracts.

Ms FORREST - No, project management.

Ms Rattray - I am just writing this down.

Ms FORREST - Are they ready for the task? Can they actually get on and do what they are saying? Committee B will ask the minister at Estimates.

Skilled workers are not easy to get in large numbers, with other infrastructure building such as the Royal and others taking place around the state. It is okay to promise all this, but you have to be able to deliver it.

As I mentioned in a briefing the other day, one of the wind farm contractors suggested they were going to employ Tasmanian workers. Now their project in Victoria has run out, so they are going to bring their Victorian team over to do the work. We do not want that happening. We want Tasmanians getting jobs.

The experience of the Royal Hobart Hospital rebuild troubles me. It is not just because of the project challenges during the building - the alleged stuff-ups and delays, many of which found their way into the media. My real and ongoing concerns relate to the future. Stage 2 of the rebuild is allegedly almost ready, but we are not ready to properly staff and run it and maximise its value.

The rebuild has been in gestation for 10 years, and it appears we are not ready to fully operate it. I find it very troubling, and I am embarrassed for all Tasmanians, particularly after today's Auditor-General's report, which I will mention briefly in a moment.

If infrastructure is meant to grow the economy and a growing economy means more government revenue, why is there no associated increase in revenue in the budget papers? Is there a lag or is the Government yet to organise a plan to capture some of the increased value? If it has not, how is the Government supposed to keep borrowing money to fund new infrastructure when the increased returns to government are minuscule? They will not even pay the interest on the borrowings.

We have to be able to capture that benefit for the whole of Tasmania. It does not show in the budget papers where that is going to be captured. All this talk about the pickup and more recent performance in Tasmanian economy being led by Government policy - I am beginning to think it happened despite Government policy. Correlation is not causation. Just because two events occur at the same time does not mean that one caused the other.

There is no doubt had that spending in the Labor government's last budget in May 2013 occurred, things would have been pretty grim. That is exactly the same prospect we are facing now. The Government might have postponed D-day, but that is all. Judgment Day still awaits. When the Government took over in 2014, \$920 million-worth of hay was missing from the barn. That

\$920 million was internally borrowed from special deposit accounts and other accounts with balances in order to fund the ordinary operations of government. By 2020 the internal borrowings I have already mentioned will be \$930 million. How can the Treasurer possibly claim to have the state's budgetary problems under control? There were problems in 2014 that looked exactly like they do now. They are a problem now.

By contrast, people have accepted repetition of his bogus surplus claims until now. I do not think they will accept it much longer. The biggest unknown in the Budget is the \$450 million in cost savings across the Budget and forward Estimates that is yet to be found but which is crucial to the Government's bottom line if it is to be achieved. It is dishonest to imply this is a mere 75 cents in every \$100 spent. The Leader mentioned this. I am going to dispute what she said. It is a big ask and a big task. To say that for every \$100 spent, you only need to find 75 cents is not the way it works in practice.

Change happens at the margins and 95 per cent of spending will occur regardless. The burden of change will fall on the remaining 5 per cent. Necessary savings will not be a mere 75 cents per \$100, it will be more like \$15 per \$100. It is the vulnerable and those on the margin who will suffer. To pretend otherwise is nonsense. To pretend the burden can be spread equally is delusion. This highlights the fate that awaits Tasmanians. It is fine to talk about debt and bottom lines and what they mean, but when change occurs it will occur at the margins.

Those at the margin are the ones who need help the most. When we talk about spending \$700 million on infrastructure in one year that sort of money would help a lot of people at the margin. We are at the crossroads. To get the economy moving the Government has decided to tackle all the infrastructure projects that banked up while it supposedly rescued the economy. To now proceed with all those projects will take the Budget to a place where we were destined to end up under the previous Labor government.

We are heading to the place of ongoing deficits. I have no problem with debt, I simply want to know how the Government will service it. The Treasurer says he will easily deal with the level of debt he is proposing. If that is the case then tell us - set it out for all of us. Meanwhile, all the people on the margin have been largely forgotten. The Leader did not read any quotes from the community sector organisation. I will.

This is a very real issue that was taken up in an article published in *The Mercury* by Emily Baker on 25 May. She reported that -

New analysis from the Tasmanian Council of Social Service lays bare what chief executive Kym Goodes has described as 'the harsh reality of the other Tasmania', one where more and more people are falling behind. 'These numbers tell the clear story of the increased pace of division and inequality in Tasmania', said Ms Goodes said. 'They tell the story of two Tasmanias - one where some of us get to enjoy the benefits of a strong economy and the other where the waiting lists, health, training and employment outcomes are becoming worse at a rapid rate.' The figures show the number of Tasmanians accessing energy concessions has risen from 88,430 people in 2013-14 to 92,863 people in 2018-19.

While the number of unemployed has dropped from 17,500 people this financial year, the number of people facing underemployment, meaning they cannot obtain enough work, has risen to 28 800 Tasmanians from 25 700 five-years-ago.

Mr Valentine - That is 26 800.

Ms FORREST - Yes, 26 800. What did I say? Sorry, 26 800 from 25 700 five years ago. The article continues -

Priority public housing applicants are waiting an average 56 weeks for a home and the public housing wait list has blown out by 1179 people since 2013-14 to 3233 this year.

'As you read these statistics, remember that each number represents a real person, their lives and families', Ms Goodes said. 'We cannot wait for a better time to act on these outcomes. Tasmanians have waited long enough for the right economic conditions to permit the Government to prioritise investment in them. The fact our Government hasn't yet found the capacity to invest in our people, as well as our economy, diminishes every one of us.'

I urge members to go back and read that. I urge the Government to read that. I urge every minister in the Government to read this.

The member for Pembroke touched around the areas of disability and the aged and the people missing out. This is real, this is the other part of Tasmania, and we see them in in our electorates. How the Government cannot respond to this is beyond me. In a caring, inclusive and successful state, we must ensure all Tasmanians' needs are considered and addressed. We have to be able to share in the benefits the economy has brought to Tasmania in recent years.

I note a report released in May this year - same month as now, so very recent - by the Centre of Full Employment and Equity. It is entitled 'Prosperity and Distress in Australia's Cities and Regions', and it says that Tasmania has some of the most distressed communities in Australia. The report uses methodology proposed by the Economic Innovation Group (EIG 2017) in the United States and uses spatially aggregated data to develop an index of prosperity and distress in Australian localities - PDI.

I encourage members to read the whole report - it is available through the Parliamentary Library. It reminds us of the need for a nonpartisan approach to addressing these issues. I commend it to members and quote a couple of things from this informative and interesting report. It not an overly long report, but important reading. The report says -

But it is not only this differentiation between individuals and households, in the relative constraints within which their housing choices are exercised, that is a significant issue in the social and spatial differentiation that is readily discernible across our cities and regions.

Rather, it is in addition to the differences in the potential of people to engage in the labour market, influenced by (among other things) the supply of jobs and the ability of people to tap into new opportunities, that become crucial in that social and spatial differentiation.

And further -

The general message from this collection of research is that living in a distressed community or neighbourhood is likely to come with a higher probability of witnessing disadvantages that either compound existing problems and adds to a new layer of disadvantage for an individual or family. It is concerns such as these that drives the discussion contained in this report.

...

The PDI is an indicator that rates areas across Australia in terms of their relative economic prosperity and distress based on a range of economic performance factors.

There are seven factors used to determine the PDI. More details of these measures can be found in the report and more explanations of how they apply them.

They are: no post-school qualification, change in housing vacancy rate, adults not working, poverty rate, median income ratio, change in employment and change in business establishments.

To understand how those things are applied, you need to read the report. But they are the seven areas looked at. The report states 20 per cent of communities across the country with the highest PDI score are classified as distressed. Geographically these communities are present in all states and territories; however, in relative terms, these communities are greatly over-represented in South Australia and Tasmania. Tasmania in particular has nearly double the number of distressed communities compared to the national average. How can we be ignoring these? I think we inherently know this, but we need policies that address this issue if we are all to benefit from the economic benefit of this state and the good economic times the Treasurer keeps reminding us of.

Regional cities in the top 20 distressed across the country include Launceston. Among the capital cities, Hobart has one community in the top 20 distressed communities. The report states -

In Tasmania, the north-eastern suburbs of Launceston are classified as distressed, as is much of the north coast, including George Town, Devonport, Ulverstone, the stretch from Burnie to Waratah and Smithton. Many of the sparsely populated areas are also in distress, such as Strahan in the west and St Marys in the east.

The highest ranked communities include Gagebrook, Ravenswood and Acton in Burnie.

The report concludes, and I will not quote the whole conclusion but part of it -

The ongoing lack of real and sustained action and the apparent acceptance of unequal community outcomes misses the important and often negative impacts that these geographic inequalities have. Time and time again, academics and others have pointed to the link between geography and an individual's potential.

...

Certainly, there seems to be little real action to address issues in the most distressed communities, a situation that may haunt those who are looking for votes, especially in marginal seats. The clear take home message is that society and especially the politicians that are elected to govern, need to show more

concern when it comes to the large gap between prosperity and distress that has seemed to have become a settled pattern across our local communities, or be willing to live with the consequences.

It should be clear that while local communities and their residents can and often do provide the impetus for positive social and economic change, a key priority for government should be to establish genuine bi-partisan responses that challenges policy approaches from the past, questions the inevitability of uneven community outcomes and engages the best and brightest thinkers to provide stewardship for the way forward.

We talk about having summits and meetings, but we do not see real action come out of them. We have to have a nonpartisan approach to this. We cannot keep on ignoring that there are two Tasmanias. I am not sure how many times we need to hear this before we actually respond in a nonpartisan manner.

Many Tasmanians are not being provided with the services or opportunities they need and deserve. Shelter must be at the top of the list. Access to safe and affordable housing is at crisis point. With winter upon us and very little achieved over the past five years to relieve this very real issue, our fellow Tasmanians will really suffer. Access to safe, affordable and secure housing is a fundamental need and right. Without this, much of the effort and money poured into education, health, child safety, public safety and justice, just to name a few, will not hit the mark. In the Auditor-General's briefing we heard today about some of the issues with bed block, meaning you cannot get patients out of the hospital; some of that is because patients have nowhere to go, they are homeless. We must focus on housing as a key issue.

I recently shared my vision for this beautiful state. My vision sees a Tasmania that is inclusive, safe, productive and vibrant, where all Tasmanians are prosperous against happiness, wellbeing and financial measures; a state where we value, protect and respect our natural environment for current and future generations, and care for our land, sea and air as we share in the benefit from these precious assets. All Tasmanians must be able to share in the benefits that living in this state provides. Access to safe, secure, affordable housing is critical and must be a focus of this Government. I am not saying they are not focusing on it, but they need to deliver, not just talk about it.

We must value education as a key to success; however, in the absence of safe, secure and affordable housing, access to education cannot be assured. It has to be housing first.

We need to focus on the elimination of poverty through job creation and a productive community with equal access to quality food and water. We need policies that support local business and foster community cohesion. We need a vision that is shared across the political landscape, with much greater tolerance and respect for different opinions than is currently exhibited. We should not be pitting Tasmanians against each other - and we saw bad examples of this in the recent election. We need all sectors of our community to work together to make the best place in Australia to live, work and play if we are to deliver on a shared vision.

Perhaps we could look to our neighbour to the east. New Zealand's Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern is moving away from traditional bottom line measures like productivity and economic growth, to setting its priorities in the budget to focus on goals like community and cultural connection and equity and wellbeing across generations. Ms Ardern's budget focuses unashamedly

on matters related to equity, inclusion and community wellbeing - we all do well if we all do well. In her policy setting, all new spending must advance one of five government priorities: improving mental health, reducing child poverty, addressing the inequalities faced by indigenous Maori and Pacific Island peoples, thriving in a digital age and transitioning to a low emissions sustainable economy. All government policies have to address one of those five areas.

Mr President, I am not suggesting we can just pick up this policy approach and adopt it as it is any more than we can directly replicate Finland's Housing First policy or its education policies, but the principles are the same. When we look at these principles, we should be looking at the policy settings that will give effect to the vision we have for this state. Most of us share the sort of vision.

I am not sure this Government has a clarity of vision; even if it does, it is not clearly linked to budget policy and priorities in a tangible way. It is great to see infrastructure spending, but if it is not delivering benefits to those people who need it most, we really have a problem. It is not that we do not need to invest in infrastructure, we do, but rather it must demonstratively create community wellbeing and benefit and we need to be able to point to how it does. Creating jobs is crucial and having a job is fundamental to enhancing an individual's self-esteem, self-worth and capacity to fully participate in society. There needs to be employment opportunities to facilitate inclusion. Our high rates of underemployment and low rates of participation need to be addressed. We need to ensure our people are job-ready with the necessary skills and training to achieve this. The catchcry of jobs, jobs, jobs needs to flow through to providing broader community benefit beyond simply those who are employed.

Taking such a policy and budgetary priority approach requires strategic planning and not a scattergun approach. We need to break down the silos and require all government policy decisions to consider how any proposed spending will address key areas of priority. There is a need for a new approach and it is being called for by those working in the community sector. The member for Nelson will speak about this because she has extensive experience in this area.

We are in the middle of an inquiry into the horizontal fiscal equalisation scheme. I do not want to pre-empt any conclusions or findings from the inquiry. In the budget paper a table is presented outlining the Community Grants Commission data showing we are only raising 90 per cent of the revenue the Commonwealth Grants Commission assesses we should be raising if we are raising an average of what other states do with the same effort. This is a matter we need to be seriously thinking about. If the \$450 million in savings are found across the forward Estimates, I would like to know what that will mean: will we be spending even less than what the Commonwealth Grants Commission has assessed that we need to? If those savings are genuinely effected, we will be spending less in services somewhere. How will the Commonwealth Grants Commission see this? Will we be spending less compared with other states? If that is the case, I am not sure the people of Tasmania would be keen to accept it.

The Government is proud of its tax system and says it is competitive, but are people coming to Tasmania because we pay less tax than we should or do compared to others? After all, the majority of people do not pay state tax anyway. Or are people being dissuaded from moving here because we do not raise enough and our services as a result are substandard? Maybe that is one of the considerations.

Talking of substandard services brings me to the question of health. How long do we have to put up with the misleading spin from the Government about record spending, when year after year the Government serves up a budget proposing to spend less than the actual spending in the year just

completed, or in this case, nearly completed, given the budget is handed down in May, and the end of the year is the end of June.

The Government has, over recent years, compared this year's Budget with the hopelessly inadequate figure in last year's budget, that in every case, needs additional funds to top it up, predominately through the now annual supplementary appropriation bill.

The general public now also fully appreciates this and the only meaningful comparison is with actual not budgeted spending. People are awake to the fact every year of this Government the budget increase has been less than spent the year before or only a very small increase. It simply does not keep up with health and general inflation costs.

People know health spending will not be nearly enough, even though it may well be more than what was budgeted the year before, thus the record health spending claim.

The Government maintains it is spending a higher portion of its budget on health. Next year it will be 31 percent. In isolation it is a meaningless statistic. Maybe the government sector should be larger. After all the government is a service provider. We have a growing population with growing needs and health needs in dollar terms that in general grow faster than the economy.

Without considering all the other factors, an increased portion of the budget spending on health is not necessarily evidence of this Government's priorities. It could be evidencing the Government is not growing its budget as it should in a growing economy crying out for more services, in a climate where they couldn't restrain health spending any further without fear of a revolt.

The Treasurer seems to be unaware of this predicament by his rhetoric and titles his budget Maintaining Momentum, Investing for Growth. Well the momentum is downwards. We continue to spend more than we receive. Unless some serious corrective action is taken, this will continue.

Back to health, the members who were able to attend the Auditor General's briefing would have had a chance to look at his report. His latest report into the performance of Tasmania's four major hospitals and delivery of emergency department services is damning.

I want to read some of this report even though this information has been repeated by a number of reviews over the years. I encourage members, and I am sure everyone will read the full report. In part of the findings and recommendations section, it said -

Agency and hospital staff consistently referred to the impacts of recent governance churn in the sector as a factor, but also to the absence of effective leadership and accountability as major impediments to tackling long-standing cultural barriers to change, and the dysfunctional silo mentality within hospitals, contributing to bed block and ineffective discharge planning and bed management.

These significant cultural challenges were similarly noted in 2014 by the Australian Government's Commission on Delivery of Health Services in Tasmania, which reported it had observed a deeply engrained culture of resistance to change, evidenced by the system's inertia in the face of several reviews recommending reform.

A 2017 Clinical Utilisation Study by THS of 1013 hospital admissions confirms significant scope exists across Tasmanian hospitals to free up existing bed capacity by improving bed management, including admission, patient management and discharge practices. THS estimates improvements to these practices alone could create an additional 3000 bed days per year.

That is only a small section of it. In his conclusion he says -

It is my conclusion that the Tasmanian hospital system is not working effectively to meet the growing demand for ED care, inpatient beds and its associated performance obligations for ED access and patient flow within the THS service plan.

This is partly due to capacity constraints, particularly at RHH, which is undergoing extensive redevelopment works, but also because of longstanding cultural and process weaknesses within hospitals that are impeding effective discharge planning, bed management and coordination between EDs and inpatient areas.

These challenges are heightening the risks for patients and staff and are preventing the EDs of Tasmania's four major hospitals from operating efficiently and effectively.

He also covers the outcomes for patients once they arrive in the emergency departments, and the adverse outcomes have increased enormously. We cannot allow this to continue. The reports have been done - this one, and many others before. The Auditor-General mentioned that the 2014 report had 52 recommendations, and most of them have not been implemented. I am not sure if this minister is up for it, or whether we need to see a change - someone who is willing to take it on and do it. He has been there since 2014 when that report was done, and most of the 52 recommendations have not been implemented. No wonder he did not want to give us the KPMG report.

There is a real problem in our health service. The minister knows that. The Government knows that. It is going to take some real leadership to deal with it. On the matter of investing for growth - from the title of the Treasurer's Budget - unless we can capture some of the value of this investment to enable us to have money available to fund the services the people of Tasmania need, this means nothing more than a continuation of the downhill momentum. It is especially the case for those who are not sharing the benefits of our recent and currently ongoing economic growth and activity.

I hope the Treasurer will be a little more honest and accepting of the reality that the state is facing. While he seems content to avoid full acknowledgement of our reality, it is almost impossible for him to take the first step on the road to recovery.

I conclude with a few specific matters related to the Budget I am personally not able to follow up during Estimates next week because they fall under the purview of Committee B. Can the Leader answer these questions in her reply?

I note the provision for access to parliamentary drafters outside the Office of Parliamentary Counsel for the members. I commend the Government on providing that. I note it is under the output group under Parliamentary Library, which Committee B will be looking at. There is no specific detail about the amount of money for that or how it is going to be accessed. I am sure more detail will follow. There is an opportunity for Committee B to follow that one up. It will make a

big difference to the members of this parliament who are not in the Government. I thank the Government for taking that seriously.

The Ombudsman's Office, another area covered by Committee B, is getting two more right to information officers. There is a huge backlog in RTI requests. They even deal with parliamentary committee requests, which is completely inappropriate. However, the Health Complaints Commissioner has an even greater need. An inquiry is going on in the Ombudsman's Office, but Committee B needs to get a good understanding of what pressures the Ombudsman's Office is under, particularly in the health complaints area. We were told by our health community - this is on the record in our second interim report - about the shortfall of staffing in the Ombudsman's Office, particularly in the health area.

It is good to have two more RTI officers to say, 'No, you cannot have the information', or maybe, 'Yes, you can'. However, what about people with genuine health complaints and other complaints about access to services? That is where there is a real backlog and as much need as much as there is for RTI officers.

I am pleased to see the Government's ongoing commitment to Project O, in the north-west, our Big hART initiative from some years ago. This has been rolled out from Wynyard to Smithton. It is also on the mainland, and it is making a real difference in the lives of young women who have exposure or experience of family violence. It provides a strategic focus for those young women, it has measurable outcomes in terms of community and individual wellbeing, and I commend the Government continuing that as part of its family violence policy framework.

The Leader spoke about the Burnie Port expansion. That needs to be looked at further as to what is actually proposed. Both federal parties during the election made significant commitments to the expansion and upgrade of that port. It would be good if one of the members on Committee B would take that up and get more detail on that.

One school that is not on the list for work is the Montello Primary School. This school is a disgrace. Not the people in it, the physical infrastructure. It was built in the 1950s. It had a little facelift during the BER or one other round of funding. It is not a contemporary learning space. It is the most unsuitable learning space. Back in the 1950s, it was probably all right.

The new toilets are so inappropriately located it is breathtaking. You walk into the new toilet block and into a little corridor with separate unisex cubicles on the left. On the right is a big window along the front so you are out of the weather. The window is right on the main road, where everyone walks up and down to the school's main entrance. How could that have happened? I asked if it was built around the wrong way. If the windows and cubicles were on the opposite side, it would have looked over a play area where teachers are supervising. Did the builders not think it was a bit odd with people walking past only 20 metres away?

Ms Rattray - I suggest that in the BER funding there was a fair bit of haste. Perhaps because it was not thoroughly thought through, this was the result.

Ms FORREST - This is the new part of the school, the best bit, the face lift. The old school has two long corridors with classrooms off the side. The other toilets are at the end of this long corridor down two flights of concrete stairs. They are at least as archaic as the old Ulverstone High School ones when I went there. There is a change room that is not used. It is a bully's haven. Any

child with a mobility issue has to go around the outside of the school in the rain and wind and then in the door from where you can access it from outside.

A teacher who worked there for a short while contacted me. She had injured her knee and she could not get to most parts of the school. There are stairs everywhere. It needs bulldozing and building on the flat oval below. You can then create a lovely playing space up on the hill. I have raised this with the minister. It is in his electorate. I am sure he is keen to talk to me more about.

Penguin primary school and high school has had millions of dollars spent on it already and it is getting a bit more. That is fine, but what about Montello? What about some of the schools that have not had any money spent on them? I am sure we all have them in our electorates. I am not complaining about the other schools in my electorate. There are some that need some work, but this one is in a low socio-economic area.

It is an area where kids need a reason to come to school. We need to give them an environment that encourages them to be there. The staff do a fabulous job in really difficult conditions but we are not going to get some of these tough families to engage with this school while it is in this condition. That is my whinge about Montello Primary School.

The other thing that bothered me was the withdrawal of the public bus from Strahan to Hobart. There were not a lot of people on it but tourism is increasing and we have a resurgence in art-based tourism in Queenstown through Raymond Arnold's LARQ Gallery, the Q Bank Gallery built by Stephen Brockway and his partner. They have an artist-in-residence all the time. These artists often are not very wealthy and they rely on public transport to get to Queenstown. They cannot afford to fly to Strahan then get a lift to Queenstown; they relied on that bus.

The Government needs to look at a more flexible arrangement. There are public transport tourism operators down in Strahan and Queenstown. We need to look at different models. Just because it might not fit the Metro model or something like that does not mean you say it is all too hard. You look at other ways to increase access to that community.

Mr Valentine - Unless you want your towns to become ghost towns.

Ms FORREST - Yes, but they are not. A lot of properties in Queenstown have been bought and are being done up; it is fantastic.

Mr Valentine - Yes, I am just saying if you do not provide the transport, people move out.

Ms FORREST - That is right. Many people coming to these artists-in-residence are international or from the mainland; they do not all have the capacity to hire a car. For some of them you would think it is not best to drive on that road from Hobart to Queenstown. It is not the easiest drive. They are much happier to use public transport. I am very disappointed it has been taken away. The only option now, if you are going to use a bus, is to bus from Hobart up to Burnie, stay overnight, and then travel from Burnie down to Queenstown - two days to get from Hobart to Queenstown. I know it is a long way - I travel it all the time - but that is ridiculous. I would like the Government to have a better look at that.

The Leader spoke about the rail trail funding. We are waiting for that funding from the state for the erosion management on Ocean Vista because the bike trail cannot go ahead until it is fixed. I do not think that is in the Budget, not according to what you said. That is another matter for

Committee B if it is able to follow that up on the Ocean Vista erosion for the rail trail to go ahead. That is what I have been told: that it cannot proceed until that is fixed. Obviously, you do not want cyclists falling into Bass Strait.

Mrs Hiscutt - I did not say either way, honourable member.

Ms FORREST - You said there was the funding for the other end, not for that end.

Mrs Hiscutt - Yes, I did not say either way about what you are discussing.

Ms FORREST - I am just asking you if you could find out if it is there as it was not apparent to me.

I thank the Leader for facilitating a briefing with State Growth yesterday on the Cooee to Wynyard road, the old 'Cooee crawl', as it is affectionately known. There is a number of pinch points along that section. It does get very congested for a short period in the morning and at night. You just hope you are going the right way. When I am going into Burnie in the morning, that is the wrong way; if I am coming from Burnie to Wynyard in the afternoon, that is the wrong way. It just gets so congested and backed up.

A bit of work could be done immediately, such as synchronising the traffic lights to improve the flow and putting in a set of traffic lights at the Cam River Bridge to prevent the rat run, as they call it. I do not know if anyone knows what a rat run is - it is where you go around the back streets to come in at another entry, which moves the congestion and the problem. It does reduce people taking a risk pulling out into the smallest of gaps hoping for the best at the Cam River turn-off to the Murchison Highway.

There was some funding announced for the Cam River Bridge by the federal Liberal government so it will be interesting to know when and how that is going to flow to give effect to some of these changes. There is also funding for the Bass Highway west of Wynyard to Marrawah. There is a significant amount of money being committed to that and that money is quarantined. There is a big bucket of money and every state has its little bit of a dib into it so it is quarantined.

In closing, I am looking forward to getting more detail on where we are headed next week in budget Estimates. I reiterate: it is clear this Budget has many strong headwinds and no real plan to address them. Steady as you go is not good enough, and I have heard that a few times. We simply are not seeing any genuine focus on the revenue side of the Budget and no clear plan for or indication of how the Government will repay borrowings and interest payments of the inevitable debt we will be taking on. Clearly we cannot rely on a major surge in the national economy as housing prices in Victoria and New South Wales are having an impact there and forcing at least the Victorian government to look at the revenue side of its budget to deal with its \$500 million writedown in stamp duty revenues and a \$200 million fall in GST revenues. The Andrews Government says it is going to look at the revenue side. We need to as well.

We also cannot expect the Commonwealth to continue to bail us out if we are not doing our bit to raise our own source revenues, as the Victorians said they are already having to look at. We already have a 62 per cent reliance on the Commonwealth for our revenue. It really is time the Treasurer showed some leadership and called for a nonpartisan approach to reviewing the revenue side of the Budget as the reliance on ill-defined efficiency measures, cost shifting and raiding of

government businesses, backed up by the perennial pushing out of the so-called record infrastructure spending to make ends meet, is unsustainable.

[4.05 p.m.]

Mr VALENTINE (Hobart) - Mr President, we would not want it to happen as happened - I think it was last year or was it the year before, or was it the year before that? - with the forestry bill. As I listened to the Treasurer read his Budget Speech in the other place last week I heard a confident man talking up Tasmania's fiscal position and future prospects. I then listened to the responses in following days and not many of them were that positive. As I am sure most members here do, I surveyed the headlines in our local newspaper with a bit of a finger in the wind to gauge acceptance or otherwise, and the responses were in some ways as expected from each quarter. There were many negatives and few positives. Headlines such as 'Budget of fear and loathing' are perhaps to be expected from the unions; 'Give them shelter', from our care sector that is diligently working to assist those in greatest need; others were 'Homeless cry for help and cling to hope', 'Working families hit by crisis', 'Business gives tick to Gutwein budget'. The Property Council of Australia and the Tasmanian Chamber of Commerce and Industry and their likes obviously came out in support because that it is what I hear them do with budgets from this Government.

Neighbourhood Houses were pleased with their level of funding and the Law Society of Tasmania was pleased with the funding for legal aid being provided; the Small Business Council also expressed support.

I guess the main question is: are we heading in the right direction? As usual, I take advice on these things and there is concern with the direction the budget has taken over the last two cycles.

Ratings agencies are also making noises. No doubt the lack of a plan for reversing debt accumulation in the medium term and the fragility of our budget outcomes may cause them to be further concerned.

It is a risky budget. It largely abandons what could be argued is the more cautious risk-managed approach of recent years. It does not reflect emerging approaches to public sector organisations and management coming from countries such as New Zealand, as the member for Murchison pointed out. It is perhaps quite traditional in its approach; it is reactive, not strategic. It appears to lack innovation, one would suggest. It does not set the foundation for moving forward - instead it appears to set a trend for rapidly increasing debt.

The 2019-20 Budget has been labelled 'the infrastructure budget' by some - last year, it was termed the 'blokes' budget', as sexist as that sounds - with record infrastructure spending across a number of portfolio areas over the four-year forward Estimates. It delivers four years of surpluses by significantly increasing borrowings with a cost being a move into net debt of \$1.2 billion by the end of 2022-23.

As I pointed out earlier, the unions have called it 'a budget of fear and loathing'. This Budget continues the trend set with the 2018-19 Budget, even though many would argue that Tasmania's social indicators are in a worse position than only 12 months ago. That was shown in the table prepared by TasCOSS and published in Saturday's *Mercury*, part of which has been read out by the member for Murchison. It shows a stark contrast between the two parts of the Tasmanian economy when we can hear the Treasurer spruiking the Budget and yet we see figures like this put together by TasCOSS. Looking at the health figure in that table - in 2013-14 departing the Emergency Department within four hours at the RHH was 60.3 per cent, now it is down to 54 per cent.

Obviously we will be looking at this when we have a closer look at this in the Estimates and when we have the minister before us, we can ask further questions - not that we have not asked him over the last two years in inquiries. We have had many questions for the minister and he has turned up to those inquiries whenever we have asked him and we thank him for that. This is just showing this is on a downward trend.

Elective surgery waiting lists in 2013-14 were 7438, up to 9043 now in 2018-19. The proportion of people deferring access to general practitioners due to cost has gone up - it was 6.9 per cent in 2013-14 and is now up to 8.7 per cent. On it goes. I am sure all members have seen this table. School retention rates for years 7 to 12 were 68.4 per cent in 2013-14 and 74 per cent in 2018-19, so that is a positive there. The member for Murchison dealt with the number of unemployed. The number on Newstart Allowance: not a lot of change with 21 149 in 2013-14 and 21 338 in 2018-19. The number of children in out-of-home care went up slightly from 1054 in 2013-14 to 1310 in 2018-19. The proportion of taxpayers earning less than \$80 000 per annum, 2013-14 was 86.6 per cent and in 2018-19, 88 per cent. I am not sure if this is an adjusted figure with CPI et cetera; anyway there is not a lot of change in some senses.

As was the case last year, those speaking out against the Budget would prefer a stronger social policy focus with expenditure focused on housing, education, health, and public safety and transport. The Government is saying it is attending to some of those areas at record levels. I have to say as we go forward in life, values rise and every year we are going to have a record spend somewhere along the line. We are simply spending the value of what needs to be spent, which goes up. Yes, a record spend, but does it stand scrutiny? That is the important thing.

We have had a briefing on emergency departments across our four major hospitals and their performance from the Auditor-General as the member for Murchison pointed out. It is a significant story. We looked at how very few of the recommendations made in earlier years to overcome those problems simply were not addressed. It is astounding that with the heads-up on where our problems lie and issues needing to be addressed, we find they have not. Again, that is something we can talk to the minister about when we see him on Thursday for Estimates Committee A.

It remains important the Budget has a balance across both fixed infrastructure construction and social policy areas. When many in your community are doing it tough, you have to question where the so-called balance point lies. The member for Pembroke said she talked to Will Kestin from the National Disability Insurance Scheme -

Ms Siejka - The NDS.

Mr VALENTINE - The National Disability Service - and he said one in 10 disability service providers are considering whether they need to close their doors. That is a big worry for a many in our community who suffer a disability but may not be on the NDIS scheme.

We have to keep this in the back of our minds wherever a budget is struck: How much is it actually hurting sectors of the community who are not able to fend for themselves? How can we ensure they have a significant quality of life?

It can be argued neither is more important when looking for the balance. It is important to understand good health is a person's most desirable asset and we as a state must do our best to help our community achieve the best possible for them, otherwise their enjoyment of life can be significantly impacted by inefficient service delivery.

It is within this background I turn to budget paper 1 and how we did in 2018-19. When considering the general government income statement on page 191 of budget paper 1, it sets the basis for the development of the 2019-20 Budget. Some would say it contains a lot of smoke and mirrors depending on what they do with funds.

This table shows an estimated net operating balance outcome for 2018-19 of \$41.3 million, a substantial reduction on \$161.9 million given in the 2018-19 Budget.

During 2018-19 there was a significant improvement in revenue of \$160 million with grants, dividend tax and rate equivalent income substantially higher.

Expenses, particularly employee expenses and grant and subsidy expenses, grew at a faster rate. Within this result there is the one-off payment of \$64 million associated with the bushfires over the summer which will be partially offset by support from the Commonwealth in future years. To what extent is yet to be revealed, and there is an argument for a properly resourced national unit that can quickly respond to identify major threats.

As a nation, fire and flood are certainly high in the minds of most, and it could be an argument for having a nationally funded unit to put the resources necessary into areas like our wilderness areas and the last fires we experienced in the state. To target those fires with helicopters and water bombers available to do the necessary job could have saved a significant amount of burning.

The fire in the Vale of Rasselas around Lake Rhona was amazing. I have been there about 12 times and it is a wonderful spot and to think of it being burnt out - it was last burnt in 1984 or perhaps a bit earlier, and it is so stark when an area so beautiful is burnt out.

It certainly damages our tourism. Many people come here to backpack and bushwalk and we must not underestimate the value that brings to the state because they generally stay around quite a while and spend their money. It might not be as much money in a short space of time as other tourism opportunities provide, but it is important spending by those who come here to experience our wilderness areas.

That is why a number of people are concerned about the development of wilderness areas and allowing choppers to come in and those sorts of things. It puts a dampener on the whole experience. I guess that is something for another day.

The state's balance sheet performed better over 2018-19 than during 2017-18, with net assets increasing by \$821.1 million to approximately \$12.4 trillion. In contrast, Tasmania's budgeted net asset position deteriorated over the 2017-18 financial year.

With the Government moving to increase its net debt to \$1.2 billion over the forward Estimates, much of this improvement in the state's balance sheet during 2018-19 will be offset by higher debt. These results for 2018-19 show that Tasmania's budgetary position is very sensitive to changes. As we have seen this year, changes can flow from unexpected quarters, whether it be staffing demands, pay rises, emergency events, improved economic performance at a national level, and the resulting improvement in returns from state-owned corporations and the Commonwealth. In moving to a position of increasing net debt, the Government must deliver strong spending restraint over the forward Estimates and have stringent risk management procedures in place to manage unexpected events. Our room to move will become increasingly tight. As such, strong revenue and expenditure management remains a critical ongoing priority for the state.

Turning to the budget highlights, pages 3 to 6 cover the key budget highlights. These highlights are support to vital services, stating a significant increase of \$240 million for the Tasmanian Health Service and Ambulance Tasmania to help to address increasing health demand. As previously noted, you do need to fund at least to the level of last year, otherwise you are always going to be behind the eight ball. That has been pointed out a number of times, and it was again today by the member for Murchison. You will stay behind the eight ball if you do not fund it to an effective level where it can operate efficiently.

There are important new initiatives and continuation of existing initiatives to help offset housing stress. Some would argue, is the expenditure delivering the desired outcomes? I guess at least the Government is doing something about that and we can only hope that we get some of the outcomes it is expecting. Obviously, a lot more has to be done because the availability of rental accommodation is absolutely stretched. It is as low as 0.4 per cent in the Hobart area and no doubt in some of the other areas, such as on the coast where you get many holiday-makers. There might be many shacks, but they are not the type that they are likely to rent out long term because they want to use the place themselves.

It is important, whatever initiatives the Government takes, that it considers some of those regional areas as well, because one person looking for a house where there are very few available - say, in St Helens - is going through the same level as stress as 200 might be in Hobart. Yes, the problem is bigger in Hobart, but it does not mean to say that people are not being stressed by the problem in regional areas. This is a whole-of-state issue for the most part and that has to be recognised. I know there are some benefits, and I will not go too deeply into it because we have a short stay accommodation inquiry on at the moment, but we have to recognise that this is an issue that exists in areas other than the major centres. It is something that needs effective treatment. I will leave it at that at this point.

Another highlight is the continuation of significant infrastructure expenditure from 2018-19, and a strong focus on financial management in light of poor prospects for both GST receipts and conveyance duties. In relation to these areas, efforts of the Government in the housing area are significant but limited, as I was pointing out before. In particular, there is a suggestion that the Foreign Investor Duty Surcharge could be further increased to perhaps 10 or 12 per cent for both residential and rural properties to the extent that such a program dampens demand. What it does is reduce upward pressure on local real estate, improving housing affordability and lowering costs for Tasmania's primary producers seeking to expand their business. To the extent such industries do not dampen demand, they substantially improve government receipts.

I am uncertain as to what extent the initiatives will be addressed in the critical issue of housing for the ageing. With an ageing population, less affordable housing and relationship break-ups later in life are becoming critical issues for folk in that sector.

More people, particularly older women, are reaching the pension age either as long-term renters or with a significant mortgage. It appears this issue is not necessarily on the radar of governments at this time, or at least I have not heard much about it. It might be that it is in the mind of the governments. Can I suggest they apply their mind to it more and do something for these people? I do not know about you, but I would not like to be at the end of my life, in a situation where there has been a split in the relationship, the house has been divided but what you have left over does not provide you with enough money to buy another house, even one that is smaller, and then you end up having a mortgage and you might be in your seventies and you do not have money to live. That is a difficult thing.

Some might say, that is for each individual to sort out. Yes, it might be, but if there is some way for the Government to assist people who are ageing and are in this situation with critical housing issues, it needs to be found. There is a need to balance investment in housing across the generations and deliver infrastructure appropriate for each group through the Government's housing investment.

It also remains disappointing that the Government is not showing greater focus on preventive health initiatives to reduce demand on our acute health services. That is a long game, but it has to be started somewhere. Preventive health programs probably do not show great movements in reducing demand on the acute health services and facilities in this state for probably 10 years, but if we do not start today we are never going to get to the point where we improve the situation.

Some might say it is only the baby boomer bubble moving through and that is why we are getting an increase in presentations in our emergency departments. That might be part of the problem, but it might also be the deteriorating health of the population, where obesity might be an issue and where we need to focus more on those preventive health programs to stop those sorts of situations impacting their overall health and their need for services.

Another area is better public transport initiatives across the state. We are the renewable energy state. Where are our battery-operated buses? There are quite a number of flat areas in this state, even though there are some mountainous ones. If you take a place like Ulverstone, you would think it is a no-brainer that you could operate an electric bus in Ulverstone. An electric bus is a powerful thing - I am not suggesting that they cannot handle hilly terrain. It is just that the size of the batteries they need to make that happen makes it more economic to have those operating in a flatter environment.

I go back to when I was lord mayor visiting Adelaide and we took a ride on one of their electric buses. They have them in Adelaide. I do not know how many they have today; I did not do that research. It is possible and happening across the world.

Mr Dean - Brisbane Airport runs electric buses.

Mr VALENTINE - There you go. We are the renewable energy state but we do not actually have electric buses. In 1893 we had the first electric trams in the Southern Hemisphere.

Mr Dean - Then electric trolley buses.

Mr VALENTINE - Then trolley buses followed; I remember catching those when I did my matriculation.

Mr PRESIDENT - The member might be interested that apart from the electric buses at the Brisbane Airport, in Wellington they are now running double-decker electric buses around to replace the trolley buses.

Mr VALENTINE - Is that right?

Mr PRESIDENT - And that is a hilly city.

Mr Finch - You might remember too being stopped on the corners and the driver had to get out to replace the arm on the line.

Mr VALENTINE - That is exactly right - they had two levers that sat on the wires and the trolley bus had rubber tyres so you had to have two levers, not one, because the trams earthed through the track but trolley buses did not. They were the ones that spoilt the environment with all the wires, it was not the trams.

Nevertheless, we had those sorts of things and we have gone backwards. Battery-operated vehicles are a possibility, and there are smart trackless trams that have a path beneath the bitumen, with induction recharging their batteries.

There are all sorts of wonderful things we need to engage again as we did back in 1893 when they were moving from horse-drawn trams to electric trams and trolley buses. There is still maybe a place for trains, albeit electric ones.

Mr Dean - And driverless.

Mr VALENTINE - And possibly driverless trains, although we have had an experience in this state not long ago with driverless trains that did not quite work out.

Another issue is that of escalating prisoner numbers. The Government is talking about building new prisons, saying there are too many people in its prisons. Yet, we are continually debating mandatory sentencing - it does not stack up.

Advanced technology with bracelets and home detention trials are underway. I commend the Government for these initiatives. I do not think the answer is to put people in prison quickly if you have other avenues.

The Government's approach to managing its projected revenues shortfall is almost entirely focused on the concept of efficiency dividends. Such measures tend to lack focus and there is a need for root and branch reform of the public sector, especially the escalation of senior management positions and the necessity of services being delivered and the way those services are being delivered. It has been some time since such a review of the public service has been held.

Having worked in the State Service for some 36 years, I can tell you the impact of an efficiency dividend approach does nothing for staff who are expected to do more with less with any gain offset by staff downtime as a result of the stress they experience. It does not always work the way government expects it to work. I can tell you that from my own experience.

Mr Dean - We had all those reductions, did we not, about four or five years ago?

Mr VALENTINE - Seven, I think it was.

Mr Dean - Whenever it was, I suspect we are probably back where we were when that started to occur. Now we are talking about it again.

Mr VALENTINE - Our health services are no better. Far worse. You have to wonder about the wisdom of doing it through efficiency dividends. Have full scrutiny of the public service and the services that need to be delivered, not the activities that happen within the State Service.

Mr Dean - The core services.

Mr VALENTINE - Perhaps flatter structures with fewer silos could be identified across the State Service. Many labour-intensive activities could be provided through more efficient mechanisms. Central to a root and branch reform like that would be an approach to agency structure, which sees each agency reporting to a single minister. I do not know how that could be achieved but it would make Estimates simpler. There must be inefficiency when you have a minister over several departments or a department that has two or three ministers.

Ms Forrest - State Growth has about eight.

Mr VALENTINE - The current approach where each agency reports to multiple ministers causes issues to fall between the cracks and the loss of clear lines of accountability. Adopting an efficiency dividend approach does not achieve the desired sustainable outcomes. Activities are pushed out to other areas which in turn become stressed. When a position goes, the person goes, taking corporate knowledge with them. This almost guarantees that mistakes will be made in the future.

Knowledge management is crucial and there needs to be more of it. Software can help capture knowledge and reduce the detriments associated with long-serving employees going out the door. Beyond housing the Government has appeared to drop the ball on reducing cost of living pressures on Tasmanians. This was focused on in last year's budget but largely absent this year. The provision of many critical services in Tasmania is via government businesses that also have a demand from government for strong dividend flows. As a result, it is like a dog chasing its tail. Prices are kept high to ensure strong profits and good dividends, but spending must be increased to support those in the community affected by the high prices.

Regulators can only do so much. There is a need for stronger regulatory oversight of these monopoly entities, and a requirement for them to improve efficiency to keep price rises within CPI increases. An example is the move by Aurora to charge its Pay As You Go Plus customers a premium above the regulated Tariff 93 rate. The delivery of this product should offer savings for Aurora's revenue because money is received in advance of electricity being consumed and there should be lower cost interactions with customers. However, it is an unregulated market offering a clear example of monopoly price behaviour by a government business.

There is not much focus on better transport for Tasmania, except the possibility of a ferry service on the Derwent. Such a focus would reduce car dependency and provide better linkages for Tasmanian residents to the services they need to access.

It is well recognised that more road infrastructure for private cars only exacerbates traffic problems, often at the destination. Road infrastructure investment must be highly strategic. In the Tasmanian context, it must facilitate improved transit outcomes and result in real benefits rather than an opportunity to pork-barrel. We should have a strong focus on smart infrastructure and services, not just more bitumen.

In delivering a budget, there is always a trade-off between income expenditure and debt; however, the 2019-20 Budget abandons the cautious approach of previous years.

Last year's budget showed a deterioration in the net debt position as the Government undertook extensive infrastructure spending. This was in contrast to the position forecast in the 2017-18 Budget.

This year's Budget follows a similar pattern, and the projected net debt for 2020-21 is just under \$1 billion worse than projected in the 2017-18 Budget. This trend highlights a structural decline in the Tasmanian budget and shows an increase in reliance on borrowings to support both the operations of government and the projected record infrastructure investment.

Since the 2017-18 Budget, infrastructure demands for 2019-20 and 2020-21 have increased from \$420.6 million to \$723.3 million, and from \$359.5 million to \$715.9 million respectively.

The quantum of this increase in infrastructure spending within just two budget cycles calls into question the strategy underlying these infrastructure investments. This then raises questions about the need for such a high level of debt and also the ability of this expenditure to be effectively managed.

Why has there been such a turnaround in the need for infrastructure investment? Why was this not highlighted during earlier years when the budget position was less fragile? This descent into record levels of infrastructure spending highlights a 'firefighting' approach to managing service delivery in Tasmania at a time when 'backburning' should be the adopted approach. Strategies should be put in place to better manage demand for services provided via major infrastructure projects.

We need an approach that delivers a budget less focused on fixed infrastructure and more focused on social policy expenditure if Tasmania is to benefit.

Treasuries tend to dislike such approaches. Infrastructure investments are treated as one-off expenditures in the budget whereas social policy expenditure tends to become recurrent expenditure unless managed carefully.

It is easier to slow down or defer infrastructure expenditure than it is to put a halt to recurrent programs focused on particular issues within society. There lies the challenge. We would all agree that is a challenge. We cannot continue to see so many Tasmanians suffer as a result of that sort of strategy.

As was the case last year, the net operating surplus shows an upwards trend and is positive across the forward Estimates. Similarly, the fiscal surplus moves into the black over the forward Estimates, although at a far slower rate than forecast in last year's budget.

This Budget provides evidence that strong budget management is lacking, and it is lacking in a time when our net debt position is forecast to balloon substantially. While budgeted revenue is up by \$189.4 million for 2019-20, general government expenditure is up by \$293.9 million when compared to the budget Estimates from the 2018-19 Budget. This is a significant deterioration in the net operating surplus from that forecast last year for 2019-20.

As is normal for a Tasmanian budget, the major source of revenue is the Commonwealth Government, followed by state taxation, sale of goods and services, and dividends and tax equivalents. Health, education, and public safety dominate the expenditure side of the Budget.

In relation to dividends, tax and rate equivalents, the Budget is increasing its reliance upon these flows, both in aggregate, from \$358.4 million in 2017-18 to \$524.1 million this year, and as a proportion of revenue which is up 2.1 per cent to 8.2 per cent of revenues in 2019-20.

Over the forward Estimates the pressure continues to fall on the Hydro and its expected improved profit performance while demands on TasNetworks continue to decline as the regulated revenues to the company are constrained. Last year there was reduced out-year pressure on MAIB to provide dividends in support of the Government's budget directions. This outlook has been reversed and a special dividend of \$50 million has been applied for 2019-20.

This Budget incurs greater risk and sensitivities beyond the control of the Tasmanian Government than previous budgets delivered by this Government. Unlike in previous years, there is no longer a prudent financial buffer in place to offset adverse movements in the forward Estimates. Revenue from the Commonwealth dominates the Budget. Changes to the method of GST distribution and the way the Commonwealth is applying grants under a range of agreements are reducing the budget flexibility available to the Tasmanian Government.

The nature of tied grants and specific purpose payments to Tasmania is becoming critical. The trend for funding from the Commonwealth to come with specific strings attached appears to be increasing. Funding seeks to address national problems. This constrains the manner in which Tasmania's specific problems can be addressed and can lead to less than optimal outcomes for the Tasmanian community. In particular, such programs place a large administrative burden on a small jurisdiction, further limiting our ability to address local issues.

State taxation is the next most important source of revenue for the Government. In this Budget many risks are associated with the Estimates provided. Most critically, significant revenue flows are derived from the property sector and the recent performance of that sector cannot be expected to continue. Any slowdown or decline in this sector will have significant budget impacts during the out-years. That is something we have to understand.

On the expenditure side of the Budget, wages comprise approximately 47 per cent of total expenditure. Given recent union demands for improved wage parity with interstate jurisdictions, the need to attract additional staff in critical areas and the potential for public sector wages to rise significantly in other jurisdictions, there is a significant risk around these estimates.

Each year, commentary is provided with respect to superannuation liabilities. It is noted that the Budget identifies only a small increase in these liabilities over the forward Estimates. This is reflective of currently low interest rates and inflation, and stagnant wages growth across the economy. Given the emerging interest rate outlook, superannuation is perhaps one area of lower risk in this year's Budget.

I think this Budget is really not the best for the Tasmanian people at this time. I am sure there are some people living above their means, but some are living in places that I would not want my dog to be - people sleeping under ramps leading up to commercial premises and the like. Do we really want our people - people we see on a daily basis, maybe carrying a bag or two, and not realising they are actually sleeping rough - hit harder because we are not doing enough for them in housing or health? We do not want that, especially mental health. I did not mention that but mental health is one of those areas that is very significant in our community. We do not want our fellow Tasmanians to be living like that. We need to pay attention to what we can do to improve that. I note the Budget, with those comments.

[4.49 p.m.]

Mr GAFFNEY (Mersey) - Mr President, I have always known you lean to the right. Before I share my own response to the 2019-20 Budget, I thank honourable members for sharing their

views on how this year's Budget will affect their electorates and impact the state. As a local member, I always look forward to seeing what the new budget has in store for my electorate. I can see other members keenly anticipate that as well. It is of interest to note how each speech differs, as each member focuses on their interests, identifying strengths and weaknesses. I think it reflects the variety of personalities in this place and is a good thing.

This is the tenth budget I have reviewed since being elected in 2009. During this time the excitement and at times anxiety I feel when I find out what the budget has in store for Mersey has never once diminished. I am sure all members feel the same sense of engagement that I do. As a result, I always enjoy listening to them enthusiastically informing this Chamber about how their electorates will be affected by the budget. This provides all of us with a valuable opportunity to learn how the budget affects all Tasmanians, not just those in our own electorates. It is of interest how people go off on tangents when they realise there is an issue they may want to put on the Table for those in the other place.

I will commend the Premier, Will Hodgman, the Treasurer, Peter Gutwein, and Treasury staff for their tireless work in putting the 2019-20 Budget together. Tasmania on the surface appears to be in a strong financial position, perhaps the strongest in many years, but, as we have heard, that is subject to questions from various economic commentators. There is no doubt this is at least partly due to the economic management of this Government and a stronger Australian economy, as pointed out at forums, weakening the Australian dollar. We have witnessed various circumstances from around the world where poor economic and fiscal management has been very unstable at times, with catastrophic outcomes for different jurisdictions.

I had the pleasure of attending three separate budget-related functions last week. The events on Thursday, Friday morning and evening continued the tradition of accessibility that has characterised the manner in which budgets have been delivered for a number of years now. This approach increases transparency and allows the government to explain its budgets to the Tasmanian people with a level of approachability seldom found in other states and territories.

Indeed, the travelling roadshow is well received by Tasmanians in Hobart, Launceston and this year Devonport. Interestingly, because of the different structure of the north-west coast and west coast, the north-west presentations rotate between Burnie, Ulverstone and Devonport, which is significantly different to Launceston and Hobart.

The Treasurer has described the new Budget as a \$6.5 billion engine. While net debt is set to reach \$1.1 billion in 2022-23, the Treasurer has described this as serviceable, brought about in part by economic factors that are largely external and beyond our control.

I appreciate there are members of our community who are exceptionally learned in the economic and financial aspects of managing budgets. I tend to listen and depend on those with a greater level of understanding than myself. It becomes difficult for the average punter, myself included, to grapple with the many different points of view on the current Budget, which is in itself no different to other budgets, but who do you believe? All Government members support the Treasurer's Budget, as do individuals and groups who have received advantages and benefits from the decisions made. On the other hand, we have the opposition and representatives of unsupported groups crying foul of the Budget. It is a bit of a dilemma trying to work through the variety of opinions, often backed with sound reason and legitimate sources. However, I note the Treasurer's description of the debt as being serviceable seems to be supported by a number of respected sources.

Managing director of Font PR, Becher Townshend, encapsulated the challenges faced by the Treasurer in formulating this Budget. He wrote -

The 2019-20 Budget shows the contradiction that we currently have. On one hand the economy continues to boom, with some of the best economic numbers we have seen in the history of the state, but on the other hand, revenue is falling. This is because the state is becoming a victim of its own success. Combined, both GST revenue and Stamp Duty are predicted to fall half a billion dollars over the next four years. GST is going down because Tasmania is performing better relative to the rest of the nation, while stamp duty is also coming down, not because of a fall in property prices, but the fact that houses in the south aren't changing hands because they're so expensive, and the boom in the north and north west is not enough to cover the difference. As a result, Treasurer Peter Gutwein has been forced to make some difficult decisions.

The Government has addressed the economic headwinds facing the state in a number of ways. Becher Townshend continues -

First up, there will be the introduction of two new taxes: foreign investor land tax to catch overseas money, but more importantly for Tasmanians, a 15 per cent point of consumption tax on gambling, capturing gambling online and bringing Tasmania in line with the rest of the nation.

In addition, there will be a \$50 million special dividend taken from the MAIB, while the Tasmanian Public Finance Corporation will hand over \$39.5 million.

Government departments will also be required to provide a 0.75 per cent special dividend and the so-called hard-line 2 per cent wages target continues. However, given the teachers' wages decision, it remains to be seen if this can be achieved.

This Budget unashamedly places a major focus on infrastructure. The \$3.6 billion infrastructure spend is the centrepiece of the Budget. The Treasurer has said it ensures we build the Tasmania today that we need tomorrow. One could perhaps liken the proposed infrastructure spend to the 2009 federal stimulus package introduced by the former prime minister, Kevin Rudd, who said the government was prepared to plunge into a temporary \$22.5 billion defence of Australian jobs. He stated -

I recognise that a temporary deficit may not be popular, but that is the global reality that we face with all governments now in deficit. I cannot remove the impact of the global recession on Australian jobs, but by Government action we can reduce it.

The Treasurer made it clear in all three presentations I attended that Australia is now going to face a headwind with regard to economic growth. The Treasurer, Mr Gutwein, highlighted that the main players driving the Australian economy, such as Victoria and New South Wales, are not advancing and progressing as much as was envisioned or hoped.

I turn now to infrastructure spends that underpin this Budget. The Budget includes \$35.72 million for road upgrades in the north-west and west and \$292 million for statewide road maintenance. Additional funding has been allocated for affordable housing with a \$40.5 million committed to this financial year and \$125 million through to 2023. We passed the Short Stay

Accommodation Bill 2018 last week; it is encouraging to see the Government continuing to address the ongoing housing crisis facing the state.

I am pleased a number of funding commitments from this year's Budget will positively impact my electorate of Mersey. The *Spirit of Tasmania* has been departing from Devonport for many years now, providing a crucial link between our state and the mainland. It could indeed be regarded as a floating highway for both human movement and freight. I welcome the Government's \$157.5 million investment in the construction of two new TT-line vessels to ensure a large-scale ferry service to the mainland will continue for many years to come. This is fantastic news for the north-west, as many Tasmanians require the option to catch the *Spirit* on a motorbike or in a car with a caravan in tow across Bass Strait, ostensibly acting as a gateway for incoming tourists through which they can explore the state.

I am pleased Mersey is set to benefit from a number of tourism investments in the west and north-west. The Government is set to invest \$80.05 million in cooperation with the federal government in the Cradle Mountain Master Plan and visitor experience. The funding will go a long way to enhancing what is already a truly spectacular experience. Indeed, Cradle Mountain has an international reputation, and one only hopes whatever infrastructure is built enhances the natural beauty and is respectful of and complementary to the wilderness and the environment. The West Coast Wilderness Railway is also set for a financial boost with \$16 million being committed to update this worthy attraction and increase its capacity. Anyone who has been on the railway can attest to its status as one of Tasmania's premium tourism experiences which complements the internationally renowned Macquarie Harbour and Gordon River Cruises.

As you would be aware, Mr President, a scenic train ride has the capacity to be a real gem in the state, especially on the north-west coast from Devonport through to Wynyard, where it would be a fantastic attraction. The Government should seriously consider putting more funding into a venture for that part of the state.

The Government is also investing in Tasmania's next iconic walk. This endeavour has been allocated up to \$20 million and will add to Tasmania's already long list of world-class bushwalks. The Tarkine has been mentioned as a potential location alongside the Walls of Jerusalem, Freycinet Peninsula, the southwest Conservation Area and Freycinet National Park. Given its proximity to my electorate, I hope the Tarkine will be selected as a location for an iconic walk. However, as long as walks, bike trail rides and cycle pathways are promoted and financially supported, I am personally not overly fussed or parochial when it comes to investing in Tasmania's active recreational tourism ventures. What is good for one is good for the state.

While the three tourism investments I have outlined are not in my electorate of Mersey, I believe the economic benefits will be felt by the entire west and north-west of the state. I share the Government's view we should aim to keep tourists here for longer. The Tasmanian Liberals website reads -

Our new targets for tourism are aimed at making visitors stay longer, see more of our state and spend more. A new multi-day walk in regional Tasmania will help us to achieve this. For example, since completion the Three Capes Track has resulted in an additional 39 500 bed nights per year on the Tasmanian Peninsula, 15 new jobs in the region and another 20 across the state, and \$18.25 million in visitor spending, with much of that being spent locally.

I commend the Government for its ongoing commitment to the tourism industry.

Progress comes in a number of forms. This Government has a strong commitment to economic progress as well as progress in terms of improved infrastructure, roads, rail, freight, tourism and irrigation.

One area of progress that has been neglected by this Government is social issues. This Government appears resistant, and at times obstructive, to social change, progress and addressing inequality despite social issues being a key responsibility of state governments within the parameters of the Australian Constitution.

The Constitution delineates the powers of the Australian Parliament. Some powers are exclusive to the Commonwealth. Some powers such as health and education are concurrent powers, meaning that they are shared between the Commonwealth and the states.

What remains are residual powers, which are retained by the states. The powers to legislate with regard to many social issues therefore lie with state parliaments. This will vary between each social issue. Our power to legislate is subject to both the Constitution and the courts, all the way up to the High Court of Australia.

A couple of examples of this are the decriminalisation of homosexuality and, separately, same-sex marriage.

Tasmania was rightly able to decriminalise homosexuality in 1997 because criminal law is an area where states retain the ability to legislate. On the other hand, when the ACT attempted to legalise same sex marriage in 2013, this was not acceptable to the High Court.

Section 109 of the Constitution states that when a law of a state is inconsistent with the law of the Commonwealth, the latter shall prevail, and the former shall, to the extent of the inconsistency, be invalid.

We can see that there is no broad permission or prohibition on the state parliament legislating regarding social issues. It varies from issue to issue and state to state.

We should continue to legislate where the legal system of this country permits us to. As I have just explained social issues often fall within our remit. I therefore believe we have an obligation to affect genuine change.

For instance, this Chamber recently passed legislation that created meaningful change for the transgender, gender diverse, and immediate community members closely associated with the aforementioned individuals.

The Government was highly resistant to this change, despite the fact it did not affect anyone other than the transgender and gender diverse community. Most Tasmanians share the view that the actions of individuals need only to be restrained when they are causing harm to others.

Some of the media releases from this Government were misleading. In radio interviews, obvious falsities were not corrected. The Government was content to be silent when members knew that some of the commentators' words were incorrect and pedalling mistruths and misinformation to the public. That type of behaviour is reprehensible from any government.

This view was most famously articulated by John Stuart Mill. Mill is highly regarded as one of the most pre-eminent, enlightened thinkers and one of the forefathers of classical liberalism, and civil libertarianism. Mill formulated what is considered to be a key principle related to the government's intervention in the lives of individuals. This is known as the harm principle.

In his work in 1859, *On Liberty*, Mill stated that the only purpose for which power could be rightfully exercised over any member of a civilised community, against his will, is to prevent harm to others.

I hope the small government sensibilities of those on the political right can help to forge paths towards a more inclusive Tasmania. Nobody wants to interfere in the private lives of people who intend to do no harm to the rest of us.

Some detractors of this Budget have argued that infrastructure and other spending have come at the cost of social progress. CEO of Tasmanian Council of Social Services, Kym Goodes, stated -

This budget does not deliver the game-changer Tasmania needed to get local people into local jobs. Each year, the State Budget sends a message to Tasmanians about what our government's priorities are. This is the fifth infrastructure based, job creating budget we have had since 2014, each one spending more on hard infrastructure than the one before it, with the promise this investment will lead to job creation.

The Tasmanian Government can build hard infrastructure, but if we don't invest in supporting Tasmanian jobs seekers to get local jobs, we're not ensuring everyone can share in the state's prosperity. Tasmania's unemployment rate is still disproportionately high. Social indicators such as housing waiting lists are getting worse. The Premier recognised the challenge when he committed to a plan for strategic growth in his State of the State Address in March -

We must find ways to ensure all Tasmanians are feeling the benefits of a strong economy and that no one is left behind.

Kym Goodes said -

Solving entrenched Tasmanian issues such as unemployment and poverty is not simple, but it is possible. We know the answers lie in getting local people into local jobs and that focussing on innovative transport responses, targeted training, oral health, adult literacy and digital inclusion support sit at the heart of strategic solutions.

Given that many social changes come at no financial cost, I do not believe this is a trade-off. We can and should work together achieving both of these goals -

This is not the game-changing budget Tasmanians need. The government knows it, the Treasurer knows it and Tasmania's 17,000 jobseekers know it. We have seen this Budget before. It has been delivered again and again. We cannot expect to see different results until the Government opens up to investing differently and directly in Tasmanians.

The Mersey Community Hospital will benefit from this Budget, with \$31.58 million being invested in upgrades and \$4 million for additional staffing. A number of services previously available at the Mersey Community Hospital have been moved to Burnie and elsewhere. While this is viewed by some as regrettable, it is an unfortunate reality of a system that lacks infinite resources. However, other services and capacities at the Mersey have been strengthened. I welcome the Government's renewed commitment to health on the north-west coast, but after listening to the member for Murchison wonder whether the \$730 million will extend to 10 years or not.

Health spending is continuing to take up larger proportions of the Budget. It is now at 32 per cent of the Budget compared to 25 per cent a decade ago. This can partly be explained by the worsening health of Tasmanians. I am hopeful the Government will invest more in preventative health measures in the future. It is well and good to look after people when they get sick, but money could be saved by preventing so many people from getting sick in the first place.

The Australian Bureau of Statistics found that between 2011 to 2012 and 2014 to 2015 the percentage of Tasmanians over the age of 18 who were obese rose from 28.5 per cent to 32.3 per cent. The Menzies Institute for Medical Research calculated that the national obesity crisis is costing the federal government \$1.5 billion per year in direct health costs. As a rough estimate the obesity epidemic is costing Tasmania tens of millions of dollars unnecessarily. Obesity statistics demonstrate the need for extra funding for preventative health measures. We also have to impress upon Tasmanians that we as individuals are responsible for our health choices and associated direct health consequences.

The Budget provides \$270 million for a northern prison. If it does go ahead the new prison should be located in a central geographical northern location. This is where parochialism and common sense should not be confused. Devonport would provide a central location between Launceston and Burnie, west and east coasts and the islands. The families of prisoners who were originally from the north of the state will have less difficulty visiting their incarcerated loved ones.

This increased proximity to loved ones, or those offering support and connectivity, might improve prisoner behaviour and go some way towards decreasing recidivism.

Mrs Hiscutt - Do you know whether the council has put an interest in?

Mr GAFFNEY - I think Latrobe Council has, I am not sure about Devonport City Council. The Law Society has backed the construction of a northern prison, expressing its public support to media outlets. Speaking with *The Examiner* last Friday, Law Society of Tasmania president Evan Hughes said that if the new prison does go ahead, an increase in Legal Aid funding would be welcome in order to prevent a bottleneck in the system.

That said, I wonder whether the construction of a second prison in Tasmania is necessary. The Government has warmed to the notion of a northern prison over recent years, mostly due to necessity brought about by its own policies.

In 2015 the then member for Western Tiers, Greg Hall, cited support that existed at the time for a northern prison when he asked the following question in this Chamber -

Given the publicity generated yesterday in regard to a northern prison and the comments of defence counsel Evan Hughes that northern offenders unfairly

suffered from dislocation from their families and support networks, and also the strong support from the President of the Law Society of Tasmania, Matthew Verney, as well as the Prisoners Advisory Legal Service Chairman, Greg Barns, for the establishment of a northern prison, and further, a recommendation from a committee in this House, the Select Committee on Correctional Services and Sentencing in Tasmania, that there should be two prisons in Tasmania, one accessible to the main centres of population in southern Tasmania and another in the northern part of the state, reasonably accessible to both north and north-west of Tasmania -

- (1) Why would the Government not consider support for a prison in northern Tasmania given we are a very decentralised state? You could argue we are the most decentralised state in the nation.
- (2) Is it also not a fact that overall management of inmates in Risdon Prison is difficult and problematic at times because correctional authorities are unable to segregate the gangs and regional factions? We have been told that by two prison directors. That is, as compared with New South Wales, which has some 40 prisons - obviously a much larger state - but they are able to manage that inmate behaviour much more effectively.

The honourable Dr Goodwin responded -

Mr President, I thank the honourable member for Western Tiers for his question.

The Government has no plans for a northern prison facility. In 2012 under the previous government, the Department of Justice commenced consideration of an upgrade of the existing Launceston Reception Prison through the Department of Treasury and Finance's structured infrastructure investment review process. That process is still underway at a departmental level.

The Launceston Reception Prison is an ageing facility that will require upgrade in further years. Our priority at the moment is to deal with the issues posed by the Launceston Reception Prison and its age. As a Government, we have made clear we have no plans for a northern prison facility at this time. The honourable member mentioned issues posed by a single prison jurisdiction. There is no doubt that the prison faces challenges in managing prisoners and some of the issues the member talked about which occur on a daily basis, but the prison authorities do that to the best of their ability.

In Estimates Committee B in 2017, Guy Barnett, then acting minister for corrections, was asked about the possibility of a northern prison by the member for Windermere. He appeared to be more open to the possibility of a second prison than Dr Goodwin had only two years prior. He stated -

It is a good and a fair question. In recent weeks there has been discussion at the public level with the Opposition announcing a \$40 million commitment to a northern prison. That is on the back of a report which was done by the previous government 2013 of \$137 million for a northern prison. So they had a report, their own report, that said \$137 million and then in addition to that \$30 million for recurrent funding for a northern prison. That was in 2013 and that is a report that

has been referred to and so we are totally at a loss as to why they would just pick out \$40 million for a northern prison.

Having said that, it is an important issue and under investigation by the Government. That 2012-13 report did provide some information, obviously to the previous government, that considered the replacement of the Launceston reception prison as well and a development of a northern prison through the Department of Treasury and Finance, the Structured Infrastructure Investment Review Process. It is a formal official process, you are probably familiar with how that works through the Department of Treasury.

He goes on to say -

The Government does acknowledge the Launceston Reception Prison is an aging facility that will need to be upgraded or replaced in coming years.

I have toured there not quite recently and absolutely agree and support that assessment. In terms of works to be completed by the Launceston Reception Prison, some of those works were completed in 2014 to rectify minor building faults and to address urgent safety and security issues. Those issues included risk to prisoner's safety and potential security issues.

The process of developing options in a business case for a northern prison complex will continue. However in contrast to the Opposition, as I have indicated, we are going to be very deliberate and considerate and that needs to be looked at very carefully in a comprehensive way, looking at our criminal justice system as a whole. Rather than just picking figures out of air.

With all due respect, Mr President, Mr Barnett was asked a fairly simple question and the answer was quite lengthy so be prepared for next week.

The announcement of the new prison has renewed my concern about the effectiveness of the Government's law and order policies. I have been critical of various attempts by this Government to introduce mandatory sentencing. I am also aware this Chamber will soon debate the abolition of remissions.

The need for a new prison appears to be an inevitable consequence of policies such as these with overcrowding set to become a significant issue for the Tasmanian prison system in the years to come.

Those concerns are shared by Barrister Greg Barnes, who was quoted in *The Examiner* last September about the abolition of remissions. Mr Barnes said -

All it will mean, is you will see more people in jail for a longer period of time ...
The abolition of remissions in other states has had disastrous consequences with prisons overflowing.

Every year, this parliament and this House approves extra substantial funding for the prison system. Every year, the member for Windermere dusts off his previous speech and challenges the government of the day to provide an explanation about the overspend. Quite frequently, the response includes a comment regarding increased prison numbers, as it did this year. It appears that the Government has resigned itself to the increased prison population that is set to be caused

by its own policies. It does make one wonder if the Government's intention is to lock people up and throw away the key.

I believe it will be beneficial to all of us if the Government discontinued its harsh justice policies. It would mean that a new prison would not be required and that perhaps the \$270 million could be spent on something more productive than locking people away.

I spoke earlier about the need for investment in preventive health measures. In my view, the same approach can be applied to criminal justice. All options should remain open if they help to reduce offending.

If the new prison is to go ahead, I will wait to see where the Government decides to construct it. As I stated earlier, I believe Devonport is an ideal location. Some additional questions that remain to be answered and discussed are: How would the prison operate? What will be the management structure? What type of prison will it be? Which type of inmates will it house - high security or minimum security? Where has the Government received its advice and recommendations? What is the time line for completion? How will the community be informed?

While the decision appears to have been made to build it as part of the infrastructure spending, I look forward to further information from the Government regarding the new prison.

Mersey's young people are set to benefit from this Budget. Spreyton Primary School is set to receive \$300 000 of funding this year with \$1.4 million promised for the following year. Devonport High School is set to receive a \$10.5 million dollar redevelopment package commencing in 2021. Last year's budget allocated \$5.3 million in 2021 for Devonport High School. The figure is down in the new Budget with only \$500 000 committed for that year. As a result, I am concerned that Devonport High School will never see the funding that it desperately needs and deserves. It is my view that the original funding designated for 2021 should be restored in next year's budget.

As the member for Mersey I will continue to call on the Government to adequately fund the schools that fall within my electorate. Given my background in education I can see the great work that teachers in the north-west are doing. It is my hope that schools across the whole of Tasmania are adequately funded with no region being neglected - hence the call from the member for Murchison for Montello Primary School, which I agree with. Every child deserves a quality education, irrespective of his or her postcode.

I commend the Government for dedicating funds to support children with trauma and emotional and behavioural challenges. Initiatives such as the Strong Families, Safe Kids and the Safe Homes, Safe Families: Tasmania's Family Violence Action Plan are invaluable in addressing the needs of children who have not been fortunate enough to get the start in life that every child deserves.

The impact of trauma on the life of a child cannot be overstated. It impacts every aspect of the child's life, including their education. I am pleased that the Government has committed \$7.3 million as part of its Strong Families program so that government schools can adequately cater to the needs of traumatised children.

I was honoured to speak in this Chamber earlier this year about the Trauma Awareness Network Australia as a special interest matter. As part of my remarks in March, I said the following:

I spoke with TANA founders Mike Lizotte, Brigid Daly and Sue Heart in mid-November last year, and was immediately interested in the group's stated purpose, which is to disseminate information to raise awareness about the effects of toxic stress and the development of community resourcefulness and resilience.

I believed then, as I do now, that the long-term intergenerational impacts of trauma are a huge concern. There are many areas of socio-economic disadvantage on the north-west coast and west coast and, indeed, throughout the state. The vision of TANA, if implemented, could serve to head off many of the secondary issues, a direct result of childhood trauma which we observe in our society.

As the local member I will continue to raise awareness about the impact of trauma, particularly on the lives of children. Again, I commend the Government for recognising the importance of addressing trauma in this year's Budget.

Whilst I am supportive of the 2019-20 Tasmanian Budget, despite my aforementioned concerns about prisons and education, I make mention again of my concerns about the impact that poker machines have within our society. I will be continuing to push that cart until decisions are made. I know that other members in this place share that concern.

I believe the Treasurer and department of Treasury staff have a difficult job and I congratulate them on what must be the result of many discussions, late nights and difficult decisions, even though we may not agree with all of them.

Whilst there are always detractors regarding the budget, there will also be those who will be supportive of the 2019-20 Budget. I also thank members for their contributions they have made in response to the Budget. I note the appropriation bills.

[5.20 p.m.]

Ms ARMITAGE (Launceston) - Mr President, budget week is always an interesting time when we get to speak about our electorates and the state in general, what we like about the budget and what we would like to see in the future or what we feel is missing. This year is no exception.

If the Government is serious about maintaining momentum, I would strongly encourage it to focus greater attention to businesses and communities in the state's north, where business confidence is strongest and where construction and infrastructure projects are reaching unprecedented levels. To this end, I am pleased to note the continuation of the payroll tax rebate scheme to 2021 and continuing payroll tax cuts to businesses to create around 650 new jobs.

The latest CommSec State of the States report records Tasmania's population growth as leading the country in relative terms, stating that Tasmania is the strongest on relative population measure with its 1.15 per cent annual population growth rate, almost 100 per cent above the decade average rate. Australian Bureau of Statistics data indicates that this is supported by healthy growth in dwelling starts to 11.8 per cent on decade averages in Tasmania, in addition to Tasmania possessing the strongest annual growth in home prices, up 6.5 per cent from the previous year.

I now come to one of my pet gripes: the fact that the Government provides assistance to first home builders but not to first homebuyers. I acknowledge the reasons the Government gives for this, but do not agree with it. I believe it is discriminatory to those people who cannot afford to

build a new home. Even a holiday from stamp duty for homes up to a certain amount would be a welcome relief for first homebuyers. I am sure many in this place started with an older home that they did up before taking on the financial burden of a new home.

I note in the Budget that the First Home Owner Grant of \$20 000 has been extended until 30 June 2020, but I believe the title is ambiguous as it calls it the First Home Owner Grant.

I commend the Government for keeping to its commitment on infrastructure projects and its associated spending. I am, however, concerned on an ongoing basis, especially given the impact that the loss of GST revenue will have on the forward Estimates. If maintaining the momentum of Tasmania's economy is the Government's mantra then there should surely be an ongoing priority for the maintenance of high-standard services. Again, I refer to the most recent CommSec State of the States report where the figures indicate that for housing finance Tasmania is the strongest performing state in the country, up 3.9 per cent for annual growth.

This suggests to me that not only does the reduction of stamp duty stimulate housing finance, but it contributes to the overall health of the state's financial sector, both in terms of personal and commercial activity. I question how this will impact the public revenue pool in coming years, however. If this activity slows the volume from which stamp duty revenue can be collected, a significant hit to the forward Estimates could emerge. I therefore wonder if the Government has a contingency plan should this eventuate.

I commend the Government's suite of budget measures to target Tasmania's regional areas, to target existing employment opportunities and capitalise on existing ones. To this end, however, I would urge the Government to continue targeting existing networks such as the \$1.4 million partnership with the Tasmanian Chamber of Commerce and Industry and TasCOSS to ensure that needs of the community and of the commercial sector are taken into account on an ongoing basis.

To build on this, undertaking strategic and considered consultation with a wider array of community groups, I believe, would ensure that these needs are being met and avoid duplication of effort and waste.

My concern that this leads up to is whether or not this is all sustainable. Tasmania's annual growth in home prices is up by 6.5 per cent on the previous year and Hobart's CPI is the highest in relative terms for any capital city in the country. Again, referring to the latest CommSec State of the States report, Tasmania is leading the country in relative terms for annual growth in the construction sector at 25.5 per cent on the previous year.

The Affordable Housing Action Plan 2019-2023 has been allocated \$125 million in the Budget and is supposed to significantly boost the statewide supply of new social and affordable homes, provide more homeless and supported accommodation, help more Tasmanians into home ownership and assist around 2000 households, according to the Government's Budget media documents.

There is every reason to be optimistic about Tasmania's future in the years ahead and so much strategic planning is needed. I would therefore urge the Government to ensure that our ongoing interests are observed in the fiscal years beyond 2019-20 through the receipt of fair GST reallocation. Tasmania may not be worse off now but the combination of current policy and forward Estimates figures indicate that the maintenance of Tasmania's essential services and employment opportunities may be made more difficult as our population grows and GST revenue contracts.

On to Education. It is always good to see money going into one of the most important areas we have, the education of our people young and old. Two new schools, four major school redevelopments and six new early learning centres is certainly welcome news, as education and access to it cannot be underestimated.

I do remain concerned though regarding the rollout of years 11 and 12 to high schools in cities such as Launceston, which already has access to two very good public colleges in Newstead and Launceston colleges. Concerns with regard to lower student numbers leads on to sufficient class numbers for teachers in these important curriculum areas. It is beneficial to have years 11 and 12 available in country and regional areas where there may not be easy access to these classes, but I am concerned for the viability of our current colleges.

I welcome the Government's commitment to \$1.8 million over four years to move 100 DPIPWE staff to the north and north-west of the state. The Government is right to point out that the northern regions are key contributors to economic growth through primary industries. This measure would reflect the contribution made to Tasmania's overall economic robustness. I look forward to seeing these opportunities generated and the creation of longer term employment opportunities for those with important specialist skills for these jobs. I urge the Government to support those who have moved, to monitor and adapt the northern positions and to work with all involved in order to maximise potential and minimise resistance.

Before I get back to infrastructure, roads and the money that is being put in, particularly in the Launceston area, I want to mention the highway we drive regularly. The member for Windermere would note as much as I do the continuing road works. When you are driving of an evening the road looks as if it is finished but there is still an 80 kph sign, just past St Peters Pass for several kilometres.

Mr Gaffney - They cannot take the sign off until all the lines are done because if there is an accident a person could say that because of -

Ms ARMITAGE - It does look like all the lines are done. I cannot see where more lines could go. It has been frustrating over a period of time when it appears a road is finished.

Mr Dean - Parts of that road there, at St Peters Pass, were finished well and truly before the part of the road at the Powranna section. Now it is open to 110 kilometres per hour.

Ms ARMITAGE - It is frustrating. I appreciate that the Government is investing in infrastructure. The new bridge across the Tamar - I will believe it when I see it. We continue to hear about it. If it happens it will be wonderful but I certainly would not be holding my breath.

Increasing the Charles Street Bridge capacity is essential, particularly with Bunnings and the other big box stores across the river. We do not have the traffic issues that Hobart has but it is good to see, particularly the Mowbray corridor and new connecting roundabout and connector. There have been some serious accidents in that area. We hope the roads get fixed once and for all and do not need continued repair, as has happened before.

The Government will recruit a further 125 new frontline police officers over the next four years and provide a further \$240 000 to support a full-time special operations group because they understand the difficult job they do. That will ensure police officers injured in the line of duty will continue to receive 100 per cent of their pay while they are on workers compensation. That is very

important. After looking at a variety of reports we know the north is the crime capital of the state, which is concerning. It is good to see that more police officers are being recruited.

The allocation of \$270 million over the next 10 years towards the construction of a new prison in the north is also a welcome investment. The budget papers state that the facility will be designed to create increased opportunities for prisoners to find meaningful work on release and provide improved family connections for northern prisoners. Whilst laudable, there is a lack of detail and context. The northern prison project is in its formative stages; however, the project should not be advanced in a vacuum. Prisons are the final and most severe form of sentencing and are for the protection of society and the rehabilitation of its inmates first, and a deterrent and discipline measure second.

Regarding increased opportunities for prisoners, I urge the Government in the strongest possible terms to ensure that support for prisoners, their families and community groups is also provided on an ongoing basis. A prison is of little value if those who are released after serving a sentence have no support to reintegrate into society. Consultation and input on the context of increased opportunities for prisoners should be a focal point for the northern prison project, not just a focus on construction or location.

On to Macquarie Point. Where do I start? Correct me if I am wrong, Leader, but I believe it is seven years on from a \$45 million federal grant to clean it up. It is still a long way from completion. I read recently it is said to be up to 30 years and \$2 billion away. I hope that is not true. I would be interested in what has been achieved to date and what has been spent. I acknowledge our site visit last year, but my recollection is that there did not seem to be a lot happening for the money that has been spent, apart from lots of plans. I will be interested to get an approximate figure.

I also note the Greater Hobart bill. I recall from briefings that the relocation of the sewage treatment at Macquarie point was likely to form part of the discussion with the mayors. It was previously estimated at \$140 million. I am unsure of its current cost. This provides a good segue into the Tamar River and Launceston's sewage issues.

In a survey run by *The Examiner* in the lead-up to the recent federal election, readers' top priority was cleaning up the Tamar River. I commend the Treasurer in listening to our community groups, such as the Launceston Chamber of Commerce, who have been championing opportunities to address the health of the Tamar River. In its provision of a \$180 million contribution to TasWater over the next four years, the Government has shown that it too prioritises estuary wellbeing through this infrastructure program, such as sewage amelioration and the optimisation of stormwater systems. I agree with the Launceston Chamber of Commerce executive officer Neil Grose that this investment not only presents an opportunity to remediate problematic issues with the Tamar River, but also provides a chance to maximise the potential of the Tamar both in economic and environmental terms.

Entrusting TasWater with these important tasks means the Government should undertake a continuous process of consultation with key stakeholders to ensure that a strategic river response is developed and that transparency and accountability for these funds and projects is maintained. I question the agreement reached previously that the then Turnbull government would partner with a re-elected Tasmanian Liberal Government to complete a comprehensive list of actions identified by the Tamar Estuary Management Taskforce in its River Health Action Plan and that the Tamar River would finally get the clean-up it needed under this new joint state and federal partnership

announced on 16 February 2018. I question whether any of these actions, identified by the Tamar Estuary Management Taskforce, have commenced or are soon to start and their time frames. It was stated at the time that the partnership would enable 12 projects to be undertaken along the Tamar estuary, focused on improving catchments and upgrading major infrastructure, with a total investment of \$95 million split in a 50:50 funding arrangement. Work would be undertaken over a period of five years from 2019.

I am sure the Government appreciates that providing a clean waterway to a whole community is just as important if not more so than removing a well-operating sewage treatment plant because of aesthetics.

Health is difficult and not something any minister can fix immediately. I am concerned that the funding in the Budget is a reannouncement of previous years with nothing new. Political analyst, Martyn Goddard, commented in the *Mercury* newspaper on 21 March 2019 that in his opinion capacity at the Royal Hobart Hospital and Launceston General Hospital must double within 10 years and the state Government's hospital plans, announced on 20 March 2019, were too little and much too late. Unfortunately, this is a sentiment I am hearing all too often from both patients and staff of our hospitals. Martyn Goddard continued -

To avoid those rolling crises, our two main public hospitals in Hobart and Launceston need the capacity to do three things: to deal with rising demand, to treat people who have been waiting for far too long and to provide some surge capacity to deal with sudden problems like the annual flu season.

He continues -

Many of the plans exist within the Health Department, but it won't happen because the government won't spend the money. Even in more normal times this state needs about 50 more acute hospital beds a year just to keep up with rising demand.

It needs to be stressed this is not just a symptom of this Government, it happens whatever the colour of government, never enough money put into health. Martyn Goddard further states -

The figures on bed block, the time waited in emergency by people needing admission but for whom there are no beds, are a good guide to the trouble we are in. Of the 266 public hospitals in Australia with emergency departments, the Royal Hobart Hospital is the fifth worst at number 261. The Launceston General Hospital is at number 266. It's harder to find a bed there than at any other public hospital anywhere in Australia.

In an Auditor-General's report on the performance of Tasmania's four major hospitals in the delivery of emergency department services, we were advised demand for emergency care in Tasmanian public hospitals has steadily grown over the last nine years with a total number of presentations to emergency departments increased by 15 per cent, or by almost 21 000, from 2009-10 to 2017-18 with most of this growth occurring at the Royal Hobart Hospital.

It also found there has been a 56 per cent increase in the number of hospital admissions statewide between 2009-10 and 2017-18. It further found the efficiency of hospital emergency

departments statewide has declined over the last nine years with a downward trend in the proportion of patients with a length of stay less than four hours evident since 2009-10.

The Royal Hobart Hospital and the Launceston General Hospital exhibited the lowest performance against the four-hour target with the average length of stay of admitted patients across the four major emergency departments being around 9.5 hours, driven mainly by historically very lengthy stays at the Launceston General Hospital.

Concerningly, the report states that -

Although DoH signalled an intent within the 2018-19 THS Service Plan to develop a more comprehensive monitoring framework for related KPIs this had yet to occur, more than six months after the plan was approved.

The report further showed neither THS nor Department of Health effectively implemented the former performance framework and the Department of Health monitoring reports show the THS consistently failed to meet its service delivery targets relating to the emergency department access and care over the last three years.

One of the reasons the LGH has such a high admission rate is it is central to the state and many serious cases choose to come further north to the LGH rather than North West Regional Hospital and the Mersey Hospital. I am reliably advised this is particularly the case with births with many expectant mothers choosing to come to the Launceston General Hospital. Lengthy stays in the emergency department are a further concern as it is a well-known fact the longer a patient stays in the emergency department the worse their outcome.

Having said that, the staff perform their tasks admirably. Ask anyone who has been in the hospital and they will be full of praise for the treatment they have received. We must support these very staff and ensure they do not burn out as our community relies on our public hospitals.

I will not be attacking the Health minister as I believe decisions are made by the department and Cabinet. Even with a change of government the departments do not change.

Waiting lists are obviously a concern, particularly for preventable diseases - colonoscopies and endoscopies come to mind. Leader, I have asked questions previously and I would be interested in the current waiting list for these procedures at the Launceston General Hospital, as this bowel cancer is preventable if caught early, as evidenced by the federal government's faecal testing kits sent out to people in a higher risk age group.

Imagine having a positive result on one of these tests, to be sent by your GP to the public hospital for a colonoscopy, only to wait a significant period. I hope this is no longer the case. Your advice on this would be appreciated.

While the National Disability Insurance Scheme is a federal issue, I am concerned some groups such as the New Horizons Club may have difficulty in accessing payments, given the new funding landscape. There is much concern that despite the strength of the proven outcomes of New Horizons' work, there are no guarantees the organisation will be successful in its funding applications.

While I am sure the bridging assistance of Mrs Petrusma's department is appreciated, the New Horizons Club is too important an organisation to be existing from grant to grant, not to mention the risk of losing valued staff who need employment security. I would hope that the state Government acknowledges the benefit of New Horizons, which now operates in both the south and the north, and ensures certainty for them and their members.

Mr Dean - I think they have because an agreement has been reached with the state Government to support New Horizons. That was in the recent letter we received from New Horizons, to thank us for our contribution, because of the state Government taking that position.

Ms ARMITAGE - It is worth putting on the record, member for Windermere, that we have an expectation that New Horizons will be supported statewide.

The suite of funding which the Government has proffered for northern arts, tourism and boutique Tasmanian experiences is a welcome investment.

In Launceston, the Breath of Fresh Air Film Festival has again proved its worth, attracting the likes of star Sam Neill and thousands of people from intrastate and interstate to film viewings. We need to pay tribute to its creators, Owen and Helen Tilbury of Launceston, who took a huge risk in 2010 to start their passion with BOFA.

I recall attending a couple of BOFA films with the late Vanessa Goodwin, and she was certainly very encouraging of BOFA. It is good to see it is now screening in the south of the state as well. We are always happy to share our successes with the south.

We should also recognise the Tasmanian Government's five-year funding commitment through Events Tasmania to the Australian Musical Theatre Festival, which was held in Launceston last weekend. This appeared to be very successful and I congratulate all involved, particularly the member for Murchison's daughter, the very talented Jane Forrest.

Ms Forrest - She had more media than me this last week. It is disgraceful.

Ms ARMITAGE - I am sure it was well deserved. She has done wonderful work.

The funding being provided to Festivale over the next two years is indeed welcome, and for the purposes of full transparency, I should disclose that I sit on the Festivale committee. This does, however, endow me with the full knowledge of Festivale's success and impact over recent years. I note that the Budget does not indicate any funding over the forward Estimates beyond the 2020-21 year.

Festivale has been making tremendous strides of late, attracting more and more interstate and overseas visitors to regional Tasmania celebrating the summer season, this year being a sold-out event on the Saturday evening.

The impact Festivale has on regional tourism, more generally with the flow-on effect of generating greater business opportunities for our tourism operators, should not be understated. I therefore urge the Government to see the value of this not-for-profit event and continue to support it accordingly.

Moreover, the continued support of MONA FOMA outside of Hobart is a welcome development, along with the Northern Tasmania Arts Organisations Initiative, distributing \$100 000 in grants a year for the next two years, to artists in northern council areas to engage and inspire audiences and the wider community.

As a longer term investment, the program is, like funding for Festivale, not built into the forward Estimates beyond 2020-21, so I encourage the Government to consider the importance of arts to northern communities, in addition to the tourism and socio-economic benefit it generates.

Looking after our communities starts with providing a safe, healthy and inclusive environment for our children and families. Seeing continued support for the Karinya Young Mums 'n' Bubs program with the provision of the funding built into the previous budget's forward Estimates is welcome, and an appropriate acknowledgement of the important work done for young women and children in crisis.

Health and wellbeing is likewise being supported through the funding provided to improve the facilities of the northern Tasmanian tennis centre, which has proactively been seeking funding to bolster Launceston's standing as a regional city to accommodate both community and world-class sporting events.

In a similar fashion, providing funding to assist with the Elphin Sports Centre roof replacement ensures community sport groups and professional sports teams alike are supported, particularly our beloved Launceston Tornados.

The Launceston City Deal has shown an unprecedented level of cooperation between the federal, state and local government sectors with the development and maintenance of horizontal relationships with key community groups, stakeholders, business and educational institutions. We have seen the fruits of these relationships manifest in the Brisbane Street Mall redevelopment, the Launceston Civic Square refurbishment and the Quadrant Mall update.

It is now past time for works to continue particularly between the state and local governments to ensure these amenities are used to their full potential. Typical comments from my constituents are regaining the loss of retail and shopfronts in the Launceston CBD.

The jewel in the crown of the City Deal is undoubtedly the University of Tasmania transformation project, which is concentrated in the Inveresk precinct of Invermay on the cusp between the suburban and city areas of Launceston. This is an opportunity that must be fostered to ensure the educational offerings at this world-class campus will address the present and future needs of Launceston in addition to attracting interstate and overseas interest in this amazing region.

Not everyone is happy with the proposed move but we have to look beyond just moving a university and see the benefits it provides. While I accept on face value Launceston City Council is providing UTAS with land at an estimated value of \$5 million, the benefits will far outweigh this investment, which is estimated to be a \$250 million project. Launceston needs to be seen as a university city and the state's number of full fee-paying students must increase. We need to do all we can to encourage overseas full fee-paying students to come to Tasmania as it has been shown to be advantageous to our state for a number of reasons. It should be remembered there is an area of approximately 18 hectares at Newnham currently housing the university that could become rateable, either for business or for much-needed housing.

I commend the state Government for its work for northern Tasmania's future and work with our community and local government. As is said, we learn from the past, look to the future but live in the present. I note the Budget.

Debate adjourned.

MESSAGE FROM HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY

Resolution Agreed

Mr PRESIDENT - The House of Assembly does agree to the following resolution communicated to it by the Legislative Council on 23 May 2019.

Resolved:

That the Legislative Council having appointed two Estimates committees reflecting the distribution of government ministers portfolio responsibilities, requests that the House of Assembly give leave to all ministers to appear before and give evidence to the relevant Council Estimates committee in relation to the budget Estimates and related documents.

S Hickey
Speaker
28 May 2019

ADJOURNMENT

[5.48 p.m.]

Mrs HISCUTT (Montgomery - Leader of the Government in the Legislative Council) - Mr President, I move -

That at its rising the Council adjourn until 11 a.m. on Wednesday 29 May 2019.

The Council adjourned at 5.49 p.m.