

**Wednesday 10 April 2019**

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

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

**Third Reading**

**Bill read the third time.**

**SUSPENSION OF SITTING**

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

That the sitting be suspended until the ringing of the division bells.

This is for the continuation of our briefing.

**Sitting suspended from 11.06 a.m. to 11.34 a.m.**

**MENTAL HEALTH AMENDMENT BILL 2018 (No. 43)**

**Second Reading**

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

That the bill be now read the second time.

Section 47A of the Mental Health Act 2013 provides for a patient to be involuntarily admitted to an approved facility, if the treating medical practitioner is satisfied, on reasonable grounds, the patient's health or safety, or the safety of any other person has been, or is likely to be, seriously harmed. The medical practitioner must also be satisfied admitting the patient is the only way to adequately address that risk.

Section 47A applies to a patient who is subject to a treatment order and has complied with that treatment order. In that respect, it can be distinguished from section 47 of the act, which may be applied to admit a patient who has failed to comply with their treatment order.

By virtue of sections 181(1)(d) and 42 of the act, whenever a patient is admitted to an approved facility pursuant to either section 47 or 47A, the Mental Health Tribunal must be notified and must review the patient's treatment order within three days of notification.

The act provides for the tribunal to sit in divisions of one member, or three or more members chosen by the president. However, section 181(1)(f) currently requires any review of a treatment order must be conducted by a division of three members. While the tribunal can effectively conduct a one-member review within its existing resources, convening a three-member panel requires payment of a full four-hour fee to two additional members, who work on a sessional basis.

Section 47A was introduced into the act through amendments made under the Mental Health Amendment Act 2016. The Mental Health Tribunal has advised in the 12-month period since those amendments came into effect on 1 July 2017, the tribunal held 82 three-member panel hearings for patients admitted under section 47A. The cost to the tribunal to run these hearings with a three-member panel was approximately \$29 500. In some cases, these hearings occurred shortly after a mandatory 60-day or 180-day review of the treatment order under the act.

The tribunal has advised that where a patient has complied with their treatment order and the decision to admit the patient is a clinical one to prevent possible harm, there are no compliance issues that require the tribunal's consideration. In most cases, such a review can be effectively undertaken by single member of the tribunal. In fact, prior to the commencement of section 47A last year, where a patient required readmission but was not in breach of their treatment order, all readmissions were reviewed by a single member of the tribunal and the order varied to reflect the change in treatment setting.

The tribunal has also advised a significant number of patients find three-member hearings arising from a readmission to hospital very distressing, particularly given that periodic reviews are already mandated by the act. In its submission during consultation on proposed changes to the act, the Mental Health Council of Tasmania noted this process is often incredibly stressful for patients and, in many cases, detrimental to their treatment and recovery during a period of already heightened stress and ill health.

This bill addresses the issues I have just outlined.

It amends section 181(1)(f) of the act to provide that where a patient has been admitted to an approved facility pursuant to section 47A to prevent possible harm, the mandatory review of the patient's treatment order in accordance with section 181(1)(d) of the act may be conducted by a division of either one member or three or more members of the Mental Health Tribunal.

This amendment will provide the president of the Mental Health Tribunal with the flexibility to appoint, where appropriate, a division of one tribunal member to review treatment orders for section 47A admissions. This will assist in reducing costs where matters are likely to be straightforward, as the tribunal can conduct a one-member review within existing resources. One-member hearings are likely to be perceived as less confronting to admitted patients, who may already be feeling vulnerable at a stressful time.

I would like to emphasise the requirement for a mandatory tribunal review, within three days of admission under section 47A, will remain in place. During consultation, a number of stakeholders expressed the view mandatory reviews serve as an important safeguard, by allowing the tribunal to consider the appropriateness and effectiveness of treatment, even where compliance with a treatment order is not an issue. The Government shares that view, and this is reflected in the bill.

It is also important to note the amendment does not affect reviews of treatment orders conducted for any other reason, including mandatory reviews following admission under section 47, mandatory reviews 60 days or 180 days after a treatment order is made, or reviews requested by a person with standing or initiated by the tribunal at any other time. These will remain unchanged and will continue to be conducted by a three-member panel.

In developing the Mental Health Act 2013, which commenced in early 2014, great care was taken to ensure a balance between consumer rights and the need for treatment, while also recognising the important role played by carers and family members of people with a mental illness.

The act contains a significant focus on the rights of patients and has an extensive review regime to ensure those rights are protected. Section 47A and the review functions of the tribunal have been, and will continue to be, consistent with the United Nations Principles for the Protection of Persons with Mental Illness and the Improvement of Mental Health Care.

Finally, I would like to take this opportunity to thank those stakeholders who provided submissions during the Government's consultation process, and whose valuable input has been taken into account in preparing the bill. The Government is committed to ensuring people with a mental illness can receive the assistance they need and are treated with dignity, respect and care.

I commend the bill to the House.

[11.42 a.m.]

**Ms FORREST** (Murchison) - Mr President, I support the bill. I want to make some comments on it and talk about some of my concerns about getting access to mental health care when people are requiring this level of treatment.

The Mental Health Bill, when it was introduced in Tasmania many years ago - I think it was 1996 - was deemed to be revolutionary in some respects. It had a 12-month review clause in it because of that. That 12-month review took 13 years. This was when the Labor Party was in power. I moved to establish a select committee to look at it. That was vehemently opposed by the then minister for health, Lara Giddings. But we pushed on, as we do in this House, and inquired into the provisions of the Mental Health Act, and undertook that long overdue review.

The government of the day was doing some work at the time. Our inquiry certainly informed the Mental Health Act 2013 and enshrined, as the member referred to, the United Nations Principles for the Protection of Persons with Mental Illness and the Improvement of Mental Health Care.

People with mental illness, particularly very serious mental illness, are very vulnerable members of our community. We need to do whatever we can to ensure they get appropriate and adequate treatment in appropriate and adequate facilities by appropriately and adequately trained people. Sometimes a decision is made to deprive them of their rights and liberties, detain them to do so and put them on involuntary orders, which means they have no choice. It is a really serious measure.

So when these measures are being applied to any individual, any Tasmanian, we need to take it very seriously, to make sure they maintain their human rights.

It is a complex and complicated area in many respects, but it is excruciatingly important to ensure we look after people who are very vulnerable but in need of care and treatment in quite a restrictive environment at times.

The new Mental Health Act was implemented in 2013; when it was debated, it was acknowledged there would probably be further requirements for amendments at a later time, as we find with all our legislation.

Are we not seeing that this week? Another bill coming up later is all about fixing problems picked up with the operation of an act.

The protections put in place under the section 47A provisions were to require the Mental Health Tribunal to conduct a review with three members of the tribunal, regardless of whether a recent review had been undertaken of an order or another one was to be conducted very shortly in terms of the statutory time frame for those reviews to occur.

We were informed in the briefing that it is somewhat problematic at times because these reviews often have to be carried out where the patient is. It is costly, but the cost is not so much the issue; more importantly, it can be very stressful and intimidating for the patient. We heard that during the briefing, and we know from advocates, patients with mental illness and Mental Health Tribunal members that it is a fact.

In my view, this is an appropriate amendment to enable one member of the tribunal to conduct this particular review. As the Leader said, it does not remove the requirements for these other statutory reviews to be undertaken in this process.

Children as well as adults are subject to these provisions. With children, special provisions are made to ensure their rights are maintained, and that they are provided with the appropriate level of support at such a difficult time as this.

On that point, we have been told for many years that we are going to get a secure mental health facility for young people and adolescents. As have other members, I have had constituents come to me because they are the parents of young people with very significant and serious mental illness who require admission to a child and adolescent mental health facility. We all know that we have been told for years, under previous and current governments, that such a facility was going to be built.

We have not built one yet. We are in the process of building one, but it is not staffed yet, and I understand it is not necessarily funded yet. Until we have that, we need to be sure we provide adequate support facilities and care for these people.

I am aware of a young person under the age of 18 who is an inpatient of the acute, secure adult mental health ward at the Royal Hobart Hospital. She has been there for at least 12 months. It is a highly inappropriate facility for her care. I understand too from queries I have made that there appears to be a memorandum of understanding for children younger than she is, maybe 13 and younger, where they can be transferred to a Victorian facility and be provided with the care they need there. That does not appear to exist for young people around the age of 13 to 18.

What happens to these people? I had a constituent of mine, a 17-year-old young woman, who needed admission to one of these facilities. There is nothing in Tasmania.

She made a suicide attempt, which thankfully was unsuccessful, but it was pure maternal instinct that prevented that. Her mother went in to check on her and found her just in time, literally. She ended up in the ICU at the Burnie hospital, just in time.

We need to be sure, if we do not have these facilities in the state, that we provide access to these facilities in Melbourne.

The good news is I understand this young woman will be transferred this week or next week to a facility in Melbourne. This is after at least 12 months of being in the most inappropriate care setting.

However, I am informed the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service has refused to look after her when she comes back. I am saying that here. I have been told this and raised it with the minister because it is a very serious concern.

She will probably be a few weeks in the appropriate facility in Melbourne. She will no doubt receive good age-appropriate care. Her mental illness problems will not disappear because of that admission and she will need care when she comes back. What then? If what I have been told is proven to be the case, it is disgraceful and I hope something happens to prevent it.

There is one live case right here, right now in Tasmania. Another one - and these are just two I am talking about - is a case on the north-west coast that I know quite well. I will leave the Government to respond to that point either now or at a later time.

Another point raised during the briefing was that an argument for this change was the cost associated with the hearings, where three members of the tribunal are required to conduct them under section 47A of the act, Admission to prevent possible harm.

This was introduced on 1 July 2017, and we were informed that in the first year of its operation, the cost of conducting those 82 hearings was \$30 000. There may have been a hearing that heard two or three cases on one day, so it was not 82 individuals, and it could have been an individual admitted and then discharged from another treatment order, a compulsory treatment order, and then readmitted later on. It is not necessarily 82 people.

In the roughly nine months from 30 June 2018 to now, it has cost \$40 000 with 104 hearings. That is a huge increase in the number of hearings. I would like the Leader to address this now, if she can; if not, it will be a question for a later time. The minister can expect some of these questions to resurface during Estimates

Why are we seeing such an increase in people needing to be treated in such a restrictive manner? Is it because we are not providing the appropriate services for their care in the community? Is it because they cannot access appropriate facilities in other places and are not being managed well in the community? We do not have enough appropriate mental health service providers or access to mental health care, which is why so many Tasmanians are having their rights and liberties removed for a legitimate purpose - yes, but why are we seeing so many?

It concerns me that we are not serving the people of Tasmania well - those who have acute mental health illnesses that require compulsory treatment - to ensure they have the best chance of recovering from their illness.

The protections provided in this review framework are vitally important and of course must continue. We are not changing that; we are just changing the number of members of the tribunal who conduct this particular review.

I support the amendment. To me it is not about cost. The cost is obviously a matter and when we reduce it down to tribunal member, the money is not hypothecated and it does not go back into mental health, because we save it here. We need to ensure adequate money is spent on mental health services, particularly for people who have acute mental illness who require high levels of care, often in a restricted environment.

If the Leader cannot answer those questions now, I do not intend to hold up the deal at all, but I just wanted to put them out there. If there are opportunities to follow my questions up, I would appreciate that.

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### **Recognition of Visitors**

**Mr PRESIDENT** - Honourable members, I acknowledge the presence of students from Our Lady of Mercy Catholic School at Deloraine. The member for McIntyre is just about to put up her hand as your member. We welcome you. It was good to see a couple of you playing football outside in the parliamentary gardens. Pity we could not get some goalposts up there. It is terrific to see you here and we hope you come back again.

**Members** - Hear, hear.

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[11.55 a.m.]

**Mr VALENTINE** (Hobart) - Mr President, I support this bill. Anything that impacts positively on those who suffer mental illness is something we should support. That relates to having a three-member health tribunal instead of having one member deal with certain aspects of a person's care.

I chaired the Government Administration A subcommittee inquiry into Acute Health Services in Tasmania, which published its findings in December 2017. Key findings (6), (7) and (8) were -

- Access to timely acute and community mental health care is inconsistent, lacking functionality and resulting in inadequate care of patients with mental illness
- Child and adolescent inpatient mental health services are lacking in Tasmania, resulting in sub-optimal care for young people experiencing significant mental illness
- Tasmania does not have a statewide perinatal and infant mental health service, resulting in sub-optimal care for vulnerable children and women experiencing postnatal depression and postpartum psychosis

Mental health is an issue in our community. I turn to one aspect of the other interim report the committee produced about current and projected state demand. There are five findings there that point to mental illness issues -

4. Patients with disability or acute mental illness are high users of acute physical health care. They are vulnerable and experience higher rates of morbidity and mortality in the health system.
5. Emergency departments are not well equipped to provide high quality care for acutely unwell mental health patients.
6. There is increasing demand for adolescent mental health services.
7. There is a high demand for perinatal mental health assessment and care throughout Tasmania.
8. Bed block in acute mental health care has been exacerbated by a reduction in bed numbers.

These people really need proper care. This amendment will remove that level of stress when people have to appear before a tribunal. I support this bill because it will assist a vulnerable section of our community. It might only be a small number of them that go through this process -

**Ms Forrest** - There are quite a few if you look at the numbers.

**Mr VALENTINE** - We will find that out when you ask your question, member for Murchison. We move to improve people's lives, such as when we were dealing with the bill regarding birth certificates. We do these things because we want to give people the opportunity to live a more fulfilled life. This amendment will remove the stress that has come to light. It will save money. As the member for Murchison said, money is not the focus. The focus is about reducing the stress on the individual when they have to appear before a tribunal under certain circumstances.

**Mr Dean** - The process of this bill has to be right as well

**Mr VALENTINE** - Are you suggesting that the process with the other one was not?

**Mr Dean** - Absolutely.

**Mr VALENTINE** - Well, we will have to agree to disagree on that score.

[12.00 p.m.]

**Mrs HISCUTT** (Montgomery - Leader of the Government in the Legislative Council) - Mr President, the member for Murchison asked the question about the reasons behind section 47 hearings and what the Government is doing about it. It is important to note section 47A only commenced in 2017. To date, there are limited statistics that allow any ongoing trends to be identified. Advice has been sought from the president of the tribunal, who has provided the following advice and I will quote directly -

The increase in admissions to hospital is purely down to people on Treatment Orders becoming unwell on their current treatment regime. It is not because of resourcing of services ... it is just a deterioration in health.

I assure members that the Government is building a better mental health system for Tasmanians by rolling out our \$104 million plan to deliver more beds, community support, and acute child and adolescent facilities.

I reiterate the Government's past commitment to deliver Tasmania's first-ever child and adolescent mental health facility. In the Government's recent Agenda 2019, it committed to completing and opening the first dedicated adolescent mental health unit in Launceston in the last quarter of 2019.

**Bill read the second time and taken through the Committee stage.**

## **PREMIER'S ADDRESS**

**Resumed from 9 April 2019 (page 69)**

[12.04 p.m.]

**Ms RATTRAY** (McIntyre) - Mr President, I have completed my speech from yesterday and it appears I did not leave anything out. My speech has covered well everything I felt I needed to say and I look forward to listening to other members' contributions.

[12.04 p.m.]

**Ms FORREST** (Murchison) - Mr President, we all look forward to hearing good stories with happy endings, especially in these turbulent times, but we need to keep in touch with reality.

The annual State of the State speeches have been a bit of a rallying cry for the troops rather than an analysis of where we are. One could easily be forgiven for mistaking them for an election campaign launch.

Take this piece from the Premier's speech, where he was referring to our strong economy -

Without it we simply could not invest more into health, education and the essential services Tasmanians need, or take action to keep cost of living pressures down, which we have done, or to build the infrastructure our growing state needs, which we are doing.

Mr President, that is stretching things a bit. The revised Estimates report, which I am sure members have had a chance to look at, that was issued in February saw a reduction in our own-source revenue for this year and across the forward Estimates. How come revenue Estimates were reduced? The biggest hit was to conveyancing duties. The Estimates were reduced by 10 per cent in each year.

The Premier went on to say -

This Government remains committed to strong, disciplined financial management, spending less than we earn, keeping the budget in surplus ...

That is simply not true. Have a look at the revised Estimates report - turn to page 44 of that and cast your eyes at the bottom line labelled 'Cash surplus/deficit' and check the figure in the third column labelled 'Revised budget'. What do you see? You see a cash deficit that is \$350 million -



that is the expected cash shortfall this year from Operating and Capital Expenditure spending. That deficit does not include equity contributions into government businesses or other advances, or the repayment of the housing debt owed to the Australian Government. If they were included, the cash deficit would be \$522 million for the current year.

How can the Premier stand up and totally misrepresent the truth and tell us the Government is spending less than we earn? His own figures say the complete opposite. It is almost as if he cannot read the set of financials in front of him. The Premier stands up and says we are spending less than we are earning. I am surprised more people do not call him out.

What about the forward Estimates? If you turn to page 61 of the revised Estimates report, there are cash deficits in every year. Those deficits do not include equity contributions to government businesses or the other amounts I mentioned a moment ago. If you include them, the Government will spend more than \$1 billion more than it will receive over this year and the next three years.

The Government is doing exactly the same as the previous government did in the years up to 2014. By the end of the forward Estimates, there will be less hay in the barn than in 2014. They were highly critical of the previous government doing that but they have done exactly the same.

I took a quick look at Tuesday's federal Budget. Our GST receipts for this year, 2018-19, will be less. Last year's budget predicted GST of \$2.488 billion. The revised Estimates chopped it back to \$2.465 billion. The federal Budget says our GST for this year will only be \$2.448 billion - a further reduction of \$17 million. The Government's revised Estimates surplus for this year, 2018-19, was chopped back from \$164 million to \$7 million. It is now negative.

Next year's GST will be a further \$63 million less than what the revised Estimates predicted. It is all going in one direction. The Government's surplus for that year has gone; its cash position is even worse.

The GST falls will continue over the forward Estimates. The federal Budget told us the size of the GST pool over the forward Estimates has fallen. We now know from the Treasury yesterday that the pool size is less than our last budget assumed, which means there is less money to distribute around the states.

We do not know for sure our percentage share of the pool over the forward Estimates as the exact share is calculated each year, as members would be aware, through the Commonwealth Grants Commission, but Treasury must have estimated that our percentage share is likely to fall.

One of the lessons of the financial crisis over 10 years ago is that GST receipts slowed down much faster than GDP growth. That caught everyone unawares, especially our government at the time - a previous government. At least the Treasurer this time has more warning.

If anyone is still wondering why the Government is not offering more to its workers, it is because it does not have any money, despite all the claims it had a surplus. It does not have the money it has suggested it has. The Government is spending more than they are earning. That is the problem with telling a fib - it comes back to bite you.

In addition, I notice another supplementary appropriation bill laid on my desk yesterday. The Government is asking for another \$217 million, and that is a little more than topping up the petty cash tin.

Its revised Estimates included more for health, operating expenditure and shifting Royal Hobart Hospital capital expenditure from 2019-20. I expected some supplementary appropriation for this, as flagged in the revised Estimates report.

Now the Government is asking for even more. It is hard to believe the budgeting can be that bad. The GST cuts over the forward Estimates must be even worse than the cuts from 2019-20 in statement 3 of the federal Budget papers.

The Treasury model must show future changes to our percentage share, as other states - for example, Western Australia - receive more, and perhaps the GST pool is growing slower than the last budget assumed, which seems to be the case. This is what has happened with stagnant wages growth - people do not have disposable income to share, and we saw the falling retail sales.

Property values are falling in the big states, New South Wales and Victoria. When GST relativities are assessed by the Commonwealth Grants Commission, those states receive more. The pie is only so big.

The ABC news talked last night about \$500 million reduction in revenue through less GST and stamp duty.

How did the Government get this so wrong? At least the property market seems to be holding up in Hobart. The downturn of the property market and the falling housing property prices and values in other jurisdictions will have a flow-through effect. We are a federation and that is what happens.

It is time for the Government to be more honest about the position we are really in here.

Developing a 10-year infrastructure plan is something I wholeheartedly support. In fact, I moved a motion some time ago suggesting we do just this. The 10-year rolling infrastructure plan, plus the longer 30-year plan which the Government are focusing on, is good -

**Ms Rattray**- It was supported.

**Ms FORREST** - No, it was not.

**Ms Rattray** - Wasn't it?

**Ms FORREST** - Not by all. Not unanimously supported in this House, no. But an infrastructure plan without a funding timetable is pointless.

Without funding, to lock in a plan for what you are going to do in the future with the infrastructure spend is pointless. Unless the process of a clear plan of funding of infrastructure projects is removed from vagaries and meddling of partisan politicians, particularly leading up to election time, it becomes another pork fest.

If an example of what not to do is needed, we need look no further than the Royal Hobart Hospital. Back in 2011, the Royal Hobart Hospital master plan was a four-stage development. The latest updated master plan now lists six stages, one of which is fully funded and nearly complete. The second, which has recently been given the green light, is only partly funded, and another four

stages, including a major development and another campus, are on the drawing board, and may be tackled somewhere between 2020 and 2050, which is a pretty broad time frame.

To use the words in the recently completed master plan, 'this work will be completed as and when funding is secured'. None of it is funded. None of it.

That is the problem. The budgets each year have featured lots of infrastructure spending, but they are the first thing to get the chop when cash gets tight. Every year infrastructure spending has been, on average, \$100 million less than budgeted.

The Premier talks about a massive program to build the infrastructure our growing state needs. His past record has been awful, every year. Capital expenditure on our infrastructure projects has been pushed back to meet the needs of other areas of government, particularly the operating expenses related to health and other areas.

The revised Estimates report has a commendable level of planned infrastructure spending, but a conspicuous lack of detail as to how it is to be funded, especially in view of the fact that the Government is spending far more than it is earning.

The second stage of the Royal Hobart Hospital needs an extra \$63 million, as the Premier told us in his address. Where is it coming from? The budget is coming in May and we hope to see more in it. We can all talk about what we are going to build, but if you do not put money with it, it simply cannot happen.

**Mr President** - The Budget was \$6.2 billion last year. It was \$1.8 billion in 1995.

**Ms FORREST** - The infrastructure spending? The Royal?

**Mr President** - The budget itself. That is how much it has increased.

**Ms FORREST** - We are still spending more than we are getting in. As we grow, there should be a bigger budget. We would wonder what the heck was happening if it were not, but if we keep spending more than we are getting in, that can only lead in one direction.

We cannot keep going like this. We are trying to build a substantial facility, one of the largest in the state's history, from current cashflow. We were given a \$340 million grant from the Australian Government, but that was all clawed back by the consequent reduction in GST receipts over the next three years. It was a Clayton's grant. It was simply GST in advance.

I read the other day the German government's bond price is negative. That means people are actually paying the government to look after their money rather than the other way around.

TASCORP has borrowings with interest rates of 3.25 per cent, according to its 2018 financials. Ten-year Australian Government bonds are paying under 2 per cent interest. There are other ways to fund these major intergenerational infrastructure developments.

When I read the revised Estimates report and see the slide into net debt in three years time, I thought at least we could have a discussion about sensible levels of borrowing to ensure the needed infrastructure is built sooner, when it is actually needed, rather than cutting and shutting, postponing

and deferring. That has been the pattern with infrastructure spending over the past 10 years, regardless of political affiliation.

It is great that Tasmania has picked up its game of late. However, we need to remember that just because two events occurred together does not mean one caused the other. It might be coincidental. I do not mind the Government taking credit for all the good things but the danger is they start believing it.

Much of the state's improvement has not been caused by the Government. People like David Walsh do not make decisions depending on who is sitting on the Treasury benches. They just get on.

When the Government boasts of its spending on new projects, most of the funds required come from specific purpose grants. Roads, irrigation, the Bridgewater bridge, for example. The list is very long. We saw that in budget papers previously.

If the Government continues to insult us each year by allocating less in hospital budgets than the immediate year prior, they surely cannot be taken seriously.

You cannot argue with the figures. They are there in black and white - the budget, the spend in annual reports and the budget papers. The figures are there. They were also reported in the last committee report of the acute health services subcommittee of government Administration Committee A.

If the Government needs to borrow, they should tell us. Stop pretending. When the chickens eventually come home to roost, we are all going to find out.

I am a little sceptical about the constantly repeated need to have 'a competitive tax system'.

Too often that means giving concessions to one section of the population. This means the burden falls on other people rather than raising a little extra revenue and using it to pay the interest needed if we borrowed and built the much-needed infrastructure a bit sooner.

Borrowing is much more likely to have positive spin-offs than having a competitive tax system, which for me is just a code for granting concessions to one group. You cannot look at things in isolation. The Treasurer will probably put his own spin on this and throw this back in my face, saying I want this and that, as he tends to do across the table in Estimates. We have to look at ways of funding infrastructure that does not rely on our cashflows, which we know are not good. We have a cash deficit so you have to look at other ways of funding it.

We need the infrastructure. Everyone who drives on the roads in Hobart knows we need investment in infrastructure as well as schools.

On a separate point, I was a little bit sceptical about what the University of Tasmania is up to. We all support the need for better educated people in our population generally, and access to a university education is part of that. It is not the be-all and end-all - vocational training and education are equally important. But there are times when I think UTAS, particularly recently, has become more of a property developer than an educator.

The Australia-wide university model where fee-paying students are needed for universities' bottom lines, in my view, has seen UTAS's expansion of its interest in Hobart's property market and a subsequent need to house so many students from elsewhere, whether it be international or from the mainland.

It must be having flow-on effects for local residents seeking rental accommodation, as is the so-called sharing economy; all of this must affect the broader housing market. I know the Government is trying and we have seen the Minister for Housing recently talking again about these matters, but I noticed the Speaker downstairs recently reminded us quite publicly in the newspapers that we still have a long way to go.

I think most of us know there are challenges in housing across the state, but it seems to be particularly difficult in Hobart. When large areas in the CBD are being taken up by the university, yes, they are housing their students, but that is then pushing other people out who have relied on some of those areas for accommodation in the past.

The purchase of the K&D Warehouse site for conversion from a commercial property into a mixed-use property with some accommodation will increase accommodation and is probably a positive in that regard, but taking up some of the other properties previously used for rental accommodation for other Tasmanians has been a real challenge.

**Mr Willie** - There is another accommodation to be built on the old Red Cross site as well.

**Ms Forrest** - I am not saying they are not doing the right thing in that, but it has put pressure on and that is what we are hearing.

The issue of housing and the impact on housing is multifactorial but it is not just one thing that has caused this big challenge - population growth, cost-of-living increases, the sharing economy with accommodation-sharing platforms and that sort of thing have also contributed.

**Mr Willie** - Slack wages growth.

**Ms FORREST** - And slack wages growth, as the member for Elwick suggests. If your costs of living are increasing but your wages are stagnant, it is really hard to meet the necessary payments you have to make, including rent. People are finding it hard to get into the housing market to buy as well.

Adding a further plan to the infrastructure plan, and that includes housing, is important so the project can be built in a more efficient and timely manner rather than just dribbling out amounts out of the current cashflow if and when the Government can afford it. We need to look at a different way of funding very necessary infrastructure. The vagaries of the economy will not necessarily work in our favour and we cannot just sit back and wait and hope.

We continue to hear about the advances made by the Government in access to public housing, but the Government's own reported data show this is clearly not true. The same can be said for access to health services, particularly in mental health care. I mentioned that in a previous debate.

I am sick and tired, no pun intended, of the constant claims, for as many years as I can remember being here, that we will have a dedicated adolescent mental health unit built soon in Tasmania. I know beds are being built in Launceston, but we still do not have an operational

unit - there are still Tasmanians requiring this care. We have to make provision for these young people now.

We also need to fund those beds, not just the physical rooms, but the care, the qualified psychiatrists for adolescents and mental health nurses who can care for those young people. There has been, and remains, an urgent need for this level of appropriate care. Child and adult acute mental care has not been adequately provided throughout the state despite pleas from medical staff, patients, families and carers of those with acute mental healthcare needs. There are still extraordinarily and unacceptably long times that some mental health patients are waiting for admission to emergency departments across the state.

Young people with acute mental health conditions continue to be provided a level of care that does not meet their needs and is not provided in an appropriate setting. Despite the absolute best efforts and care of the medical and nursing staff, young people need to be cared in clinically appropriate facilities. That is not happening for young Tasmanians unless you can afford go to the mainland and pay for expensive private care.

The same can be said for access to termination of pregnancy. It is clear some terminations are being provided in some private settings and possibly other locations in the state. However, this ongoing secrecy about where and how to access this health care just continues to perpetuate the stigma and shame attached to it. It is a shame the Government seems to condemn women seeking a legal health service.

Mr President, I just saw in the media that the High Court of Australia has upheld safe access zones around termination of pregnancy clinics in Victoria and Tasmania, so women will be free to access those without fear of being harassed and vilified.

Waiting times for elective surgery, ambulance response times and issues such as access block continue. The Government seems to have its head in the sand, saying that its so-called record funding in health is addressing these issues. Both are wrong and the information on their database clearly shows that.

Mr President, there is much to be done. It will be interesting to see what funds flow our way from the federal election and the pork-barrelling exercise we are going to see.

There are a few matters I wanted to raise with my electorate. I do not want to raise too many because the opportunity will come in budget time, when we see what is committed to in the budget.

One thing is the Burnie Port expansion, which was formally in the Leader's electorate but is now in mine. I am sure she still has a great interest in that port. It needs to be focused on in a major way, particularly when Copper Mines of Tasmania in Queenstown becomes operational again. There is not the capacity to handle ore from that mine as well as ore from the reprocessing of tailings at Hellyer Mine. What do they do? Does one cut back production? There is a real need to make sure we get the Burnie Port expansion complete so we do not have to say, 'Sorry, we cannot ship your product'.

I have spoken about a number of schools at different times in this place. There has been some great work done over the last term of my time here, such as Smithton High -

**Mr Willie** - The Smith Family works in Wynyard.

**Ms FORREST** - Yes, the Smith Family is working in Wynyard High. Most of the schools have had little bits of work done. I visited Montello Primary School a few months ago. The age of the buildings and their set-out is just dreadful. It was built in the 1960s or maybe the 1950s. There was a bit of a façade rework during the Building the Education Revolution time, which put in some new toilet blocks. The other toilet is at the end of a very long corridor, down two or three flights of stairs, in a back corner where there is no other access. There are two toilet blocks there, absolutely ripe for bullying. Kids have to go all that way to get there. Those who have mobility issues have to go around the outside of the building because there is no other access to it. The ones that were built - and all credit to the intent - were unisex toilets in a small block that was level and near the top entry to the school. The main road that goes past the school entry faces the toilet block. You walk into the little corridor to all the unisex toilets. They are all unisex toilets which is great, so kids just to and fro. The little corridor has big windows right along the side so any child going to the toilet is in absolute total view from the street, only metres away. Who was thinking about the design of this when it was built? Children from kinder up are going to these toilets and anyone standing in the street can watch them. They cannot see them in the cubicles, but it is hardly the point. This was not well thought through.

The classroom facilities are really dated and cold. They and other schools have demountable classrooms that have been there way too long -

**Mr Willie** - Years.

**Ms FORREST** - Yes, that is right, they need to have space and while the demountables were meant to be temporary, they are almost a permanent fixture. That is a school I would really like to see. I have written to both the Minister for Education and Training and the Minister for Infrastructure to raise their awareness. It is in his electorate so I am sure the Minister for Education and Training would be interested. Many schools need work done on them, but this particular one needs attention.

In terms of my electorate's other major road infrastructure matters, a lot of work has been done. The member for McIntyre talked about the Murchison Highway, where the problem is that the road surface has to be resealed constantly.

The member was lucky she drove over it after it had been resealed again. These massive potholes are terribly dangerous for motorbikes coming around those windy bends. It is terrifying. I have asked a number of questions of the Leader about this and we are still working it through. It was resealed recently before we went looking at the salmon farms, and I have been back since. We have not had a really wet period yet to test it again. Hopefully, they will get it right this time, because it has been like the Illawarra Road, and members know how many times that has been done.

The other area of highway is the Bass Highway, west of Burnie. Not only west of Wynyard, but out to Marrawah, there are some really dangerous sections. This section of the highway carries many heavy vehicles and school buses as well as all the other usual traffic. We keep hearing various commitments from both federal and state governments about prioritising this. Little bits have been done around Rocky Cape area, but there is still a real need to upgrade some areas of this highway subject to such a high volume of traffic.

The area between Burnie and Wynyard, commonly and affectionately known as the 'Cooee crawl', rivals Hobart traffic for about an hour each morning and afternoon going in one direction.

One direction is okay going against the traffic, but going with the traffic can take an extra half hour to get from Wynyard to Burnie or Cooe. That is where you have the double lanes at Cooe.

Work has been done there. The Department of State Growth conducted a good interactive consultation process. Online, you could click on particular sections of the road, including intersections, and put your particular views on that section of the highway. It was a good process, and I am looking forward to the outcome. It is difficult to address because the Cooe crawl section goes right through the residential and then commercial area of Cooe where there are new car yard showrooms. Widening the road here would require large acquisition of land and potentially some new buildings.

The long-term plan suggested in my contribution to the consultation process is a bypass around the back. Again, there is the flat bit at the front and a big hill with farmland up the top. I accept it is not an easy solution without taking too much farmland -

**Mr Farrell** - Tunnels, maybe?

**Ms FORREST** - Tunnels, yes. Talking about tunnels, there is another option to reach the top of Mount Wellington. You could tunnel in from the base and have a lift to the top. You do not need a cable car then. Think about that for an option. They do that in some places in Switzerland.

**Mr Valentine** - That was thought about many years ago.

**Ms FORREST** - Elon Musk might like to do that. Maybe you should contact Elon Musk and say, 'Here is a bit of a challenge for you - come and have a look at this one.'

**Mr Valentine** - It is bluestone, that is the only thing.

**Ms FORREST** - I am sure Elon Musk would love the challenge.

**Mr Valentine** - I am sure he would.

**Ms FORREST** - He would have some way of dealing with those challenges, which he would see as only opportunities rather than challenges.

**Mr PRESIDENT** - In Gibraltar, the roadworks in that rock are amazing.

**Ms FORREST** - Yes, I know. Never say never. There is always someone who wants to prove they can do it.

**Mr Valentine** - I will touch on that later.

**Ms FORREST** - Okay, on Elon Musk or the mountain?

**Mr Valentine** - The tunnels.

**Ms FORREST** - In terms of dealing with the Hobart traffic, too. These are key issues. They are difficult issues, otherwise they would have been dealt with by now, I have absolutely no doubt. Governments past and present are aware of these issues.



If you have an accident on the Cam River bridge, the whole north-west west of Somerset is cut off. You have to go a very long way up the Murchison Highway to get across the Cam River. If there is a crash on the bridge, you cannot even get the ambulance beyond it, if someone needed an ambulance further down. You could get the local ambulance but you cannot get to the hospital. I guess you could always get a helicopter in, but you should not have to do that. It is a road that should be able to be used.

I note the Premier's address. Those comments I make stand. We need to be more honest; the Government needs to be more honest and be truthful about what the state of the budget really is. That would be much more of a point of interest around the budget, which is not that far away. As the Treasurer said yesterday, they are going to have to cut the cloth to meet their - what are the words?

**Mr PRESIDENT** - Costs.

**Ms FORREST** - Yes, cut the cloth to meet your costs - not only your costs but also your revenues, how much you are getting in. There will need to be changes. The Government needs to be honest with us. Continuing to put out massive infrastructure spending promises in the budget and in the forward Estimates without the money attached to them is disingenuous. Let us be honest. Let us stop saying we are spending less than we are earning, because we are not. We need to be honest.

When you get the wages claim, which other members may talk about, by a number of our public servants, when you have a Treasurer saying what a massive surplus we are going to have and that everything is rosy and the economy is booming - I am not saying the economy is doing badly, I am just saying we have to be realistic and honest with what is happening here. When you say that and then refuse to negotiate, in my view, a decent wage rise for the public servants because we have all this money, the reality is we do not have all this money. You cannot have it both ways so let us be honest.

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### Recognition of Visitors

**Mr PRESIDENT** - I welcome Deloraine Primary School students to the Chamber. The member for McIntyre is your member and is looking after you. We were up in the Deloraine district about a month ago. It is good to see you down here. I hope we can continue to crisscross and see each other from time to time.

**Members** - Hear, hear.

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[12.39 p.m.]

**Mr VALENTINE** (Hobart) - Mr President, I am sorry for my voice but there is little of it -

**Ms Rattray** - Your offering will be brief?

**Mr VALENTINE** - No, but I think I get the message from the member for McIntyre.

**Ms Rattray** - I am just trying to help the member look after his voice.

**Mr VALENTINE** - That is right. You are always caring for others. Thank you for that care.

Mr President, it is interesting, when you read the State of the State Address, how there seems to be a focus on growth. The Premier says Tasmania's economic growth is higher than the nation's and the fastest in a decade, nearly double the national average. Commentators see the rise in house prices as a positive, but when will the bubble burst? Is the growth paradigm something sustainable?

**Ms Rattray** - I noted on one of the morning shows only yesterday the bubble is bursting on the big island. We usually take a little while to catch up over here.

**Mr VALENTINE** - That is true. We have a lot to offer on this little island and people are starting to realise that. That is why our housing is so attractive, especially when they can sell their house for \$2 million on the mainland and come down here and buy something similar for possibly \$800 000, put the rest away and retire quite happily. That is what happens over time.

In general terms, the issue of the growth paradigm - I do not know how it is going to happen, but there had to be a genuine look at whether it is sustainable into the future. A little island like Tasmania can ride on the coat-tails of other jurisdictions, when we are obviously an attractive place to invest and all those things. Is that growth paradigm sustainable globally? I find it difficult to see it is. We need to bite the bullet and have a good hard look. Small Tassie cannot do it on its own. Nationally it needs to be canvassed. I am not an economist who would be able to add value in this area of the economy with an opportunity to look at a different paradigm and how it might look well into the future.

People espouse the fact our house prices are rising, which is good. We are all getting better value for our assets, but the rich become richer and the poor pay higher rents, which means they ultimately are poorer. I find difficult to balance why it is a good thing house prices are rising. Demand for housing is so high right now that rents are even higher than Melbourne. The other day an article in the paper stated we are a dollar higher in median rent in Hobart than Melbourne. I am not sure exactly when I read that, but I am sure it is right, if someone checks.

Building more housing for people, affordable housing in particular, does create jobs. What is the affordable limit? Wages in our community are not comparable to other states and that is an issue.

The Premier talks of our unrivalled natural environment and premium grade products, excellence in education, science and research. Adventure tourism - it is not about sitting sipping lattes and wine. That has its attractions to many who do not wish to do the harder yards, carrying all the gear when bushwalking or tramping. Many of those people want to have those sorts of experiences in a more relaxed manner. Tasmania has previously captured the attention of the upper end of bushwalkers, the trampers, as a result of the status of our wilderness and we risk losing a competitive edge if we are not careful about what we are offering the broader community in terms of experiences. There are many people across the globe who are seeking that wilderness experience, uninterrupted by helicopters and the impact of commercialised experiences such as 'glamping'.

It is a bit like the GMO moratorium argument. There are real benefits from a global demand for organically pure products, unadulterated by genetically modified organisms. There is enough to sustain an industry with that focus in Tasmania because it is globally recognised that we produce good food products. Because there is a reduction in the number of localities offering GMO-free products, we can make a killing. That is an argument that will come before us at another time.

It is the same with our adventure tourism. There is a demand. If we can continue to offer a product that is not overtly impacted by commercial operations, I think we ought to look at that. We could reap rewards from people who spend significant time roaming our wilderness and then relaxing in our cities and towns, spending their money on all sorts of things. The long-term impact would have real benefits. That is not to say that we cannot offer glamping, but we need to offer it without impacting the competitive edge we have.

There are some good operators, but do not kill the goose that lays the golden egg.

In education, the Premier mentions excellence in his speech. Our NAPLAN results do not echo that we are delivering excellence. Are we approaching education the wrong way, or does it call into question the measuring paradigm and therefore the need to move away from NAPLAN as a nation? Those with greater experience in the sector will be able to drill down into that. The last thing we need is for NAPLAN to be nothing more than a league table. There are winners and losers in that. I am sure the member for Elwick, being a teacher in his past life, would have some comments on that. My wife, who is a teacher, has opinions, but I am not here to deliver those.

**Mr PRESIDENT** - You hear enough of them.

**Mr VALENTINE** - The thriving arts sector will only thrive if we support it in the right way. It takes a community to realise the value of arts to the health and wellbeing of the community. Funds need to be well placed and the quantum of funds needs to reflect the importance of the role it plays. That is where the community comes in. It is the community that sets the value on these things. We can ask governments to put more money in. The Government needs to because there is an increasing realisation that the arts can deliver real value when it comes to community health and wellbeing. It is not just about creativity, it is about it being a preventative health measure. That needs to be understood.

**Ms Rattray** - Through you, Mr President, we were just told by the member for Murchison that the money is not there. Where do you get that balance? What goes without?

**Mr VALENTINE** - I appreciate the problem. There is not an easy solution. However, when you look at how much money is put into preventative health compared to acute health services, every year the Government fails to fund to the level acute health services require to function properly. It is always underfunding that. In each following year, it is not funding them at the right level. But then, you think that it is a chicken and egg situation. You need a heavy concentration on that preventive health program, and funding things like the arts to keep people out of hospital, which reduces the need for funding.

**Ms Rattray** - If you pull back on acute services, there will be a segment of the community who miss out on important healthcare services now and may not see the benefit of the preventive program. I do not know either how you would do it.

**Mr VALENTINE** - I understand entirely where the member for McIntyre is coming from. We need to depoliticise it and we need that long-term strategic framework for preventive health, acute health and community health - all those things and the arts. All of that needs to come into a strategic plan over a long period. The politics needs to be taken out of it and we need to move forward as a community, otherwise we will not progress. You cannot chop and change that sort of a vision every four years. It just does not work.

**Ms Rattray** - A longer election cycle might be part of the answer.

**Mr VALENTINE** - Many people would say it is long enough already, but I agree that the length of the election cycle is important. It does not need to be too short, but it does not need to be too long either, otherwise the chances of the community to have their proper say in who guides this state - there are swings and roundabouts.

I do not see why parties cannot come together and work out a proper strategic plan and direction they can all agree on with the things that really matter. Do not politicise things to the nth degree. Argue about the small things, not the big picture.

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### **Recognition of Visitors**

**Mr PRESIDENT** - Honourable members, I welcome students from the Deloraine Primary School. They came in two waves; this is the second wave. It is great to see you here and we hope you enjoy your time.

**Members** - Hear, hear.

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**Mr VALENTINE** - Mr President, the arts sector will only thrive if we as a community support it in the right way. It takes the community to realise the value of the arts to the health and wellbeing of the community from a number of angles.

I encourage the community to support live theatre and exhibitions and to buy works of art to hang on the walls rather than some more commercialised prints and products that might be available in some of our stores. The same goes for our designer furniture sector. Look at the offerings from major commercial operators for cupboards, desks and chairs, and then check out our homegrown designer products. You may be very surprised at the significantly greater value that is on offer when you take into account that long-term value of that product. You have something that is homegrown, designed here in Tasmania and will retain its value. We live in a throwaway society. You are less inclined to throw away furniture you know has had good thought put into it and has an intrinsic cultural value to it.

**Ms Rattray** - It becomes a family treasure.

**Mr VALENTINE** - It does, and people keep it.

**Ms Howlett** - The Government has the COLLECT Art Purchase Scheme, which can assist you in purchasing from local artists.

**Mr VALENTINE** - That is good, but as individuals in the community, if we thought more about that, we could support the arts in all its forms in very real and beneficial ways rather than getting a throwaway item somewhere else.

The Premier mentions events and festivals. I can only but agree that it is a good move to spread the love to our more regional areas and communities that need the benefits that can flow from investment in events and festivals. When you hold something in a regional area, it brings its own

twist on how such events are focused or presented. What works in a city is not necessarily what works in the country. Community engagement in the presentation of events is essential for maximum impact in that community. Without it, the ongoing benefits are substantially reduced, in my humble opinion.

Ten Days on the Island is a classic example. I managed to attend three or four events during that time in the north-west just after our salmon farming tour. It was great to be able to walk through a farm and up to an old grain silo and listen to interesting music emanating from that grain silo put on by the good grace of Brian Ritchie and others. It was a great experience. Then, to travel around the different sheds - huge potato sheds on the coast there - and listening to some of the creative offerings in those sheds. A once boring, old vacant shed becomes something very significant from the cultural aspect. The community was engaged to put that on. Schoolkids got up there so the kids get a good feel for what can be achieved in the arts. I back the idea of having those events and festivals outside our major cities. That is not to say major cities should not have festivals, do not get me wrong. I just think there is an intrinsic value in festivals being held in regional areas, with their particular twist or take on how the presentation should go.

**Ms Armitage** - We would love Dark Mofo in Launceston.

**Mr VALENTINE** - Would you? You want that as well. You already have half of it.

**Ms Armitage** - We didn't want Mona Foma, we don't need anything in summer.

**Mr VALENTINE** - I was talking about outside the cities, not Launceston in particular.

**Ms Armitage** - You said regional.

**Mr Farrell** - Launceston is outside the city.

**Mr VALENTINE** - It is a bit far out of town.

To international tourism. For international tourists, quality of experience is important and we need people here on our terms, not to have them fundamentally change over the long term the very reason our destination was chosen by them in the first place.

Think about where you go for your own holidays. You go to a place to enjoy it. The Galapagos Islands, for instance, or somewhere like that. I have never been there. Maybe Mr President has been there.

**Mr PRESIDENT** - No.

**Mr VALENTINE** - No, he has not been there. You might look at ducking in while you are over there in that vicinity, Mr President, after your time here expires.

**Mr PRESIDENT** - Easter Island but not Galapagos.

**Mr VALENTINE** - You go there. You do not enjoy it anywhere near as much if you have to enjoy it with thousands and thousands of people. You go there because it is a remote area in some cases and you get a real sense of place. If you have many people there, all with their cameras taking photos everywhere, it tends to diminish that experience. International tourism is important for our

own economy, but we need to make sure they are here on our terms so we are not degrading our base product - the very reason they come here. We need to be sure we are dealing with our assets in a manner that is sustainable for their base attraction. We do not want our assets being degraded, reaching a point where they are not able to cope with the attention placed on them. I do not know how you achieve -

**Ms Rattray** - You have just read the National Trust submission, have you?

**Mr VALENTINE** - I did actually read the National Trust submission. It is not where I have that from; nevertheless, we do not want our assets being degraded.

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

## **QUESTIONS**

### **Justice and Related Legislation (Marriage Amendments) Bill 2018 (No. 47) - Response to Questions**

[2.31 pm]

**Mrs HISCUTT** (Montgomery - Leader of the Government in the Legislative Council) - Mr President, I have answers to questions on the Justice and Related Legislation (Marriage Amendments) Bill 2018 asked in this place yesterday.

To the first question sent to me, the reply is -

- (1) It is accurate to say the bill still has not been finalised. The bill had not had its third reading in the Legislative Council and amendments had not been back to the House of Assembly. It appears to be possible, under the bill as amended in the Legislative Council, for parents whose child has a sex registered as female to have that child's gender registered as male, see clause 21, proposed section 28A(3).

The Government has been very up-front about this position on the flawed Labor-Greens - not in this House - bill brought to the Legislative Council. The Government was prepared to go on *Tasmania Talks* and explain to members of the Tasmanian community why we have very serious concerns about this legislation. The same cannot be said for members of the Opposition, who have not explained their position on *Tasmania Talks*. If members were so concerned about Government statements, perhaps Labor could take the opportunity to explain it themselves.

The answer to the other question -

- (2) My response was referring to the number of times a person could potentially alter gender. There is nothing to limit the number of times a person is able to alter their gender. Under this bill as amended in the Legislative Council, the person cannot make application within 12 months after a gender has been registered, but a person can make any number of applications over the course of their life, so long as they do not apply more than once in every 12-month period.

The Government has repeatedly said the amended bill has neither been adequately reviewed nor properly consulted with the Tasmanian community.

There is a great uncertainty about the unintended legal consequences and that is why we have consistently called for the bill to be delayed so the Tasmania Law Reform Institute can undertake a comprehensive review and consultation.

### **Labor-Greens Tag**

[2.33 pm]

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

Yesterday, when questioned by the member for Rumney, around who were the Greens members in this Chamber, the Leader apologised and said the Labor-Greens tag seems to be there all the time and it should have been Labor members.

### **ANSWER**

Mr President, I thank the member for Elwick for his question. My answer should have been 'Labor members in the Legislative Council or Labor-Greens of the parliament'.

**Mr Willie** - You are saying Labor members have the majority in this House?

**Mrs HISCUTT** - A voting bloc.

### **Independent Members**

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

Is it the Government's position to question the independence of independent members in this House? I can do the maths. There are four Labor MLCs in this House. Four independent members voted with us on this particular bill, but not always. Is it the Government's position to question the independence of independent members?

### **ANSWER**

Mr President, I thank the member for Elwick for his question, the answer to which is no.

### **Labor-Greens Bloc**

[2.34 p.m.]

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

In the *Advocate* of Monday, 25 March 2019, you wrote an opinion piece titled 'Labor-Green bloc blocking the Liberal government's legislative agenda'. The text includes statements such as -

Over the next few months the residents of Montgomery will go to the polls not only for the federal election but also to elect who will represent them in the Tasmanian Legislative Council.

The Legislative Council election is fundamentally important because of the risk of the Labor-Green bloc becoming stronger ... A recent example of Labor and the Greens using their numbers in the Parliament to frustrate the Government's agenda and push an extreme left agenda is the blocking of mandatory sentencing ...

Honourable Leader, considering you issued an apology yesterday in this House, will you issue a press release clarifying your statements in the *Advocate*?

**Mrs Hiscutt** - Maybe, maybe not.

**Mr WILLIE** - Can you answer the question? Yes or no, it is a simple question.

**Mrs Hiscutt** - I do not think there is any need. I think there is a Labor bloc up here and that is it. In parliament there is a Labor-Greens bloc. I think it is pretty right.

**Mr WILLIE** - In this opinion piece in the *Advocate* you referred to the Labor-Greens bloc in the Legislative Council.

## **ANSWER**

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

There is no Greens-endorsed member of the Legislative Council.

## **PREMIER'S ADDRESS**

**Resumed from above.**

[2.36 p.m.]

**Mr VALENTINE** (Hobart) - Mr President, the independent member for Hobart, thank you. It is good we can have a little joviality to lighten the day.

Earlier I said we do not want to see our assets degraded and reach a point where they are not able to cope with the attention placed on them. That was in relation to visitors to our island. Visitor numbers are really increasing. I am unsure how to best deal with our assets. Is it to cap visitor numbers if there is a danger of loving them to death? Such a move would not be necessarily negative and may see a more sustainable outcome.

This needs consideration. I do not have all the answers, but think of the Overland Track, Wineglass Bay and possibly the Three Capes Track. A number of areas are getting significant attention. Wineglass Bay track is one of our most loved assets, but it is like Flinders Street Station according to people who have been there recently.



How much does that take away from the experience people go there to get? It is a question of the sustainability of the special nature of these places. How can we best cope with the attention they are getting without ruining the asset?

The Government is putting in significant extra Parks and Wildlife funding. With such a significant proportion of our state being parks and national parks, it is important they have the resources to properly manage those areas. I thank the Government for putting in that money, although whether it is sufficient to cope is another thing.

The strength of the economy is important, but when being carried along with the tide, we may mistake a fast current as success, until it finally dawns on us we are being carried far beyond the limit of our capacity to cope. I thought it was a bit like the Dunalley canal. I used to spend a lot of time at the Dunalley canal, one of the best swimming places in the state. There is no sand to deal with and plenty of fast-flowing water. If you are a young teenager on a paddleboard going down the canal with the current, you can get up a significant speed, but if you do not pull yourself out at the right time, you can end up on the other side of the bridge with a pretty hard row back. I equate that to our economy in the way we approach life in this state. Sometimes we are carried away with the impetus to develop, and then we reach a point we have overdeveloped. With too many vacant hotel rooms, if the pressure drops off, investors will be left wondering what is going to happen to their investment if they cannot fill the rooms.

It is not around the corner, but we need to think long term across the state. Possibly not so much in the regional areas, but who knows? As Hobart visitation becomes filled up, there might be a greater impetus in more regional areas and then we reach the point where suddenly we are not flavour of the month anymore and are left with infrastructure not going to pay for itself. They are some of the difficulties. You might say that it is a problem for the investor. It may well be a problem for the investor, but it behoves us and our government to be aware of the issue and to make sure that whatever they are backing, it is done in a reasonably strategic manner.

The rate of business investment is also important. Again, we need to ensure it happens on our terms. We should not reduce our competitive edge by overshadowing the value of our built heritage, for example, in preference to facilitating investors. Balance is required and a recognition of what is important to the community when it comes to long-term sustainability and focus.

Sometimes cutting red tape means getting rid of well-intentioned strictures of the past. There is a mantra of too much red tape, but red tape was initially put there for a purpose. We need to make sure it is not over the top and critically analyse that it is not stopping some unintended consequences. We can take away the unnecessary components of red tape that hold investment back, but let us not change it for change's sake.

We should not simply react to the ease of development approvals in other places because their horse may have bolted. On the mainland, while the rate at which development is occurring might seem attractive - and why can we not have that sort of development rate here? - but, again, look at that in context, and at whether the base product is being eroded, simply because there are many investors on the doorstep.

**Mr Armstrong** - Are you meaning houses or businesses?

**Mr VALENTINE** - No, I am talking about hotel developments and investments like that. Development must happen on community terms, not on the terms of the holy dollar.

**Mr Armstrong** - We need to have houses because there is a housing shortage.

**Mr VALENTINE** - I could not agree with the member more. There is a housing shortage, but how you actually provide for housing is another thing. It might be in providing for affordable housing, you are actually reducing people's amenity. Tasmania has a population of about 520 000 people, and it may be we are actually reacting like a city the size of Melbourne is reacting, one that does not have the same degree of amenity we have. People do not want to lose amenity. They want to be able to provide affordable housing, and quite rightly so, but by making sure the population comes with you rather than simply for development's sake. Do you understand what I am trying to get at? Sort of. Yes, okay, that is fine.

**Mr Armstrong** - We beg to differ is all I am saying.

**Mr VALENTINE** - I do not know - horses for courses.

We need to evolve as an attraction in a contemporary world, but to lose our specialties in exchange for the dollar may not always be repaid by sustained visitation into the future. It is one of those balancing acts we have to concentrate on. Basically, the wow factor needs to be maintained and not overshadowed by the perils of mass tourism. If you do not have the wow factor anymore because of the density of tourists, you have to think to yourself, 'Why are we doing this?' You have to get that balance right.

Power pricing is mentioned. The capping of power prices may indeed deliver for small business. It certainly helps them in their business planning if they can have a degree of certainty. That is all linked to the capacity of our generation assets to deliver, but let us not forget that we are not the only ones taking steps to improve our renewable energy generation. It is a technological world and we probably should not place too much faith in forward markets. By that I mean the faith in a second Basslink to pay dividends, given that demand might drop in the future - that is a big question. We think we have all this renewable energy and we can sell it to the mainland, but at the same time many states are looking at renewables themselves and are trying to satisfy the demand there. As technology evolves, there are more and more ways of developing renewable energy and so we might find that those assets remain a little idle 15 years down the track.

**Mr Armstrong** - If we get all these electric cars that they are talking about -

**Mr VALENTINE** - There is a big demand -

**Mr Armstrong** - If we get to 50 per cent, we will need all the renewable energy we can get to power them.

**Mr VALENTINE** - Someone might come up with a hydrogen vehicle and you do not need electricity for that.

There are risks. That is what you are pointing to: the risk and the demand. The demand is certainly going to grow when it comes to electric vehicles.

**Mr Willie** - Power generation at the source is going to grow too with battery technology.

**Mr VALENTINE** - That is right, and a lot of faith is being placed in batteries. There are many rare earth components in batteries so we have to be able to provide the rare earth elements to develop them. There are risks in generation, or at least in storage, of electricity that we have to look at. Certainly baseload generation like hydro-electric generation is an absolute plus for us. If you look back to when we developed all those hydro dams, it really was positive for this state.

**Mr Dean** - On batteries, information came to us the other day, and I guess you have it as well, about the development of a new battery that will store much more electricity and for a longer period. It has been produced, but I think they are looking at ways of improving it.

**Mr VALENTINE** - Another thing that has been developed is capacitors. They say the future really is in capacitor technology. It changes the whole dynamic. We have to be careful that we invest in technologies that are sustainable and give long-term payback. We should not jump in too quickly with that second connector because it will be interesting to see the demand.

**Mr Dean** - What you are saying is very true because you only have to look at televisions and things that we bought 10 years ago that are now obsolete and not worth much at all. Technology is changing so quickly, it is steaming ahead.

**Mr VALENTINE** - It does. You only have to look at mobile phones to know that, and what they can do today.

**Ms Rattray** - I remember the very first one was like a brick.

**Mr VALENTINE** - Yes. You had a shoulder strap you had to carry the battery on; it sat in the centre console of the vehicle. We are getting off track a bit, Mr President. It is good to have the discussions. I do not mind the interruptions. I am sorry to cross-talk.

The agriculture, seafood and food sectors are booming. The Premier is so right there - we have a great future in that regard. The irrigation projects have really delivered for this state. Of course, they have to be properly managed. Irrigation on land that is not used to having so much water over it sometimes can be a problem in terms of rising water tables and salt issues. However we do it, we have to make sure we are not developing a problem for the future and that we are going about it in the right way. I have quizzed this a couple of times during Estimates. When we had Tasmanian Irrigation before us, they said they do have water plans and do test for this sort of circumstance. It is vital that testing continues and we do not get to a point where much of our arable land is sidelined because of the salt problems we might be developing today through the use of that land. We have to make sure we get it right.

With aquaculture, we have to be careful not to damage Tassie's 'clean and green' brand, which is a competitive edge for us. Our clean waterways are a great image for aquaculture. We have to make sure it is true and we are not over-farming, and that we are doing the measurements - that the bottom environments in our bays and wilder places, as it seems to be, are able to cope with the extra nutrient load. It is important we have the right tests and strictures surrounding this industry.

A lot of the salmon farmers - there are only two or three major ones - recognise that there is a problem because they move their pens around. We have to make sure we are not inventing a problem for the future by the way we manage it.

**Ms Rattray** - I really felt that the industry players in the salmon industry were doing a very good job in looking after the environment and reacting to the concerns about the pens. I thought they had really taken a leap forward.

**Mr VALENTINE** - If you look at when they first started, the amount of money they invested in doing things in a more environmentally friendly way has come a long way, but I still think there is a long way to go, and they would say that, too. It stands to reason - if you put 45 kilograms of feed in through a number of pens in a certain period, if that happens to get through to the base, which they try their best not to because it means they are wasting money, it will impact on the base environment under the pens. They move them around so that some of those areas can go fallow again. This is one of the reasons they go out into those rougher spots so it gets dispersed more. There is only so much nutrient load that our rivers, streams and bays can take. There is also the issue of the level of nutrients and heavy metals in some of our streams around this state and how that is going to impact on their operations further down the line. Storm Bay is an attractive place, but River Derwent has a lot of heavy metals. They have to weigh that all up, do the measurements and make sure their product is not tainted by the reputation of a river that has not been loved very well over years.

**Mr Dean** - It is a good point you make. As a very small example, I have a few goldfish in an outside tank. I have to clean it out regularly.

**Mr VALENTINE** - What do you have?

**Mr Dean** - Just a few goldfish. I have to clean it out two or three times a week. It is amazing the amount of excrement these fish make.

**Mr VALENTINE** - We have the EPA and we just have to make sure the EPA is constantly developing the right sort of tests to check on the environment, not just for the sake of the salmon farmers but for the rest of the community as well.

The restaurant scene across Tassie is doing very well. The Premier talked about the food sector. Whenever I walk around Hobart, I see new restaurants or coffee shops. They are sprouting up everywhere. It is wonderful to see. It is bringing money back into the state because they are paying GST, although it seems our take of GST is down. I find that difficult to understand because with activity rising, I do not see how our GST could be less. However, it is across the whole nation, not just Tassie. It is an interesting circumstance we find ourselves in.

Tenders were mentioned. More Tasmanian businesses are winning tenders for more Tasmanian government work. That is good for the economy. It has to be good for the economy. I am interested to know why that is. I assume it is due to the improving capacity of our businesses rather than any favouritism. In a tender situation you have to do things by the book and you have to make sure you are being fair and equitable to everybody. Perhaps the Leader can explain what the process currently is in terms of advantage that Tasmanian businesses might have over other tenderers, if any. It might be, for instance, that if a Tasmanian tender is less than 10 per cent greater than the best tenderer, the Tasmanian business gets the gig.

**Mrs Hiscutt** - We did dissect the tenders into smaller aggregates so that our businesses could tender for different parts of a whole.

**Mr VALENTINE** - They have the capacity to deliver.

**Mrs Hiscutt** - Yes, because some of our companies are not big enough to do the whole job, but are quite capable of doing sections of the job. I am pretty sure that would be the reason.

**Ms Armitage** - It is unfortunate my engineers in Launceston tell me that does not necessarily happen with tenders they put in for TasWater.

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### **Recognition of Visitors**

**Mr PRESIDENT** - Honourable members, while we are talking about Launceston, I acknowledge the presence of students from Scotch Oakburn College in Launceston in the Chamber. Hopefully they will take something away. I hope to see a couple of you in here in years to come.

**Members** - Hear, hear.

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**Mr VALENTINE** - Mr President, it is good news for our businesses on the payroll tax front. That is a real positive. Irrigation projects are a real benefit, and how important soil testing is to prevent future problems. Pump priming of the building industry can come with its own problems when the market slows after industry has taken on new employees to cope with the demand and then has to put them off again. This is the cost of doing business in a smaller place like Tasmania where there are fewer options.

Travel to the mainland to take up opportunities is not an option because of the cost of moving their gear and all the rest of it. Anything to flatten out the demand, with more sustainable development, has to be good for small business. It cannot be easy for them. How do they cope in the circumstances with major developments like the Royal and other things happening in other cities and places? They must be putting on short-term rather than long-term employees.

With short-term employees, there is little confidence to go and buy a house, for instance, because they are not sure they are going to have the dollars. A balancing act again, and making sure the Government concentrates on how best to apply its resources to help people trying to run businesses in this state.

One of the real positives of the Premier's State of the State Address is to provide a presumptive provision for State Service frontline workers suffering post-traumatic stress disorder, which means they do not have to prove they have such a condition -

**Mr Dean** - It is presumed they have it.

**Mr VALENTINE** - It is presumed they have it. Those dealing with such matters decide the level of affliction and other matters impacting on the individual's circumstances.

**Mr Dean** - Exactly the same as applied to the fire service.

**Mr VALENTINE** - Yes, that is right.

**Mr Dean** - Would it relate to police? It should do. The public service, State Service and emergency frontline workers.

**Mrs Hiscutt** - Hopefully the bill will be in our House soon and we will be able to have a good look at it.

**Mr VALENTINE** - The bill will be up for discussion, as we always do, Leader. The Government says it will destigmatise mental health in our community, which certainly needs to happen.

Climate change was mentioned by the member for Mersey as needing immediate attention. I have been involved in this area since the mid-1990s. At that time, we did not realise we were actually reducing carbon emissions when, almost by accident, at the Hobart tip we put these pipes through to capture methane gas, and then flared it off to reduce gas around the tip site. Little did we realise that later we would tender it out to a third party to turn that into electricity generation. There are quite a number around Tasmania. Glenorchy does it. They probably do it in Launceston.

**Mr Dean** - Yes.

**Mr VALENTINE** - By scavenging the methane gas, putting it through a generator which puts it into the grid, there is a payback to the system. Private enterprise producing the generation receives a percentage and the rest can come back to the council. It saves money and reduces greenhouse gas emissions. The same thing happens with the Macquarie Point wastewater treatment plant - they scavenge gas from the site, use the electricity generated which they burn to create steam that is then used to do other things. I think that is the way it goes.

**Ms Rattray** - Wouldn't it be another good initiative to actually reduce our waste in the first place?

**Mr VALENTINE** - Obviously yes, you are right. Every time I buy a product I think, 'What can I recycle out of the package?' One of the biggest things, and many companies are getting better at it, is polystyrene. You cannot put that in your recycling bin. It has great thermal qualities, but if you burn it, it is shocking. There needs to be a recycling mechanism for polystyrene.

**Ms Rattray** - I am sure our Scotch Oakburn College students would be very interested in what the Government and the parliament have in store for recycling.

**Mr VALENTINE** - Truth be known they probably already have an app developed to make it happen. They can go back to their science and ICT classes and think about how they can improve the situation.

**Mr PRESIDENT** - They will be onto it tomorrow.

**Ms Rattray** - Homework tomorrow.

**Mr VALENTINE** - Some people ask: what difference can Australia make? It is such a small place compared to China, where there are billions of people. The difference it makes is that Australia then becomes a leader. It might not be that what we save from going up into the air is huge compared to what happens in other countries, but the fact that we as a country give attention

to this means that people take notice - that is the benefit. Mind you, we produce a lot of coal for many countries so it behoves us to think about that side of the moral equation.

The impact of climate change could be huge for our nation. You only have to look at some of the mapping done years ago by DPIWE of low-lying land in the south - the Sharples report, for those who are interested. When you look at the sea level rise of 600 millimetres to a metre, you start to think how much valuable land is going to be inundated, which drops the value of the land.

I remember when I was on the Hobart City Council, there was a block of land at Nutgrove. There was a bit of hullabaloo because the community was concerned it was going to be built on, but when we looked at it, it was almost below sea level. I remember the discussions at the time because we had to look at this from a moral perspective: yes, we could sell the land off and get a million dollars for it or whatever, but we would be selling land that could well be inundated by a rise in sea level.

**Mr PRESIDENT** - Is that the park or grassy area in the middle of Nutgrove Beach?

**Mr VALENTINE** - Yes, it is.

**Ms Rattray** - That caused a hullabaloo? Define 'hullabaloo'.

**Mr VALENTINE** - Community angst.

**Mr PRESIDENT** - There were houses there before it was purchased.

**Mr VALENTINE** - Yes, it is interesting. Councils really have to think about whether someone could turn around and sue them later for selling land likely to be inundated now those maps have been done. The impact is quite high if you look at those areas that can be inundated.

I note comments on roads infrastructure and increased congestion on our roads. My electorate is not immune to that. Interestingly, when everyone is talking about the traffic problem in Hobart and digging tunnels, 70 per cent of the traffic stops in Hobart and 30 per cent travels through. If you build the tunnels, not a huge amount of traffic will use them to get to the other side of the city because most of the traffic stops in the city. Quite clearly, those people trying to develop solutions to our traffic problems have to understand that most of that traffic comes into the city. If you can improve people's access to the city by public transport - ferries, whatever it is - the ferry idea has merit; whether the Government takes up the offer by Bob Clifford is another thing. He has done it before when the Tasman Bridge was knocked down all those years ago, and he says that he is willing to build the ferries if they build the facilities for the ferries to use.

**Mr Dean** - At his cost.

**Mr VALENTINE** - Obviously, he would run it as a company.

**Mr Dean** - Sure, without a doubt.

**Mr VALENTINE** - I think that is what he is saying. He would take the risk in building the units as long as the foreshore facilities were provided by the Government. It is going to be interesting. When you look at the river, it has always been said - and I certainly used to say it a lot - it is the highway that does not wear out. You do not have to fill potholes in a river, they fill

themselves. Water does not wear out. You just have to make sure you have enough of it. I do not think the River Derwent is likely to get to a level that cannot run ferries.

**Mr Armstrong** - It does get a bit bumpy sometimes.

**Mr VALENTINE** - It certainly gets a bit bumpy. We are well and truly aware of that - even coming from Bellerive to Hobart, in my own experience. I can remember some pretty rough trips across there.

Nevertheless, on the issue of tunnels, I remember trying to do an ABC interview outside the Town Hall when I was lord mayor and they had five takes to get this grab. They said - 'For Pete's sake, can't you do something about these trucks?' I said, 'Yeah, put them in a tunnel.' It was a throwaway line but the next week in the council, a motion was moved that the lord mayor's notion of tunnels not be proceeded with. I had not even put it to the council, but two aldermen at the time had moved to -

**Mr Dean** - Censure you.

**Mr VALENTINE** - It was to say what a stupid idea it was. Following that, I had a visit from an engineer. The aldermen who were saying 'Don't do it' clearly were talking about the high cost because of bluestone - not an easy thing to plough through. When the engineer came to talk to me, he said, 'You could put one in Macquarie Street.' He said he knew the soil structure in Macquarie Street, and that there was only one knob of bluestone that comes out somewhere near St Joseph's but that the rest was Knocklofty sandstone so you could trench and cap it. Sometimes the notion needs to be drilled down into to see whether it is feasible. The overriding issue is that 70 per cent of traffic stops in the city.

**Madam ACTING PRESIDENT** - Without trucks, the economy stops.

**Mr VALENTINE** - Certain parts of the economy stop. You could say that.

The important thing is that whoever is doing the thinking on this needs to think long term. If you look at Sorell and the old railway line that used to exist between Sorell and Kangaroo Bay back in the late 1800s and early 1900s, a train used to travel from Sorell all the way up the valley, in through the tunnel at Tunnel Hill and then around the contours to Kangaroo Point. That is how the people from Sorell got to Hobart; they would catch a ferry then.

All those corridors have not been protected. There is still much of that particular track left and the corridors are still there, and you can follow it to Sorell, where the member for Prosser has her office on the corner. What are the streets?

**Ms Howlett** - Cole Street and Main Road, Sorell.

**Mr VALENTINE** - Cole Street and Main Road. Just up the road in Cole Street is the old railway station.

**Ms Howlett** - Station Lane.

**Mr VALENTINE** - A stone's throw from your office. There is still an old carriage somewhere in the vicinity. It is still there and used to go out through Penna. It used to go across a causeway at



Penna to Cambridge. The causeway is still there, except there is a gap in the middle where the bridge has gone. The point is if any area needs light rail, it is to the east. It is the Dodges Ferry-Sorell connection and long-term thinking to provide for the corridors is needed.

One of the options is a bridge coming across from Dodges Ferry onto Seven Mile Beach and then straight through to bypass all of Sorell and take away congestion. Many people would be concerned about Seven Mile Beach or Five Mile Beach being impacted and used for such a purpose. We need to think about a long-term strategic framework. If we do not do it today, the opportunities disappear as the land is taken up for other purposes.

The peripheral park-and-ride nodes are important - obviously, Kingston way, maybe even in the Huon - but to actually get people onto the bus, you have to provide the services at the nodes.

**Mr Dean** - Free parking in particular.

**Mr VALENTINE** - Probably free parking, but also childcare centres and shopping facilities. People can leave their children in childcare centres, travel by train, come back, maybe do some shopping and then go home. It has to look at people's lifestyle. Dodges Ferry is probably not as good an example because many tradies live there and they are not going to catch a train or a bus, because they have their gear in the back of their utes. You have to see how you can balance it with the percentage of people who have needs for proper roads.

Whenever we build facilities, we need to address cycling. Tasmania is a fantastic cycling state. Many people come here to do the Great Eastern Drive. They come here to do that because it is so fantastic. Whenever we build new roads, they need to cater for cyclists so they are not in too great a proximity to the heavy traffic.

**Madam ACTING PRESIDENT** - After the turnouts.

**Mr VALENTINE** - Yes. Lay-bys or whatever we might like to call them.

**Madam ACTING PRESIDENT** - Slow vehicle turnouts.

**Mr VALENTINE** - You have that one off pat.

We have a real opportunity for a statewide bicycle network following the train line from north to south and across the north west and down the west. It is the flattest path between two points. If each council along the way were to put in some resources to develop a cycleway right next to the rail line, there would be no reason we could not become the cycling state. There might be a couple of places where it has to deviate, like the Rhyndaston Tunnel. We have mountain bikes coming out of our ears. Look at the attention the mountain bike trails are getting worldwide. We could feed off that impetus and say, 'Here is your mountain bike trail and here is your touring cycle trail'.

**Mr Dean** - A bike-alone track from George Town to Hobart.

**Mr VALENTINE** - You can go anywhere. Wherever the train lines go, you could have a cycleway.

**Mr Dean** - All the way. Look what happens in Hobart with people on the cycling track here.

**Mr VALENTINE** - They took out part of the train line to do that. Some would say that was not such a great move because it only left one line. Down the track there will be provision for passing lanes for trains.

I am very happy to be involved with the Public Works Committee as its chair. We get to see the state. I thank the members for nominating me to serve on that committee. It gives us a good overview of what is happening around the state with roads and so on. We have that opportunity to put in our opinion, do we not, Madam Acting President?

**Madam ACTING PRESIDENT** - We do.

**Mr VALENTINE** - The Premier mentioned the Antarctic Gateway Partnership and the need to cement it into place. That has never been truer than it is today. When I was lord mayor, I signed a memorandum of understanding between the five Antarctic Gateway cities - Cape Town, Ushuaia, Punta Arenas, Christchurch and Hobart. It was an opportunity to almost have a code of ethics on how to deal with Antarctica.

It is a great opportunity to build the economy, yet the international opportunities present their own issues. We cannot control what other nations do. We can be a provisioning point and we can assist them in developing their activities in the Antarctic, but you cannot control what they do. It might go against the grain of our nation. We have to be careful of the alliances we develop over time. Not all nations have the same focus we have.

The income is tempting but the focus of the nations individually may work against the ultimate outcome that is desirable for that place as we see it.

In closing, I will mention dealing with social inclusion. 'We must continue to break down the barriers to the greatest enabler of social inclusion - education, training and the opportunity of a good job', the Premier said. Social inclusion is also about breaking down the barriers people have to the normal enjoyment of their life and identifying some of those areas we need to tweak.

One was in the bill this morning. It is a simple thing. Instead of three members on the Mental Health Tribunal, there will be one, so the patient does not feel as stressed when their issue is dealt with. I also mentioned the birth certificate, but I will not go there. Do not mention the war.

It is good to see the regional stimulus package. A \$300 000 partnership with the Cradle Coast Authority to deliver strategic local economic projects. The whole state needs to function that way.

Many people are complaining about how the University of Tasmania is buying up properties. It is doing it in a competitive way. It is not like the university is being handed these properties. People that own them want to get the best price and it just so happens that the University of Tasmania has the money. How does it have the money? The university is probably thinking long term, knowing it has all that land in Sandy Bay that it can sell off for various purposes. It is valuable land so it might end up making it cost-neutral for them to move into the city. I remember years ago that an earlier general manager of the city, Garry Storch, who went to Caloundra and unfortunately passed away many years later, said we ought to have a focus as an education city. The whole council agreed with that and said that is something that we will go for and push. Look where we are today. The university is coming into the city. It is more and more focused on seeing Hobart become a university city just like the University of Otago in Dunedin. It can pay off, because it is a good brand to have.

Yes, there is that problem that you have more students now in the city centre than ever before, and their focus on what they want to purchase or how they want to eat and what sort of restaurants they want certainly impacts the whole economy of the city. They may not have as much disposable income as we think because they are full-fee paying students. That is why the university wants to facilitate for them because they are bringing money in, and the university is then able to utilise their money to get a good outcome.

From what I see at the moment, I am not totally against the university coming into the city centre. I see it as positive because it is buying up commercially oriented business sites such as motels and hotels, not housing sites, but they might turn them into housing. The balance there is that CBDs are generally about being commercial business districts, not housing districts, and it might be seen that sort of housing on land like the K&D site -

**Mr Dean** - That would have been a great housing site, I would have thought.

**Mr VALENTINE** - That is what they have just purchased and it looks like that is what they might be doing there. But you have to think that it changes the nature of a CBD. They have some things to work out. The Hobart City Council certainly has some things to work out, but I think it is a good problem to have.

They have purchased the Websters site, the Red Cross site, the Midcity Hotel, the Fountainside Hotel, the Theatre Royal Hotel, the K&D site -

**Mr Willie** - The old forestry building.

**Mr VALENTINE** - The old forestry building. There are so many things this university has done, and I guess they have to answer to their masters in that regard - it is a bit of 'watch this space'. International students being full-fee paying students are helping to fund some of that, and eventually that will take pressure off the housing problem we have in this city because they are being built. Currently those students are taking housing in other locations in the city, and if they are going to move into an environment closer to their work, fewer cars will be needed, so possibly less congestion, more bicycles - there are many things there that could tip the balance towards being positive rather than negative.

That brings me toward the end of my offering, Madam Acting President.

For the two City Deals mentioned, it remains to be seen how good they are and what it will mean for the cities. A lot of money is being invested. My only question would be: have we done the long-term strategic thinking to have that money well placed? That question will remain in my mind until we see the delivery of it. It has been an interesting Premier's address.

[3.30 p.m.]

**Mr ARMSTRONG** (Huon) - Madam Acting President, I want to touch on some issues with significant impacts on my electorate and others that have affected the state of Tasmania as a whole.

I touch on the recent bushfires and recognise the tremendous efforts of all the firefighters and volunteers during the peak period of the fires. Even now with their ongoing support in the south-west - although I think they have moved out today, we have seen fires on the east coast. They are still out there doing their job.

**Ms Howlett** - Dolphin Sands is under threat.

**Mr ARMSTRONG** - It has been put back to 'Watch and Act'.

**Ms Howlett** - I believe one residence has been burned down.

**Madam ACTING PRESIDENT** - That is sad.

**Mr ARMSTRONG** - I also thank the Huon Valley Council staff and the volunteers for their hard work coordinating the evacuation centre for residents and visitors, and also the organisation of the Ranelagh Showgrounds to accommodate livestock and pets.

I can well remember when I was a member of council updating our emergency management plan every year or two and hoping it would never need to be used, but unfortunately it was.

Talking to some of the council staff, they said everything went pretty well, but there were some issues still to be looked into.

Over the last few years we have seen significant fires throughout Tasmania. Thankfully there has been no loss of lives and damage to property has been limited, mainly outbuildings and infrastructure and such, not houses as much as what it was in the 1967 fires. That is thanks to the dedicated work of our firefighters and volunteers.

As a person not directly affected by the fires, apart from some smoke, ash and embers, it is hard to imagine the mental stress residents of these areas have been put through - not knowing whether they have a home to return to and, if not, the loss of irreplaceable memorabilia. These fires have significantly impacted on local business which will be going on for some time.

The Tahune AirWalk will be closed for many months. It does not look like it will open until the end of the year, reducing the number of tourists visiting the Huon region. This in turn will affect other businesses relying on tourism.

**Mr Dean** - Is there any movement at all on the Tahune AirWalk at this stage?

**Mr ARMSTRONG** - The last I heard is that there are a lot of trees to fell because they are not safe and that will take a long time. That is not only at the site, but along the road in and out.

The management of tourists at the evacuation centre is another area many people raised with me as a concern.

The fires have also significantly damaged the Ta Ann and Neville Smith timber processing facilities. This has resulted in the closure of those facilities and hence employment has been affected because the long-term future of the mills is unknown at this time.

**Mr Dean** - Some have moved to Launceston; I think Neville Smith.

**Mr ARMSTRONG** - They still have to process the timber.

Recently on the McIntyre electorate tour, we visited the honey factory at Perth. Due to the fires, they stated they had lost more than 50 per cent of their leatherwood resources, which is going to have a huge effect on their business.

Since the 1967 bushfires, our firefighting capabilities have advanced, enabling the damage to homes and properties to be kept to a minimum. I can remember the day of the 1967 bushfires; I was at school. I heard the first siren at about 10.00 a.m. The fire sirens went all day; it is all you continuously heard - fire sirens. I lived in the township of Cygnet and most of my school friends lived on the outskirts. They were billeted out with friends and family because they could not return home that night and a long time after. They did not know whether they had a home to return to and in some cases, did not even know if their parents were still alive. It was a very stressful time for everyone involved. I can well remember about 3.30 p.m. to 4 p.m. the sky was dark, the sun was all but obscured by smoke, and you would have thought it was midnight or late at night.

Although this year's fires did not escalate to the same magnitude, it was still a very worrying time for many people. Another issue that was apparent over the course of the fire outbreaks was water use. I was asked on many occasions - because I had previously been a councillor - about the position for use of domestic water on a total fire ban day. The advertisements by Tasmania Fire Service in the *Mercury* or other daily newspapers did not mention whether water restrictions applied. I can understand this as they are two different organisations. It would be more effective if TasWater advertised its restrictions in conjunction with Tasmania Fire Service in one large advertisement. People would see then that it is a total fire ban and they would know what water they could use or could not use. This could also be relayed to the public by the Tasmania Fire Service on its radio announcements and on its website.

Local government staff indicated certain areas needed to be addressed, one being the mental stress experienced by evacuees, staff and the volunteers at those centres. I do not think we can imagine how some of the volunteers coped with people coming in there not knowing if they still had a home. It would be very stressful on the volunteers.

Road closures are another issue. I understand this is controlled by Tasmania Police. I assume they would close roads because of public safety concerns. I was approached by members of the public telling me that the state Government departments have been in conflict regarding land boundaries in the fire areas - Parks and Wildlife, the lands department and Sustainable Timber Tasmania. Whether this is factual, it is still a concern.

Those are just a few of the issues I was approached about.

This year we have experienced an extremely dry summer which resulted in increased fire risk. The contributing factor to some of those fire risks in my region in particular is that during the 1967 bushfires, the Huon Valley and the Channel region were full of apple orchards that were being irrigated and maintained. Now, in the Huon Valley there are cherry orchards that are maintained, but in many these areas where there were once orchards, mainland people have moved in for a lifestyle that lets them grow light scrub and bush. The orchards were firebreaks but now where they have grown into light or heavy scrub, there is no firebreak. Also, with the increased population houses are now scattered among some of this bush and that is a real concern.

When I was mayor, people would come to me wanting to build houses in certain areas and they were not happy about the fire plans and everything that had to be put in place. I used to say to them, 'It is for your own safety'.

I spoke to the President a week after the fires about a committee being set up to look into these fires; I understand this is now going to happen and the chair of the committee has been appointed. I hope that committee will touch on some of the issues I raised and will be able to answer those questions. I look forward to that committee doing its work and getting a report on it.

I would like to raise another issue. I know this is not only about my electorate, but also affects so many people in Tasmania. It has been brought to my attention regularly about the impact seals are having on our recreational fishing industry.

Australian fur seals are prevalent in Tasmanian waters. An adult male seal can grow to 200 to 225 centimetres in length and weigh 220 to 360 kilograms. A female will give birth to a single pup. Pups are born in November and December and are usually weaned 10 to 11 months later. Once a cow gives birth for the first time, she is practically in a continuous state of pregnancy for the rest of her life. The average lifespan of a seal is 12 to 30 years. Based on the counts of the breeding colonies each year, scientists estimate about 5000 pups are born in Tasmanian waters each year. An estimated 15 per cent do not reach maturity. It has been reported on average that an adult seal can eat up to 8 per cent of its body weight daily. That is a lot of fish.

Their diet mainly comprises fish, squid, octopus and cuttlefish. Seals are opportunistic feeders, even though they are well equipped to hunt in open waters. This is the main problem seals pose with their interaction in both recreational fishing and the fishing industry. It has been reported to me in some areas such as the east coast, the Huon and Channel areas, seals have been taking fish off the line before fishermen have a chance to land their catch. This is becoming more prevalent as the seals move further into domestic areas. They are becoming more desensitised.

I was walking down Jetty Road in Cygnet one morning and a seal had come up into the bay and was lying across the walkway. This is only half a kilometre out of the township. It was obstructing the path. It was obvious to the many walkers using the path and this demonstrates how brazen they can be.

**Mr Valentine** - You did not have a good talk to him, did you?

**Mr ARMSTRONG** - No, I went around. Those teeth on them, Rob, are real.

One time at Charlotte Cove I witnessed a seal in the bay. It was a resident seal apparently and people had their nets in and it would swim up this side of the net and if there was a fish in it, it would know the side it had come in from, swim back down the other side and grab the fish out. If it was not hungry, it would toss it up and down and play with it. It was unreal. This seal would continually do that to all the nets.

Just recently on our tours of the salmon farms over the last few weeks, we witnessed how the seals have impacted on several aspects of this industry. At Strahan, the seals were quite relaxed lying on the farm infrastructure, sunbaking and oblivious to us and the workers. We saw the same down in North West Bay.

In October 2018, Huon Aquaculture said it was investing \$90 million in seal-proof fortress pens while Tassal said it was investing \$70 million. Both companies said field deterrents were key to ensuring safety and care for their staff.

In conversations with some of the workers, they told me how they would have to dive into the salmon ponds and remove seals. That would be a daunting task, after witnessing close up the size, breadth and teeth of a seal.

I thought this might be of interest to members, particularly those who have recreational fishing in their area.

**Mr Dean** - Are there any plans you know of to control them? Is culling on the agenda at all or not for consideration?

**Mr ARMSTRONG** - I have not heard of anything. I know it has been an issue in the community and people talk about it all the time, but I have not heard of culling. The fish farms used to relocate them, but they have done away with that now.

**Mr Dean** - They talk about culling on land, kangaroos and wallabies and possums and so on. You would imagine with aquaculture -

**Mr Valentine** - Seals are a protected species.

**Mr Dean** - That is why I asked the question. Are we looking at the right sort of removal or to do something about it?

**Mr ARMSTRONG** - Are they fully protected or, like deer, partly protected?

**Ms Rattray** - I think we should establish an inquiry.

**Mr ARMSTRONG** - That was where I was coming to with this. The impact seals are having on the community. It is not just the fish farms, it is also the recreation fishers they are having a real impact on. I will talk to members later to see if we can form a committee to look at the impact they are having.

I have another issue I would like to raise. I have not touched on government issues so far, but these issues affect my electorate and possibly the rest of Tasmania. The other thing is -

**Ms Rattray** - It has always been a grievance debate, this one. We can talk about anything, that is my understanding.

**Mr ARMSTRONG** - That is what I understood. I would like bring to the attention of the Government and the Opposition the ever-increasing incursion of gorse on Tasmania's landscape. Gorse is a serious agricultural and environmental weed. It was declared a weed under the Weed Management Act in 1999. Gorse was introduced to Australia from Europe in the early 1800s as a hedge or ornamental plant. When it goes to seed, gorse produces black pods, and each pod produces two to six seeds. When the pod bursts seeds can be thrown up to six metres from the parent plant.

Seed production is prolific, and seed can remain viable 30 to 50 years or more in the soil. There are many ways that gorse can spread to different locations, such as from birds, ants, boots, machinery and waterways.

**Mrs Hiscutt** - Sheep like to get in among the gorse to lamb, so it can also be spread in their wool as they move around the farm.

**Mr ARMSTRONG** - Gorse regenerates prolifically after fire from soil-stored seed. Mature plants will shoot from damaged or burnt stems and roots, and gorse is difficult to eradicate. Control of gorse, like all weeds, requires persistence, with initial costs of between \$200 and \$1000 per hectare. Control programs require a minimum of five years commitment, including yearly site inspections and follow-up treatment of all seedlings, which is likely to increase control costs several fold. Burning is often carried out in combination with grazing. It reduces the amount of leaves and stems and stimulates the growth of the soft green shoots, which are initially spineless and more palatable to stock.

Fire can be useful in dense thickets of gorse at ground level to allow follow-up spraying of regrowth. It will stimulate seed germination, allowing more seedlings to be sprayed the following year and reducing the seed bank.

Gorse thrips were introduced to Tasmania in 2001. They help control gorse. Post-release surveys in Tasmania show they are successfully established but slow to spread. Regular slashing and mowing is not effective in eradicating gorse. It will eliminate most seed production and keep plants at a low height, but they will grow back vigorously once the slashing stops. Herbicides can be effectively applied either directly to leaves or painted on to cut stumps.

In 2016 the Tasmanian Renewable Energy Enterprises was investigating building a factory at Conara in the state's north to turn gorse into compacted biomass fuel, which it called 'Gorse Power'. I am not sure if this project went any further.

Gorse is present in most agricultural areas and some urban areas throughout Tasmania. If allowed to grow and spread unchecked, the weed can quickly smother areas making them totally unusable. In Tasmania, it covers areas of prime agricultural land, as well as hilly and stony ground. It is also becoming a threat as an environmental weed in many national parks and other bushland areas. It is estimated that between 60 000 to 100 000 hectares of Tasmania's 800 000 hectares of available agriculture land has been affected by gorse.

**Ms Rattray** - That is a lot of land.

**Mr ARMSTRONG** - It is a lot of production land. In Tasmania, the cost of gorse to the state's woolgrowers in lost production alone has been conservatively estimated at about \$1 million annually. As well as being damaging to our agricultural industry, it is also a serious fire hazard, especially when near buildings and fence lines.

I want to raise awareness of the impact gorse is having across this state, not only to our farmers but also to the small landholders, as well as state-controlled land.

**Ms Rattray** - I think we had better join those committees and have one on seals and gorse.

**Mr ARMSTRONG** - It is interesting when you hear how much gorse is taking over our good agricultural land.

Mr President, I have not touched on anything in the Premier's address, but I find Tasmanians at the moment are a lot more positive than they were a few years ago. We have seen people moving back to our state because there are jobs there for them. People are very positive, particularly in my area where we nearly lost another football team a few years ago because people had left the state looking for work. Many of them are back now and much of that is due to the thriving seafood



industry in my region. If you took the salmon industry in particular out of the Huon and Channel area, it would certainly cause a lot of unemployment.

[3.51 p.m.]

**Ms HOWLETT** (Prosser) - Mr President, it is fantastic to stand here today to commend the Premier on the address he delivered last month. It is an exciting time to be in Tasmania - our state is growing as never before. It is beyond doubt that Tasmania today is a much stronger and more confident place than it was in 2014.

With continuing economic growth, Tasmania has one of the best performing economies in the country. This growth, combined with the Treasurer's prudent economic management, has enabled the Government to invest record amounts of money in our state. The Government's plan to build Tasmania's future is about taking our state to the next level by ensuring everyone benefits from the stronger economy, more jobs and improved services.

In Prosser, this means investing more in schools and health services, investing in infrastructure projects and supporting community and sporting organisations that are at the heart of Prosser's communities.

Prosser has greatly benefited from the state's \$2.6 billion investment in important infrastructure, from new schools to new and better healthcare and emergency service facilities, and a significant number of road upgrades across the electorate.

When talking to people in Prosser, the concern most often raised is the need to upgrade and invest in the electorate's infrastructure. The affordable housing and great lifestyles offered in Brighton, Sorell and the southern beaches has seen the populations of these areas grow rapidly. This growth will continue well into the future.

Additionally, the state's booming tourism industry has seen visitor numbers to Tasman and the east coast increase each year. This rapid growth in population and tourist numbers has put Prosser's infrastructure under strain and has seen traffic congestion increase, and this is an issue the Government is intent on fixing.

The state Liberal Government has committed \$115 million and the federal Coalition government has committed \$461 million to construct a new Bridgewater bridge. We have also developed a comprehensive south-east traffic solution that will alleviate traffic congestion in Sorell.

This project includes funds for the \$30 million Hobart Airport interchange; the upgrade in the Tasman Highway between the airport and the Midway Point causeway; the \$7.5 million capacity and traffic flow improvements at the Midway Point intersection; the \$9 million Sorell bypass; and funds for overtaking facilities on the Arthur Highway. You will be pleased about that.

The south-east traffic solution is progressing. So far, extra lanes have been added at the Hobart Airport roundabout which has certainly alleviated some traffic congestion. Currently, the design and construction tender is out for the airport interchange project. This tender will be awarded in August this year and earthworks are expected to commence in October, with completion due in mid-2022.

**Mr Dean** - What was that for?

**Ms HOWLETT** - That was for the airport interchange flyover.

Concept and design of the Sorell bypass has been developed and community consultation is expected to commence this year. Work on upgrading the Midway Point intersection is expected to begin in September next June.

I am pleased to see the federal government has committed a \$130 million in the Budget to assist in funding of the south-east traffic solution. In addition to these funds, \$3 million is being provided by the state Government for the upgrade of Colebrook main road, which will provide wider lanes, sealed shoulders, junction upgrades, road alignments and improvements, and lay-by areas.

Work on the Midland Highway has continued. In Prosser, \$22.3 million has been invested for the continued work on the southern end of the Midland Highway, courtesy stopping bays near Murdunna, upgrades to Mud Walls Road, and upgrades to the Highland Lakes Road. A sum of \$1.5 million has been committed for the construction of improved pedestrian infrastructure in Campbell Town. With Campbell Town being split by the Midland Highway, crossing the road from one side to the other can be dangerous, particularly for children and the elderly. This is an issue the Government wants to see addressed.

Recently, representatives from the Department of State Growth met with members from Campbell Town District High School and representatives from both the swimming pool and Northern Midlands Council to determine what crossing infrastructure the community believes would be the most suitable.

Through this consultation, the department was advised the community is very supportive of an underpass under High Street. Work on this option is now well underway and I am pleased to say it is a priority project.

To address the infrastructure issues caused by increased tourist numbers, Prosser has been a significant beneficiary of the Government's \$72 million roads package to support Tasmania's visitor economy. This package is designed to upgrade roads across the state that see heavy use by tourists.

On the Tasman Peninsula, the Government is providing funds to upgrade Stormlea Road, Fortescue Bay Road and to implement road safety upgrades at Eaglehawk Neck.

On the east coast, funding is being provided for the extension of the Great Eastern Drive from St Helens through to the Bay of Fires and for the construction of overtaking lanes between St Helens and Dianas Basin.

Additionally, \$6 million has been provided for further general road upgrades on the east coast. On top of this, \$3.5 million has been provided by the Government to help improve east coast mobile phone coverage, which you would appreciate.

As someone who spends a great deal of time on the east coast, I know how frustrating it is to be continuously going in and out of mobile range. This investment will be of huge benefit to Prosser.

Mr President, as mentioned earlier, the municipalities of Brighton and Sorell are experiencing an influx of new residents. Many of these new residents are young families beginning the next stage of their life, and these families want to send their children to a local school. To cater for this,

the Government is investing \$25.7 million for a complete rebuild and development of the Sorell School. The new school will provide state-of-the-art kindergarten to year 12 learning facilities, transforming it into the key educational facility in south-eastern Tasmania.

The new school will also provide early childhood education and care facilities. This means parents in Sorell will have a single drop-off and pick-up location for their children for their entire pre-tertiary education, from where they access child care right through to year 12.

Public consultation is currently under way to facilitate community input into the Sorell School redevelopment as part of the Department of Education's Get Involved campaign. In February, the Department of Education hosted a well-attended public forum in Sorell where members of the community were able to voice their opinion on how they would like their new school to look and what services they would like it to provide. This consultation process is ongoing and I am encouraging all community members to have their say in shaping the new Sorell school.

In the Brighton municipality, the Government will construct a new year 7 to 12 high school. Brighton Primary School is one of the largest primary schools in Tasmania. The school accommodates over 600 students from Brighton and the Southern Midlands, yet most students must travel out of their area to attend high school. The new state-of-the-art year 7 to 12 high school will be located close to the existing primary school and will have the capacity for more than 600 students. Once completed, students will be able to complete their entire pre-tertiary education in Brighton.

The first round of public consultation for the Brighton High School project has closed and planning has commenced for the development of a concept master plan. The concept master plan is scheduled to be complete by mid-2019, at which point a second round of public consultation will commence. In addition to the new Brighton High School, \$4.3 million is being invested to redevelop the Jordan River Learning Federation School Farm, commonly referred to as the 'Brighton School Farm'. Planning has also commenced for the development of a concept master plan for this project and a second round of public consultations is scheduled to begin in the middle of the year.

The Government is also investing \$7.6 million to hire more teachers at Tasmanian school farms. In Prosser, so far, the schools in Brighton, Sorell, Oatlands and Tasman have been able to gain additional staff through this initiative.

Along with significant investments in Prosser's infrastructure and education facilities, the electorate is also receiving funds for upgrades and to construct a new health and emergency service facility.

An amount of \$2.9 million is being invested in upgrading the Campbell Town ambulance station and \$2.5 million is being provided for a major upgrade at the Midlands Multi-Purpose Health Centre at Oatlands. This upgrade will deliver significant improvements for patient care, better layout, more privacy and increased space. This investment follows the posting of two additional paramedics and a second ambulance in Oatlands in 2015.

An amount of \$12 million is being provided for a new emergency service hub at Sorell. Once completed, this modern and well-equipped hub will house all Sorell's emergency personnel. It will also allow SES personnel to be stationed in Sorell and will provide the infrastructure needed to call for volunteers to join services.

The Hodgman Liberal Government is also investing heavily to support local sporting organisations and communities. As someone who grew up in a regional area in Tasmania, I understand how important local sporting teams and organisations are to their community. I know the time, effort and passion people invest to help their local teams and organisations become a success. In Prosser, there have been numerous funding commitments by the Government to enhance sporting facilities and to encourage more people to become involved in local sporting activities.

The Government has committed \$250 000 to the Carlton Park Surf Life Saving Club for much needed infrastructure upgrades. This investment is for the construction of new facilities at the surf lifesaving club and includes the addition of disability access and a lifesaving patrol tower. This investment will allow the club to keep up with growth and to continue to provide lifesaving services to everyone in the southern beaches region.

**Mr Valentine** - You have to keep Don Marsh busy

**Ms HOWLETT** - This club will also benefit from the Government's \$1.78 million commitment to support the surf lifesaving service right across Tasmania.

As mentioned yesterday, in my special interest contribution, the Tasmanian Government and the Sorrell Council will jointly invest \$420 000 to build a 4.5-kilometre pipeline from Forcett to Shark Park on Old Forcett Road. Not only will this investment save the Dodges Ferry Football Club, it will also benefit the Dodges Ferry Primary School and the Dodges Ferry Fire Brigade. The state Government has awarded \$2.5 million towards Sorrell Council's Pembroke Park redevelopment; this funding combined with a \$6 million funding commitment by the federal government will see upgrades of Pembroke Park indoor sports facility. New basketball courts, new gym, new offices and storage facilities, a canteen and a much bigger car park will be constructed at Pembroke Park

The Sorrell Council has been planning this development for a number of years and through the collaboration of the state, federal and local governments, it is now to become a reality. The Government's most significant investment in Tasmania's sport has been Levelling the Playing Field. Through this program, the Tasmanian Government has been able to invest \$10 million over two years to upgrade and construct female-friendly sporting facilities for girls and women.

This programme is designed to facilitate the growth of women in sport in Tasmania. There were 21 successful previous applications during the first grant round. In Prosser, grants were provided to construct unisex change rooms at Pembroke Park and new change rooms at Thompson Oval in Pontville.

Applications for the second round of Levelling the Playing Field grants recently opened and I encourage all Prosser sporting organisations to log onto the website and lodge an application.

The Liberal Government's effective management of the state's budget has fostered strong levels of confidence in the Tasmanian economy. This has encouraged Tasmanians business to expand and sees our state leading the nation in private investment. All around Prosser businesses are thriving and private investments are benefiting communities. There is Giles and Julia Fisher, whom I have spoken of before in this House, with their business, the Freycinet Marine Farm. The marine farm has seen increased growth and profits due to our tourism boom and the world's desire for fine

Tasmanian seafood. As a result, they have been able to continue to invest in their business and hire new staff.

Vineyards on the east coast have had to expand because of the world's growing demand for Tasmanian wine. This year, *Wine Enthusiast*, a leading US wine publication, named Tasmania as one of the top 10 wine travel destinations of the world. Tassal, to try to appease demand for Tasmanian salmon, is expanding its operations on the Tasman Peninsula. This will create around 70 direct jobs and many other indirect jobs.

I was recently in Oatlands with the Premier where we met with a Sydney investor who is planning to establish a whisky distillery at the Callington Mill. This venture will combine the world's fascination with Tasmanian history with the world's love of fine Tasmanian whisky. In 2017 the Callington Mill Visitor Centre was closed. There were estimates that visitor centre attracted 50 000 to 60 000 visitors to Oatlands each year. The closure of the centre significantly impacted the economy of Oatlands.

When the Callington Mill whisky distillery opens, these visitors and more will return. This will benefit the businesses in Oatlands, from the cafes to the antique shops, and will help draw tourists into regional Tasmania. It will no doubt benefit the wider Southern Midlands community. These are just many of the exciting developments and enterprises currently underway in Prosser.

I conclude today with a few remarks regarding the recent fires. I commend the state firefighting agencies, the Tasmania Fire Service, the Parks and Wildlife Service, Sustainable Timber Tasmania, other emergency services and all our wonderful volunteers. I want to commend firefighters who joined us from interstate and New Zealand. All these brave and selfless people put themselves in direct danger to protect communities, properties and livelihoods. To these people, I say thank you for your extraordinary and tireless efforts. I also thank those Tasmanian fire services and volunteers currently fighting a fire at Dolphin Sands. I believe one dwelling is lost, and our thoughts and prayers are with you, and we hope that blaze gets under control very soon. Thank you, Mr President.

[4.13 p.m.]

**Mr DEAN** (Windermere) - Mr President, I am concentrating quite a lot of my speech on George Town, an area that has had many issues. The economy is doing quite well. I do not care who you are or what party you are with, it is doing well. I was in a sports shop in Launceston on Monday and the people there were talking up the economy. They have never done as well as they are now. They are selling their products; they are employing people. As one of the assistants said to me, 'And we are making a dollar'.

**Mr Valentine** - I hope you bought something.

**Mr DEAN** - I may well order a netball pole for my granddaughters. I am building a netball court for them. I may well buy it from that shop. They were saying the economy is good. Our tradespeople are all working. It is difficult to get a tradesperson at the present time. They have work stacked up and that is great.

The farmers, if you look in this state, and as my father used to always say, if farmers are doing well, the economy is not going too bad. If wool is doing well, sheep in particular, it is a sign of things doing quite well and moving ahead in the state. That is pretty much the situation we are in.

**Ms Rattray** - Sheep are good, beef cattle are good; both those commodities are good at the moment.

**Mr DEAN** - And selling at a premium price.

**Ms Rattray** - I wish I had a paddock full of them.

**Mr DEAN** - I listen to the rural reports whenever I can. If you listen to Richard Bailey, he is always talking up the prices and demand for our cattle and sheep. In fact, I have farmers here currently looking at buying stock on the mainland, in New South Wales in particular, where things are not so good in some areas. They believe they will be able to purchase cattle there, bring them back to Tasmania and make a dollar out of them. That is what is happening in this state.

**Ms Rattray** - I can confirm that. I know some of those farmers.

**Mrs Hiscutt** - I can confirm that, too.

**Mr DEAN** - I have a son who is interested in that at present and is looking at it.

**Ms Rattray** - He needs to talk to the member for Montgomery's husband.

**Mr DEAN** - Maybe, okay. I might well tell him to do that.

Mr President, our produce is sought after throughout the world. Why? Because we are seen as having a clean, green, fresh image; the Tasmanian brand is absolutely important.

**Ms Rattray** - We are not flush with feed, but we have a reasonable amount of feed in various places.

**Mr DEAN** - Things are going quite well. We have had a discussion here today about the expanding irrigation system. Produce is being grown now in areas that previously would not have run a bandicoot for a year, let alone anything else. That is true. If you look at the Northern Midlands, it was all sheep grazing country whereas now much of it is produce. An area that is particularly important is Forcett near Dodges Ferry. That was a pretty poor place before the irrigation system came through. If you look now on the road into Dodges Ferry through Lewisham from Forcett, a big vineyard has suddenly mushroomed.

**Mrs Hiscutt** - It is amazing. Where we used to try to get rid of blackberries, they are now growing them.

**Mr DEAN** - Yes, they are. That is true, too.

If you see that area down there - I have an interest in that area - it has changed so much if you compare where it is today with where it was even only 10 years ago or less. It has changed through the irrigation water that is there now.

The Bridgewater Bridge was mentioned by the member for Prosser. I ask a question here about when are we going to see activity with the Bridgewater Bridge. It has been talked about for I do not know how long - a long time.

**Mr Valentine** - Hundreds of years.

**Mr DEAN** - Yes, it has. We just heard a budget speech from the member for Prosser and I am not quite sure how many times I have heard all that, and no doubt we will get it again when the budget is handed down. I dare say we will get a repeat of much of that. I understand that.

**Mr Valentine** - It just needs a railway line on it.

**Mr DEAN** - The Leader might be able to tell me: Just when will we see this money starting to be spent on the Bridgewater Bridge? What stage are we at now? I would like to know that. When we are likely to see a replacement bridge or a new bridge at Bridgewater?

There is a bit of a bottleneck particularly at the roundabout on the southern end of the Bridgewater Bridge; it is a real hold-up in peak hour. I am not quite sure why that occurs because roundabouts are supposed to keep traffic moving, but we have people who really do not know how to negotiate roundabouts - you see it time and time again, wanting to get a clear roundabout before they will move and it gets frustrating.

Talking about bridges, there is talk about the feasibility study for the proposed second crossing of the Tamar River, which the Premier mentioned in his address. That is scheduled for the next two-year period to see whether it will be feasible. It is possible - there is no doubt about that - and it is needed. Where it will be is the interesting question. Will the public get an opportunity to have a say on it? I suspect it will go out for public consultation and discussion. Things are being talked about as to where the bridge will be, whether it will be off the end of University Way at Alanvale or whether it is likely to be farther up on the East Tamar Highway towards Dilston. Lots of things are being discussed. It will be wonderful to see that because we talk about Hobart's congestion and that is really all we have heard about. We have congestion in Launceston as well, and that is increasing weekly, as the members for Rosevears and Launceston will be able to attest.

**Mr Finch** - I remember we were having a meeting to have a look over the CH Smith building at about 3 o'clock to 3.30 p.m., and it took five changes of traffic lights at the Bunnings intersection for me to move probably 200 metres.

**Mr DEAN** - I detected the frustration in your voice when we were waiting for you.

If a second bridge were put in, it would help the traffic congestion we are currently experiencing in Launceston; there is no doubt about that.

If you look at the current connector at Alanvale, they have cut off the right-hand turn into George Town from Alanvale. What does that do? It drives more traffic towards the Mowbray Connector. The Mowbray Connector is probably a more dangerous intersection than the Alanvale intersection. There have been two deaths that I am aware of at the Mowbray Connector and there have been numerous crashes at the Alanvale one. You get crashes there constantly, or did until they cut off the right-hand turn. To negotiate the Mowbray intersection is a bit like playing Russian roulette, particularly if you are turning right to go towards George Town because they have cut the other one off. People either have to go or continue up and come out at Rocherlea. It is a bit of a nonsense to do what they have done.

The Lindsay and Goderich streets intersection you have talked about was an oversight by traffic engineers and by the council in allowing all the business development in the bottom end of Lindsay

Street towards the Tamar River without having the businesses - Bunnings, Officeworks and those others - making a proper contribution towards putting in either a large roundabout or whatever was necessary to clear traffic through that area. They lost the opportunity; in my view, at the time their vision was fairly ordinary. The council now is looking at getting other connections across into that area from Invermay - one just north of the Lindsay Street intersection. There is one there they look like opening up.

**Ms Rattray** - You cannot go left there, can you?

**Mr DEAN** - What do you mean?

**Ms Rattray** - Along from Bunnings.

**Mr DEAN** - No. If you are proceeding up Goderich Street towards George Town, after you go through the Lindsay Street intersection, another street has been cut off about two or three blocks up the street. I believe they are thinking of opening that up to cross Goderich Street.

**Ms Rattray** - They need to open that up because it is ridiculous.

**Mr DEAN** - Absolutely. They need to do work there. As the member for Rosevears said, it is becoming a real problem and people get frustrated. You have to negotiate about 14 sets of traffic lights to get out of Launceston going south. It is pretty poor engineering vision.

I am going to talk about other roads because they are of concern in my electorate. I inherited these from the member who is now the member for McIntyre.

**Ms Rattray** - Where are you wandering into now?

**Mr DEAN** - I am wandering into Lilydale Road, Main Road and Golconda Road.

**Ms Rattray** - How lucky are you?

**Mr DEAN** - Which is the same road. It is a nonsense. The member for McIntyre might want to comment on this. It is a main road from Rocherlea through to Scottsdale and is now seen as a better route than the Tasman Highway through to Scottsdale from Launceston or Scottsdale back this way. The traffic flow on that road would be quite high. I would be interested to know just how much higher it is now than what it was, say, 10 to 15 years ago.

**Ms Rattray** - Going Lilydale way, you go through the centre of Launceston to reach the outlet to the south. Of course, people will not use it. It is a lot easier to go over the side and up and down Johnstons Road, up and over Carr Villa and then down and out, cutting out all the City of Launceston.

**Mr Farrell** - It is a terrible pity they did not have foresight to build a railway line from Launceston to Scottsdale and maybe they could have taken some of the heavy freight off these substandard roads.

**Ms Rattray** - Launceston to Hobart would be better for a fast train.



**Mr DEAN** - That same road starts off as Lilydale Road then goes into Main Road for a short distance and then it goes into Golconda Road.

**Ms Rattray** - Everyone calls it the Lilydale Road.

**Mr DEAN** - That is right. The road is part-owned by the state, the City of Launceston Council, and Dorset Council.

**Mr Valentine** - It is no different to Macquarie Street, Cascade Road and Strickland Avenue, they are all the same road.

**Mr DEAN** - Is that right? The same one, yes. But it is a bit of an oddity and they should look at it to consider how it should be referred to. That road, without any doubt at all, has the most dangerous section of road in the state.

The area near Lebrina has had three fatalities within an area of about 500 metres within an 18-month period. There have been at least 30 to 40 crashes in this same section of road - some reported, some not. The residents are always helping somebody out who has crashed. In the last crash on Friday a week ago a truck rolled over on the same stretch of road. It is the most dangerous piece of road in the state.

Having inherited it from the member for McIntyre, I am not quite sure whether they used to get onto you or not, but shortly after I became responsible for that area, I was invited to a public meeting where people were extremely upset with the situation. As a result, I submitted a very strong report to the council in relation to that piece of road, I copied it to the state Government and police. I am not saying that is the cause of it, but there has been a lot of other discussion on this. Now there is black spot funding for this piece of road, and the council is progressing fairly quickly to make some changes in the area. One is looking at the speed limit. I said to them, 'All you have to do is reduce the speed limit'.

**Ms Rattray** - You cannot do more than 90 kilometres on that stretch of road.

**Mr DEAN** - You cannot, anyway.

**Ms Rattray** - You need to have a speed limit there. That is fair and reasonable - 90 kilometres.

**Mr DEAN** - Absolutely. They need to do that, to start with. I am glad to see the council is taking on some changes. The council was good in relation to the report I put in. It discussed the matter; it went to council meetings, and there was discussion there. It was good some of the councillors contacted me and there has been progress in relation to this. It is good this is occurring.

Another road with problems I inherited from the member for McIntyre is Prossers Road at Nunamara. Many people would not know some of these areas. This one connects Nunamara through to Lilydale Road. It is a gravelled section of road, with the gravel surface causing a lot of crashes. I understand Prossers Road is one of the most used gravel roads in the state.

I am pleased to have listened to the public. I took this up with State Growth. Although it is owned by council now, there is discussion between the council and the state for a change of ownership of the road.

State Growth has undertaken to seal it. It will be done progressively, and I think it will commence sealing a section of it this year. It is good to see that happening for these people.

The Mowbray roundabout has gone out for tender. I would like to see some action being taken there, as would the people who use it. We had discussion here about that and it is good to see that moving.

Without doubt East Tamar Highway is one of the best highways in the state for safety, with the wire ropes through the middle of it separating lanes and long, straight stretches. It has a speed limit of 100 kilometres per hour. During Estimates last year I raised with State Growth the prospect of raising the limit to 110 kilometres per hour.

They undertook to review the speed limit on that road. I ask the Leader: Has State Growth looked at it? If they have, what decision has been made or what are they likely to do?

**Mrs Hiscutt** - I would appreciate it through you, Mr President, that the honourable member should put that as a question on notice. We do not usually have advisors here for this.

**Mr DEAN** - During Estimates last year, they indicated they would review it.

There is some exciting news for George Town, an area that has struggled since the decimation of the forest industry, one of the darkest moments in the history of Tasmania as far as employment is concerned. In George Town in particular employment and businesses were lost; security for many businesses was lost; and, sadly, lives were lost.

Since then we have seen a gradual emerging of forestry operations in the state and George Town has seen the benefit of this, with two wood chipping plants operating and employment picking up. At the lowest ebb for George Town not only did we see an exodus from the area and many financial problems arising, but the town lost its senior cricket side. George Town has also struggled to keep a footy team on the ground.

Both of those contribute to the viability of the township. George Town now has a football team and is going to be very competitive.

**Ms Rattray** - Thanks to a number of willing players.

**Mr DEAN** - The George Town footy club has been picked and will be very competitive this year. I am hoping with employment going the way it is, we will see an A Grade cricket side emerging.

There is light at the end of the tunnel for George Town. Further businesses are being attracted to the area. The \$54 million timber veneer, plywood and woodchip mill proposed by Patriarch and Sons at Bell Bay has now passed through the hoops for construction. It has not been a straightforward process, with the usual issues arising from conservationists, in particular the Greens and the Bob Brown Foundation slamming the EPA's assessment process. It was expected. It has gone through all those hoops. The mill will be permitted to produce up to 96 000 cubic metres of product and 80 000 tonnes of woodchips each year. As a part of that, it must keep a record of all complaints. I have some concern there. It is an unusual requirement in the approval process. I would not have any problems with complaints being recorded that are proven, but many complaints are vexatious. Many complainers come from third and fourth parties, many complainants are

anonymous. I will make further inquiry to see what the circumstances are around the complaints, whether only those that are proven are recorded or whether every complaint is.

Issues have been raised about where the wood will be purchased for the new mill. The wood will be purchased from existing public and private sources, including plantations and native forest - native forest currently being woodchipped. I understand no new public forests will be accessed for logging for this mill. A staged construction is expected to start in July 2019.

What does it mean for George Town? Thirty people will be employed in the construction phase and the company says it will employ 109 full-time equivalents. If it is about 100, that is great. Many will come from outside George Town. It will bring more people to that area, which is very important.

**Ms Rattray** - Through you, Mr President, quite a lot of people who live in the north-east around the Bridport area travel to George Town to work on a daily basis.

**Mr DEAN** - There will be employment there for those people as well.

Mr President, I suspect that employment will be in the mill. There will be the additional employment in the bush, in logging and transport operations. There will be business that other services will get from providing other resources to this mill as well. That is good news for George Town.

**Ms Rattray** - Very encouraging.

**Mr DEAN** - Yes, very encouraging.

Another business in George Town was recently opened by the minister, Sarah Courtney. This is Key Employment and Education Network - KEEN. It was set up by Ray Mostogl, the previous CEO of Bell Bay Aluminium, and other business leaders of the Bell Bay Advanced Manufacturing Zone. It is wonderful to see this. Their aim is simple - to connect George Town locals with jobs.

I want to quote a couple of things from a media release -

Key Employment and Education Network Partners is a project of respected businessman Ray Mostogl, and other business leaders of the Bell Bay Advanced Manufacturing Zone.

Its aim is simple: to connect George Town locals with jobs.

In his speech at the official opening on Thursday, March 28, Mr Mostogl commented on a strange economic trend in the region.

He said that industry had noticed a shortage of skilled workers available to them.

At the same time, youth unemployment in George Town sits at 30 per cent.

Thirty per cent youth unemployment in George Town. The youth unemployment in the state is 15 to 16 per cent statewide - in George Town it is 30 per cent. That is very high. This is what this business is about - ensuring people have the skills - because we have businesses in the George

Town area, Bell Bay in particular, that cannot obtain enough employees yet we have this high unemployment in George Town. They are going to work hard towards having these people skilled and doing all the things to connect them with the jobs currently there for these people. That is what this business is predominantly all about. It is a great news story for Launceston.

This business may move statewide, so we will see some bigger things happening there. We know how energetic Ray Mostogl is, and how good he is at running a business and what he did for Bell Bay Aluminium. We will see some exciting things happening in the area. There is more excitement in the George Town area because of what is happening.

The state of the state is not so good in Launceston, with the crime rate rise sparking alarms. I raised this during my speech on the police annual report last week.

**Ms Rattray** - I remembered it.

**Mr DEAN** - Yes. Where Launceston has, sadly, the unfortunate position of being the crime capital of the state. It is backed up with the latest upsetting figures that came out on Monday. Northern district crime statistics for March 2019 compared with March 2018 show that in total offences, there has been a 19.6 per cent increase. Serious crime has, and that is the bad one, has had a 1.9 per cent increase; while offences against property has seen a 25 per cent increase; business burglaries, a 27 per cent increase; motor vehicle burglaries, a 75 per cent increase; and shoplifting, a 29.1 per cent increase.

**Mr Valentine** - What period of time are we talking about?

**Mr DEAN** - We are talking about northern crimes for March 2019 compared with March 2018.

**Mr Valentine** - For the 12-month period?

**Mr PRESIDENT** - It would not have happened with the commander in the early 2000s.

**Mr Farrell** - Maybe it is time to get the uniform out of mothballs. Shine up the shoes.

**Mr DEAN** - They have a lot of work to do in that area. The northern district commander would be doing it tough at the present time, because I know how much pressure a commander is put under when those statistics are coming out. Police commanders are on contract. A very important part of their contract is to ensure they are able to police their areas and keep crime at reasonable levels. He would be under extreme pressure. I feel sorry for the commander at the present time. Why is this occurring in the Launceston area? He would be meeting with the commissioner regularly, right at this present time - the deputy commissioner and the assistant commissioner. I can see what he would be going through because I went through it myself. You come out of meetings with them, unfortunately, battered and bruised, which I did many times, because of what was happening in my area - or what is happening in his area at this present time. It is a difficult position he would find himself in.

But crime spikes. It is a rollercoaster event, where it is up one minute, then it drops and comes up and down. It occurs in waves. But, unfortunately, these statistics speak loudly at the present time. I am not quite sure what they should do. But one of the reasons could be that the establishment level in the Launceston northern district - and I raised this last week - is the lowest of any geographic district in this state if you look at the number of police officers per population. It should not happen.

As I mentioned last week, the Police Association of Tasmania is going to address this, to try to get Launceston up with at least the level of the south and the north-west.

That could be one reason. I would venture to say that if you looked at the arrest figures for serious crime and the work figures of the police officers in Launceston and detectives whom I know, they would be some of the highest figures in this state. It is not that they are not working. They are working very hard, but there have to be some other reasons for it. I hope we can get some results.

On schools, no doubt the member for Elwick will touch on some of the NAPLAN results so I will not go into that in too much detail.

**Mr Valentine** - I am looking forward to that.

**Mr DEAN** - Other than to say that it does not look good for the state if you look at those NAPLAN figures and where we are with education. As a person on ABC radio said on Monday, NAPLAN is about numeracy and literacy only, and it does not look at all the other skills and qualifications that students have. As he said, some of these students who have basic numeracy and literacy positions are now some of our leaders in this state and some have become very good businesspeople so they are highly skilled in other areas. It does not mean they are going to drop out and live off the state. It was a good point. That was a previous principal; I am trying to think where he was from. He was a very articulate gentleman and interesting to listen to.

There are problems within our education system that need addressing, I had a conversation with a lady, who did not give me the right to use her name or that of the organisation she works with, who has a role in working with families in the northern suburbs of Launceston and the George Town area. We were talking about the issues with NAPLAN and she was saying that the truancy of 8- and 12 year-olds in the northern suburbs and the George Town area was huge - that is the word she used. Then she went on to say that truancy in the high school age bracket is even higher. She then told me the story of a young lad in primary school who was absent from school for two years. In that two years, apparently he had attended school only at the beginning of the first year and then dropped out. From what she told me, I understand that the school records either fell apart or something happened to them, and they did not keep track of this young fellow. I am not sure how that can happen. This came from a lady whose role is working with families with difficulties and in particular with kids from those families. She said it was a sad story of this young lad who had not been to school for two years.

I will put a question on the Notice Paper about the truancy rate in the northern suburbs and where it is at. She also said was that the current Education Act is a toothless tiger. It is as good an act as you have when you do not have one in this area, saying there needed to be many changes to it to keep track of many of these areas. Some people might recall when we debated the Education Bill a couple of years ago, I was very strong on the fact that it did not have any real power or authority in a number of areas. I put forward a number of amendments to introduce police to some of these areas because I could see very clearly that there was a lack of authority under the act to do much about kids in this situation. The lady said it was a real problem for them. We need to look at that and I will ask some questions on that.

In the Premier's address, the Premier mentioned that they will be targeting three-year-olds and getting them into preschool. They will be targeting vulnerable kids from families that need help

and support. How much different is this from what was being discussed at the time of the Education Act?

**Mr Willie** - It is in a long day care centre. There are day care centres around the state that will be taking on this role - Lady Gowrie, Goodstart, Discovery Learning.

**Mr DEAN** - I support it. I understand it will be rolled out in 2020 and all eligible vulnerable three-year-olds will be targeted. When we were talking about the Education Act, I supported three-year-olds being targeted in these areas where they need support. I have several of those areas, unfortunately. I am hoping that when it is put in place, we ensure that the right families are targeted and we get the right kids there - kids where the parents cannot otherwise financially support them to go into paid schooling or day care in any form.

The northern suburbs do have problems and it is for this reason I have sponsored a program in that area for vulnerable kids to get them into a football clinic. I have referred to it here previously. It is costing me a few thousand dollars to do it, but this will be the third year and I am the sole sponsor of it. We are targeting the kids in the northern suburbs area - Rocherlea, Ravenswood and so on. It is for young kids, both boys and girls, who would not otherwise be involved with or engaged in sport - Auskick or any of those programs - because their parents cannot afford it, will not give them the money or use their money for other purposes.

**Mr PRESIDENT** - While you mention that, are you aware of the \$3 million fund available for those people to tap into to give them assistance to allow them to play? It is a fund that commenced in February and the uptake has been significant, with over 4000 people already. If you want to speak to them about that, it may be helpful to you.

**Mr DEAN** - I am meeting with an AFL representative shortly, Mr President, to discuss some of these things, but they have asked me fairly recently if I would sponsor the program again and I said I would. I am happy to do that because it has been very successful. I think there are about 50 to 60 kids in those areas who engaged in this program last year and the year before. I am hoping it is just as good or even higher this year.

**Ms Rattray** - This is an opportunity for them to tap into that fund of \$3 million; surely there should be some available to them?

**Mr DEAN** - There ought to be. I will pursue that, Mr President, and I have a meeting coming up shortly in relation to this matter. It is helping and doing a lot of good for these kids. When you see them start at the beginning of the program and then at the end of the program, they are changed kids, and you get the parents involved as well.

Presumptive post-traumatic stress disorder was raised by a previous member here today. I think it might have been the member for Hobart. This is welcome. Sadly and importantly, many within the emergency services area, the State Service, police, suffer from PTSD because of some of the gross and horrific emergencies they have to attend and cannot get out of their systems with a detrimental impact on them.

I am hoping the police are involved also, because to have it presumed their work has caused it is a great for them rather than having to prove it did impact on them.

**Mrs Hiscutt** - For the member's information, with regard to sport, it may be of some help to you that on the Department of Communities Tasmania's website it is called 'Ticket to Play'.

**Mr DEAN** - Mandatory sentencing was mentioned by the member for Mersey. I simply say there are areas where mandatory sentencing is good and necessary, and we have seen it work very well. The best example is DUI and exceed 0.05, where a mandatory sentencing will be applied. People who regularly drink will know that 'I am driving, I can only have three beers or whatever.' They know what will happen if they are caught. The penalties are set and so there are times when it is very good, and useful. With mandatory sentencing, there is always an out for the court and it is always in the legislation. Exceptional circumstances may apply and if a person can prove those, they can be sentenced in another way. There is nearly always an out where the mandatory sentencing has been discussed and debated, and we will see some more of that occurring.

The Speaker in the other place raised an issue involving the living conditions of public housing tenants and the need for action.

It is fact we cannot tell people or control the living conditions of people in their home. Some people choose to live in what you and I might call squalid conditions or untidy, dirty or simply basic conditions. These conditions unfortunately bring with them cockroaches and so on, as we heard about recently in the press. Cockroaches and vermin infestations. They also bring with them mould, other creepy crawlies and just about anything else. We cannot and should not interfere with how people want to live.

Public housing is a big deal in my electorate, because I have by far the largest number of public housing in the state. That would occupy my office and staff dealing with cases almost every week. Almost weekly, and sometimes more than once a week, with housing and conditions and getting housing and so on. Of the public housing being offered to people, the greatest majority of the homes are in good condition when first occupied.

In fact, they all should be in good condition when first occupied and if not, the home managers are both irresponsible and derelict in their responsibilities. If they were to put somebody in a house not in a good condition, they would be derelict in their responsibilities. I could not see a public housing manager putting clients into cockroach- or other vermin-infested properties. It could happen -

**Mr Willie** - That example you are talking about is in my electorate. The issue is a complex of apartments and there were pests in the one vacant, boarded-up property. It was affecting other apartments through no fault of their own.

**Mr DEAN** - Even in apartments though, and once again I would have thought the manager of the complex whoever it might be - Community Housing Limited in the south, in the north. Who is it?

**Mr Willie** - Housing Tasmania.

**Mr DEAN** - Housing Tasmania. We have Community Housing Limited in the north and Housing Tasmania with some properties.

**Mr Willie** - Community Housing Limited would be managing a lot of housing in Tasmania, on their behalf.

**Mr DEAN** - Yes, they manage them. When they are putting somebody into accommodation, it has to meet certain criteria, such as cleanliness. As a police officer I have been into many homes that have been an absolute disgrace. I went with the member for Launceston to a home in my area, the northern suburbs, a year or two ago, and it was a disgrace.

**Ms Armitage** - It was difficult to find somewhere to walk.

**Mr DEAN** - It was. The member for Launceston was offered a cup of coffee and she turned them down. I did, too; I could not even have a drink of coffee, it was appalling.

I want to talk a little about New Horizons and the Wattle Group. The member for Launceston and member for Rosevears will probably talk more about New Horizons.

The Wattle Group cares for people with disabilities. They provided a wonderful service in Launceston and had an outlet in George Town. They were state-funded. Of concern is that an audit was undertaken of the Wattle Group, and it came back with some very poor findings on how the group was running its business.

It was shown that the audit was wrong in many respects. The Wattle Group can prove where the audit comment was not accurate. As a result of that audit report, the Wattle Group lost its state funding. It has asked me to take it up on its behalf, which I will because it needs help. It is helping so many in the Launceston and George Town areas.

New Horizons is currently fighting a funding battle and where it is going to come from. It is trying to get security for its funding. People here would know about New Horizons. Wonderful people. It is an organisation that has grown its membership to about 500.

**Ms Armitage** - Just under 500.

**Mr DEAN** - It has just opened a place in Hobart at Blundstone Arena. It provides wonderful opportunities for youth who need support.

**Ms Armitage** - Mr President is the southern patron.

**Mr DEAN** - Is he? We had a meeting yesterday with the minister's advisors. The minister, Mrs Petrusma, was there for a while as well. As a result of that, we arranged a meeting to take place between those advisors and Edwina and Belinda. I think that was going to occur today. We must ensure that organisation is funded. There are issues as to why they might not be able to access NDIS funding. That is something we need to address.

I wanted to refer to the National Trust. I am not sure how widely this document was distributed -

**Ms Rattray** - Everyone received one.

**Mr DEAN** - Everyone in parliament? I do not think it has been referred to by any member.

**Ms Rattray** - By interjection, I did refer to it.



**Mr DEAN** - The member for Rosevears, the member for Launceston and myself have done quite a lot of work over recent years with the National Trust in Launceston, its head office, trying to ensure it was in a position to continue its business from a suitable office. We have that for the National Trust, which has set up in Launceston in a very good situation at the present time. It is in the government building at the corner of York Street and Cameron Street. It is a great place. However, it has some problems. I am just going to quote from this document because it sums it up very succinctly and clearly. It is a report received from the Chairman, Nicholas Heyward, of the National Trust of Australia (Tasmania). I quote -

**Ms Armitage** - Is it a submission?

**Mr DEAN** - Yes. I will refer this document, which is dated 5 April 2019. They have given me the right to do this, and any member can talk about it -

The NTT operational budget of just over \$1 million, supports 10 properties and the NTT is the largest employer of volunteers in the state. \$311,500 towards our annual operating budget is provided by the State Government, for which we are very grateful.

However, the Board has identified that the NTT operating budget is clearly not adequate to provide for even the most basic maintenance of heritage assets in our custodianship. The results of decades of receiving new assets without commensurate funding or revenue streams are clearly evident, with essential maintenance, restoration and conservation works deferred due to lack of capital funding. The estimated cost of outstanding capital works is \$4 million, of which \$3.2 million is immediate and the balance required over the next four years. Addressing these urgent capital works is essential to the preservation of irreplaceable built heritage.

The National Trust has engaged with a range of highly experienced and skilled heritage-based practitioners who have advised us about concerns regarding the safety of several of our assets due to failing structural integrity. These concerns relate to both the safety of visitors but also the work safety of our staff and volunteers.

The Board has identified that it is imperative for the National Trust's future viability that this essential work, necessary for the preservation and safety of the Trust's assets, be commenced as soon as possible. If not, the NTT will operate in a crisis management environment and difficult decisions about access to NTT sites will be required to address safety concerns.

There is much more in that report, and we have been provided with attachments. But the 10 buildings are 10 of the most public iconic buildings in the state. The condition of those buildings is critical to Tasmania because they mean so much to tourism and all those other things we are really focusing on strongly. Something has to happen. This report is pleading for support and help. It is being run very well by volunteers; there are very few paid employees in it.

They are expected to maintain these building with the funding. They appreciate the funding they are getting, but the funding has been fairly stagnant for a long time. We have raised this before. The members for Hobart and Rosevears might remember - it is not Launceston. Funding has not

really increased over much over a long time. It has not even been CPI adjusted, from memory. I am pretty confident in saying that. If I am wrong, somebody will tell me, but I am pretty sure it has not been.

I am pleading here. It would be interesting to see if anything more in this budget will be handed down. I do not know. But certainly they are appealing for support. They are saying that without that support some of these buildings are going to become unstable and are going to be a risk. It will be interesting to see if that happens.

**Mr Finch** - How fortunate the National Trust is to have acquired the contribution by Nicholas Heyward, to come on board as its chair. I am sure he will bring a lot of experience and real gravitas to that position to help the National Trust through these tough times.

**Mr DEAN** - He will, when you look at the letter that has been written to all of us. It is a plea for help saying, 'If you do not, this is probably what is likely to happen unfortunately'. It is being run well; I have a lot of admiration for Matthew Smithies, the manager at Launceston. Nicholas Heyward is a wonderful asset to the National Trust in that position. It is an appeal for help.

The member for Huon raised the issue of the 1967 bushfires. We had the bushfires this summer, which were tragic. I also praise all those involved for what they have done, which has been said here by other as well.

A lady wrote to me, and you might have received the same letter, to say that Tasmania has never ever experienced fires like this before. I emailed her back and asked, 'Where were you in 1967 when 60 or 70 people were killed and I do not know how many properties were destroyed?' She did not come back to me. I was saying we have had other fires worse in result, sadly, in this state.

When that bushfire occurred, I was not in this state. I was in a war zone on an active service in a jungle somewhere on Borneo, as I have mentioned here before. Our previous president, the honourable Don Wing, remembers this story, too - that they sent the message to us in Borneo with a bit about the bushfire and said that Tasmania had been evacuated by five submarines.

**Mrs Hiscutt** - Yes, I heard that. I thought they were sent from Russia to help us.

**Mr DEAN** - That is the message we got on the front line. Unbelievable.

**Ms Rattray** - They did not pick me up and take me.

**Mr DEAN** - You did not get in the submarine? You probably would not have been born by then.

**Ms Rattray** - I wish.

**Mr DEAN** - Mr President, that is my contribution, which covered a number of issues. I will raise some of my questions by way of notice.

[5.13 p.m.]

**Ms ARMITAGE** (Launceston) - Mr President, the Premier mentioned in his address how Tasmania has captured the attention of the world with an enviable reputation for our unrivalled

natural environment, our premium-grade products and excellence in education, science and research. We are seeing these benefits wonderfully in Launceston.

In what appears the most significant and detailed investment and infrastructure project in Launceston's 166-year history, the University of Tasmania Northern Transformation project will see Launceston modified into a true university city - one which is forward-thinking and provides for the future.

The benefits this project, once completed, will have for Launceston will range far beyond providing world-class facilities in education for its students and will ensure that in the years and decades ahead Launceston will become increasingly self-sufficient and able to grow independently.

This shift from the existing Newnham location about 4 kilometres south would create a state-of-the-art university at Inveresk with, we are told, about 430 jobs during construction, and will hopefully attract many more students to our city. Hopefully these will not just be online. I am trusting that advice we have received is correct and that the university in Launceston will not be dumbed down and that we will have many more professors and degrees other than simply associate degrees. It is also essential we retain nursing and other courses currently in Launceston, given that there have been occasions when there has been an attempt to move them further south than the 4 kilometres from Newnham.

While on education, I have some concern regarding the changes to year 11 and 12 retention, particularly with regard to our two colleges, Newstead and Launceston. While I understand the reason behind high schools now going to year 12, I have concerns there will not be enough suitably qualified teachers at these schools, nor enough students to make all year 12 classes viable. I appreciate that proposed specialist teachers may be shared between schools but I fear these changes could be to the detriment of our current colleges, which do extremely well compared with other colleges in the state.

I have no problem with outlying schools having year 11 and 12, particularly if this encourages them to stay at school, but I have concern with city schools following suit.

Regarding traffic - traffic has been mentioned by the member for Windermere, and I am sure other members have also mentioned it. The eastern bypass, from memory, has been on the drawing board since around 1974, and also the Glebe bypass. I quote Mrs Napier, the member for Bass at the time, on Wednesday, 12 October 1994. She says -

Two weeks ago, my colleague, Mr Tony Benneworth, talked very positively about the Launceston River Environs study, the draft report of which was presented in Launceston outlining the potential development of the Launceston river areas that could add to the development of the city. At the same time, we also had a debate about local ownership of airports in Tasmania. One of the components of the package that might have been offered to Tasmania as part of the movement towards local ownership of airports, was the identification of the importance of the eastern bypass for Launceston.

Last week, we saw a decision by the Launceston City Council not to hold up the progress of the Glebe bypass, which impacts upon the Launceston river system itself. Whilst it might well be argued that the Glebe bypass has been needed for some ten years or so to relieve the pressure that is experienced on Cimitiere Street

and Henry Street in feeding traffic from Ravenswood and Elphin Road either in the direction of George Town or onto the highway south, it really is bringing to a crisis point the need to consider the kind of traffic problems arising in Launceston and the way in which traffic is being fed into the central business district.

She goes on -

I would like very briefly to highlight the importance of that eastern bypass to the Launceston community. I know some fifteen to twenty years ago the need for an eastern bypass was identified and thought to be a little too hard. But this Launceston River Environs study, which was supported by this State Government to the tune of \$50,000, came up with a recommendation that traffic not be fed past and immediate to the Launceston river system any more than it already is. In fact, this particular study identified a number of really exciting ways in which the Launceston river environs can be maximised in terms of tourism and commercial potential. I think it is very important that we relieve the traffic pressure occurring in the Launceston CBD and that we ensure that the Federal Government is required to acknowledge its suggestion, in fact, I would even suggest 'implied commitment', that it will support the eastern bypass for Launceston.

That was a quote from 1994. She also mentions it had been around for 20 years. It is quite sad we still have problems and traffic is ever-increasing. I am not sure whether the member for Windermere has also had calls from constituents in his side of Cimitiere Street with regard to the Launceston City Council's new freight route, which goes along Cimitiere Street. In 1994, they talked about taking traffic off this route. I really have concerns. Cimitiere Street was out of action for months while it was dug up and resurfaced, and now it is a new freight route for the city. Watch this space and see what happens.

**Mr Dean** - When Toll was able to increase its premises, it was obvious that truck movement through Launceston would be much greater and that is exactly what has happened. I had a deputation to try to stop that, but it was not successful.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - I have been advised and can only assume it is true, that many of the people living in that area have not been consulted, before it was actually made a freight route along Cimitiere Street.

Traffic is continuing to be an issue and while we do not have the problems of larger cities, there are certainly concerns around the electorate. Another is the vital upgrade at the Westbury Road intersection to keep pace with growth in this urban area.

There is certainly an increase in traffic in the Prospect Vale/Blackstone Heights area with population growth and this intersection upgrade is necessary for the safe movement of pedestrians, cyclists and vehicles, as well as promoting further residential retail and commercial development in these areas.

Investment in forward-thinking projects is a theme for Launceston, with endeavours that cater for those who are creating for the future and supporting those who want to turn their ideas into reality.

With support services such as the Van Diemen Project and Enterprize Tasmania, an innovation hub assisting in incubating projects in the most vulnerable stages, we are looking to give people the best chances of success. Organisations such as Bitlink, a multidisciplinary team of creative and IT professionals with a passion for pushing boundaries and helping people make the most of technology, and in their words -

based in the beautiful Tasmanian city of Launceston, a humble hive of entrepreneurial activity.

They are targeting the youngest in our schools, to equip them with information, skills and imagination to take on projects of their own in the years ahead.

Our state is growing and these outstanding projects and benefits of living in Launceston are becoming more apparent than ever before. Being only a one-hour plane trip from Melbourne and with cost of living and housing at some of the most comfortable levels around the state, it is clear we are getting things very right in northern Tasmania.

**Mr Farrell** - Hear, hear.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - Thank you.

An article by Johanna Baker-Dowdell in the *Examiner* on 11 January this year stated -

If 2018 was about building business confidence in Northern Tasmania, 2019 will be about building the infrastructure to encourage more people to live and work in the region.

Importantly, our organisations, commercial, government and non-government, understand that working together is the best way to achieve and capitalise upon these unique opportunities that are being afforded to Launceston.

We are making the conditions better to retain our skilled youth and entice young families to experience the benefits we have to offer.

The population task force, a coalition of organisations and individuals set on bringing on talent and fore-thinking people to our city is working on a quantifiable strategy to attract more people to the region and highlighting the boutique lifestyle and job opportunities Launceston has to offer.

Sometimes, it is a secret we do not want to share, as we really do not want to lose what makes Launceston so special.

Launceston General Hospital continues to offer incredible service, despite overcrowding and bed block with several specialist doctors resigning over conditions 18 months ago. Several other doctors also retired last year, leaving just two of the 11 doctors in Emergency. The loss of emergency medicine training accreditation in 2018 was a significant issue for patient care at LGH, particularly with regard to the supervision of interns. Recruiting doctors to regional areas is always difficult and the more a doctor has to be on call, the less likely they are to take a position. It is all about work/life balance, safe working hours and patient care. Doctors can earn more on the mainland; therefore, we must offer other advantages, such as living conditions, to entice them here. Fortunately, the LGH Emergency Department has recruited more Australian-trained specialists and

LGH has provisional emergency medicine training accreditation, enabling it to appoint trainees for the 2019 training year. A further inspection will take place later this year with regard to the 2020 training year and there is hope they will keep their accreditation.

I do have firsthand experience of the Launceston General Hospital Emergency Department, having to take my husband there a few weeks ago, after he tangled with a chainsaw on a Sunday. After going to his local doctor, he was advised it was beyond their capabilities and needed hospital attention. The LGH Emergency Department was full, but to the credit of all the staff, everyone was shown respect and care. There was a waiting room full of people with sporting injuries; flu - and I must admit I had to keep my distance from the people with flu; obviously unwell babies; young, old and in between. We had to wait awhile but where else can you go on a weekend in the north of the state when your injury is beyond your local practitioner? You have to go to your general hospital. I congratulate the hospital and all the staff, whatever their positions, on the work they do under often very difficult circumstances.

The governance and administration of our health system has seriously struggled in the past few years. I am hopeful for improvement from now on. Sometimes things have to get as bad as they can before they improve. I really hope that LGH is now in an upward trend. I intend to keep a close watch on what is happening at our hospital and make no apology for bringing issues to the fore.

This year has seen the NDIS rolled out. However, while there are obviously winners, there are also losers. Our incredible New Horizons Tasmania team feel they are unlikely to be able to meet the necessary criteria for recurrent funding. To see these wonderful people of all ages have access to sport and recreation is inspiring and extremely good.

Many of these people would never have the opportunity to play sport or have a physically or socially active life. This has to contribute to their wellbeing. I cannot imagine what will happen to these people should New Horizons lose funds and be unable to continue.

It is my continued hope that the state Government will see fit to provide adequate recurrent funding for New Horizons, considering the wonderful outcomes for their members should their application to the NDIS ILC be unsuccessful.

New Horizons members are amazing. You only have to turn up to one of their events to see these incredible people, happy, enjoying life while expanding their personal and social networks. They also often put on an end-of-year concert, which would have to be one of the most enjoyable events anyone could go to. The sheer joy and the pleasure they get and give at performing is amazing.

While on entertainment, in 2018 Launceston had the privilege of hosting MONA FOMA, with pop-up arts and music events happening right throughout the city, including Amanda Parer's 'Man' installation piece at the Cataract Gorge Basin. Many thousands of people took the time to go up and look at this very interesting art installation. It was quite incredible. Not only does this inject a unique tourism opportunity to our great city, it confirms Mona's ethos that art is for the people, it is for everyone.

By bringing it out of southern Tasmania to other parts of the state, it lives up to that ethos and gives our residents and visitors the opportunity to experience something truly fun and truly unique.

While we are delighted to have MONA FOMA in the north of the state what we really need are events in the winter. It is hoped that we could have Dark Mofo, or more aspects of it, coming north.

Our grassroots arts and entertainment sector has been rightly acknowledged as possessing some of the best community talent in the state. At the recent 2019 Tasmanian Theatre Awards Launceston's Encore Theatre Company took out the best production award in the Community Musical Theatre category. Our own Belinda King took out the best direction award in the same category.

*Strictly Ballroom*, which was an absolutely magnificent show, broke the record for the Encore Theatre Company. More than 10 090 people attended the three-week season at the Princess Theatre. This meant the Encore show surpassed the company's previous record of 10 022 patrons who attended *Phantom of the Opera* in 2014 during its 15-day season. The shows are huge commitments for the cast and crew and testament to the work they do. They are very much appreciated by the Launceston community.

**Ms Forrest** - They are doing *We Will Rock You* next, I think, which is another fabulous musical.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - Yes. While I could spend hours acknowledging the vast amounts of talent Launceston possesses in the arts and theatre, including the many local theatre groups that contribute, I want to highlight the work done by Theatre North's outgoing artistic director Greg Leong and thank him for his many years of service to the arts community.

The member for Windermere touched on heritage and the issues the National Trust has. Launceston is known for its heritage, as are many other areas around the state. Many people from the mainland come to Tasmania to see the beautiful heritage we have. If you walk along some of the streets in Launceston and look up, you will see incredible things, such as statues along the tops of buildings. You might not notice them unless you take a guided look. I was interested to receive that letter from the National Trust. The fact that, as they say, they have shovel-ready projects closely aligned with all the rural and regional objectives, which would provide positive outcomes. My concern is when you look at the places that need the money - in 2016, Clarendon Estate replaced the slate on the falling roof with \$275 000-worth of federal government funding; and in 2017, Franklin House reinstated the condemned convict brick boundary wall, which was \$40 000 from the state Government and \$40 000 from the city council. When you look further at what they need, and under 'Urgent restoration and conservation projects', Clarendon House needs urgently \$1.5 million urgently, and it needs another \$175 000 for works not as urgent. Franklin House needs \$321 600 for urgent works, with another \$40 000-worth of non-urgent works or works within the next four years. Oak Lodge - \$330 000 of urgent works; the Old Umbrella shop, and I will be doing a special interest speech on that when we return -

**Mr Dean** - My wife works there.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - I will have to mention that in my speech, member for Windermere.

**Mr Willie** - That featured.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - Yes, it did. It featured prominently. It needs \$193 300 of urgent works.

Penghana - \$124 250 of urgent works, while the Penitentiary Chapel heritage site's scope of work is \$602 840. Runnymede's scope of works is \$153 150, with a total of urgent works at \$3.2 million and works over the next four years of \$709 210.

**Ms Forrest** - That is not all of it.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - That is not all of it but it is the most necessary. We are known for our heritage and realistically we cannot let these heritage buildings fall down around us. As hard as it is to find the funding, it is hoped somewhere along the line some of this money will be forthcoming.

The Premier in his address also rightly acknowledged Tasmania's competitive strengths, not only by reference to the rest of Australia, but the rest of the world and with these expanding strengths come immense opportunities - opportunities we need to focus on and foster.

A population task force, the Chamber of Commerce, Northern Tasmania Development Corporation, Cityprom, City of Launceston and Meander Valley Council, among others, are taking a holistic and proactive approach to keeping our residents here and attracting new people to make their home in Launceston and surrounds.

The Launceston electorate encompasses many outlying areas, including Devon Hills and Hadspen - a growing suburb. In addition to the world-class technological and educational infrastructure constructed and sustained in Launceston, our arts sector is thriving and our commercial sector is experiencing record levels of confidence and job openings.

In late 2018, the Sensis Business Index showed Tasmanian small and medium businesses are the most confident in the country and combined with a heightened level of online job advertisements in northern Tasmania, we are seeing a period of outstanding prosperity and exciting opportunities come to Launceston. It is, however, important to ensure we enable all to experience this positive step forward for Launceston. The executive officer of the Launceston Chamber of Commerce, Neil Grose, has stated that while there is already a shift around the job market occurring, attracting more workers to the region would be the key to maintaining this momentum. The Premier was absolutely correct in stating Tasmania has what the world wants. I strongly encourage the advancement of a strategy to build trade and key sectors, showcase what we offer in priority markets, enhance market access and build on the export capabilities of Tasmanian businesses. Obviously, being an island, we will continue to need help with equalising the cost of travelling by the sea highway between Tasmania and the mainland, if we are to be competitive.

The lifestyle-preneur phenomenon supported by the organisations I have already mentioned and many more, are working towards cultivating an image of Launceston that projects an easy, laid-back lifestyle but which also affords the same kinds of opportunities available to people who live on the mainland by opening up our export markets both in goods and in services.

The pre-existing infrastructure and expanding opportunities have allowed exporters such as Launceston-based business, Definium Technologies, to grow its market and bring more opportunities to our little slice of Tasmania.

Specialty organisations such as S. Group embodies business confidence, adding philanthropic endeavours to its repertoire of services and enabling their clients greater choice by offering them the option of supporting businesses who support others bringing in customers who seek to do good with their capital.



Their latest enterprise is a Change Overnight Hotel in York Street, Launceston, an accommodation venture that promises changes both big and small. Every night a guest stays at the hotel allows them to give back to one of eight projects which fulfils Change Overnight's promise of a better night's sleep. The idea is they are a hotel, but the hotel gives back. These causes include the Good Shepherd Agricultural Mission, an orphanage in Banbasa, India where one night's stay at the Change contributes 210 nutritious breakfasts for the children of the orphanage. For those guests who are passionate about the environment, one night's stay can protect about 10 square metres of Tasmanian land through the Tasmanian Land Conversancy. Alternatively, guests can support those needing mental health assistance with one night's stay funding a phone call from a person in need to Beyond Blue.

The growth of boutique hospitality in and around Launceston is further showing we have the resources and capacity to provide eclectic experiences that rival Melbourne or Sydney. Furthermore, this is bringing in record numbers of tourists capitalising on the expanding middle class from Asia who come to our beautiful part of the world and support it through their patronage.

As the Premier mentioned in his State of the State Address, visitors spent a record \$2.46 billion in Tasmania last year. It proves in Launceston we have more to offer and more visitors are taking up the opportunity to visit and experience it. It is clear, therefore, that while Launceston's aspirations are rightly high, we cannot sit back and allow these opportunities to pass us by. I would encourage the Tasmanian Government now and into the future to continue supporting the work of these organisations to ensure Launceston continues to proactively prepare for its future.

**Debate adjourned.**

## **JUSTICE AND RELATED LEGISLATION (MARRIAGE AMENDMENTS) BILL 2018 (No. 47)**

The House of Assembly advised that it agreed with the Council amendments.

### **ADJOURNMENT**

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

That at its rising the Council adjourn until 11.00 a.m. on Thursday 11 April 2019.

## **Justice and Related Legislation (Marriage Amendments) Bill 2018 (No. 47)**

[5.39 p.m.]

**Ms FORREST** (Murchison) - Mr President, I rise to speak on a number of matters raised over the last two weeks during various stages of the debate on the Justice and Related Legislation (Marriage Amendments) Bill 2018.

I commence by restating my support for the legislative reform. I am pleased with all the work done over the last four to five months, and particularly to see this bill arrive back in this House, that resulted in the preparation of amendments to the bill presented to this House that clarified a number of concerns with the bill that was presented to this House.

My support does not reflect in the voting on the third reading of the bill, as I was in the chair with the President away from the House on other parliamentary business.

It has been disappointing that comments made by members of Government and others continue to misrepresent a number of outcomes of these amendments, effectively misleading the community by omission of the facts as established by the amendments to the bill and continued reference to the desire to refer the bill to the Tasmania Law Reform Institute - TLRI

The bill underwent extensive scrutiny through a parliamentary committee process - that being a Committee of the whole. The majority of amendments were available to members of the public and other members mid-February. The consultation scrutiny that occurred in this place was informed by work undertaken by the former anti-discrimination commissioner and other reviews of these matters in other jurisdictions. The role of the Tasmania Law Reform Institute is already on the record; however, for clarity and completeness I note the statement as published on the TLRI website.

Before doing so I believe it is important to note this step taken by TLRI, in my understanding, was unprecedented. I believe it was disgraceful the way the Government continued to misrepresent the role of TLRI, even after the statement was published and sought to draw this highly respected and regarded independent law reform institute, which is part of UTAS, into such a highly politicised matter. Such was the inappropriate nature of this behaviour that TLRI took the step of speaking out publicly. To use the words of Benjamin Franklin -

Half a truth is often a great lie.

The TLRI statement said -

The TLRI does not usually publish terms of reference or details of a reference prior to the release of an Issues Paper. However, given the controversy surrounding the work of the TLRI in undertaking on the Transgender and Intersex Reference the Institute has decided to post the following explanation.

The TLRI has been asked by the Tasmanian Government to provide advice on issues related to sex/gender in Tasmanian legislation, including registration requirements for changing sex/gender and consent to related medical treatment.

It is not general practice for the TLRI to publish terms of reference or details of a reference prior to the release of an Issues Paper. However, given the controversy surrounding the work the TLRI is undertaking, the TLRI has decided to post the following explanation on its website.

The Terms of Reference are to provide advice on:

- What steps should be required to register and change of sex or intersex status on official documents;

- What categories of sex/gender should be displayed on birth certificates and other documents;
- What, if any, reforms should be made in relation to consent to medical treatment to alter a person's sex or gender; and
- What, if any, reforms should be made in relation to the definitions or use of terms relating to sex and/or gender in Tasmanian legislation?

The TLRI will not consider policy in relation to these issues. Instead, the TLRI will conduct a technical review of the practical effects of the enacted Tasmanian legislation in light of reviews undertaken in other jurisdictions, to identify any desirable consequential amendments to ensure that the policy settings enacted by Parliament are achieved.

This is in accordance with TLRI practice not to comment on Bills that are before Parliament, any related amendments or any debate surrounding those Bills, except where reforms relate to recommendations previously made by the TLRI.

This means that we will not comment on the *Justice and Related Legislation (Marriage Amendments) Bill 2018*, or any related amendments, until a final form of the Bill is enacted.

Preliminary work on this reference has commenced, and will continue regardless of the status of the *Justice and Related Legislation (Marriage Amendments) Bill 2018*. This means that the work of the TLRI should not defer consideration of the Bill by the Legislative Council. Our research will incorporate consideration of the terms of any Bill passed into law.

The TLRI review will include the publication of an Issues Paper, a period of public consultation, then the publication of a Final Report. It is expected that the Final Report will be delivered to the Attorney-General on 30 September 2019, prior to its public release on 31 October 2019.

Mr President, I reiterated that because this has been misrepresented. They have made it very clear they needed the bill to be dealt with, and it is now being dealt with in another place, finalised and enacted before they can start their work. If they are to meet their deadline or their expectation of reporting to the Attorney-General by 30 September 2019, we needed to get on with it and deal with it, and we did, with significant consultation.

I believe it is dishonest of some members to keep insisting that the bill passed by this House should be and had to be considered by TLRI before we proceeded with it. It simply could not happen. TLRI could and is working on gender-related matters that are not part of the policy contained within the bill. However, to again use the words of Benjamin Franklin, 'half a truth is often a great lie'.

Similarly, a referral to a parliamentary committee, other than a Committee of the whole House, as we did, would have meant TLRI could not even commence consideration of the matters within the bill until after the committee had reported and debate on the bill had concluded. TLRI does and will consider any further consequential amendments that may be needed, as well as any other areas

that have not been included in the bill, related, for example, to consent to medical treatment to alter a person's sex or gender.

I made that point when some amendments were proposed in relation to matters raised by the Solicitor-General, noting, as I said then, and I say again, that it was not necessary. TLRI would have done that, but I believed in my ongoing consultation with Parliamentary Counsel, it was important to put some amendments in, which were supported.

We have seen amendments to other bills pass through this parliament most sitting weeks. Only this week we had the MAIB bill which addressed a failing of a bill passed at an earlier time. Another bill we will debate tomorrow contains a number of provisions to deal with issues that have arisen since various acts commenced.

If TLRI believes further provisions are needed, these can be drafted and progressed through parliament by the usual process.

I now wish to refer to comments I made during this debate that have been repeated in this place and in many cases taken out of context. I will repeat and clarify the context of comments I made with regard to consultation I undertook and other information I have been provided with.

With regard to the comments made regarding the actions and communications by the former attorney-general, leader of the Government in this place and member for Pembroke, the honourable Dr Vanessa Goodwin, regarding the need for legislative reform related to changes of gender and related matters. As the letter tabled by the member for Launceston indicated Dr Goodwin noted the then anti-discrimination commissioner, Ms Robin Banks, was undertaking a review and working on a paper examining matters related to gender reassignment and intersex-related matters. Dr Goodwin had previously written to the anti-discrimination commissioner requesting this work, acknowledging the need for law reform in this area, and that is what I was referring to. As we know, other states and territories were or currently are working on legislative reform in this particular area to remove the requirement for sexual reassignment surgery.

As we all know, Dr Goodwin was forced to resign due to serious health matters and sadly passed away before a final report was completed. Therefore it is clearly impossible she could have indicated one way or another what her view was on the bill we received in this House in November last year, which gave effect to a number of legislative reform measures recommended in the 2016 Equal Opportunity Tasmania options paper. I never suggested she supported the bill. I was talking about the principle of what she had asked the Equal Opportunity Tasmania commissioner to do. My comments regarding Dr Goodwin's view related to acknowledgement of the need for law reform in this area.

My consultation also included consultation with the Commissioner of Police, as I have said a number of times in both my second reading and during the Committee stage of the bill. This consultation took the form of a written request the commissioner responded to directly and all members now have a copy of it, and conversations between the commissioner and I. In my written request to the commissioner, I confined my comments and requests to matters related to areas where Tasmania Police are required to undertake searches of individuals. I did not seek, nor expect, any feedback from the commissioner regarding other matters related to the registration of change of gender, nor did I ask for comment regarding matters related to the issuance of birth certificates. All my comments as recorded on *Hansard* relate to both forms of consultation I had with the commissioner, both the written and the verbal, and these are limited to my request for advice

regarding Tasmania Police policies relating to searches. I remind members who have a copy of that response the commissioner opens with the comment -

Thank you for your inquiry regarding Tasmania Police's current policy in relation to searches.

I do not know how I can be clearer. In the written inquiry to the commissioner I wrote -

Concerns have been raised by some that this change may create issues for police in conducting searches of individuals where existing legislation requires the search to be conducted by a person who is the same sex as the person to be searched. I expect this is already a matter police deal with when dealing with transgender or non-binary individuals who have not registered a change of sex under the current legislation or don't identify as either male or female. I have asked OPC to draft an amendment to address this more broadly that I am happy to provide that to you as soon as I receive it.

I also asked if the police service has a policy to manage the current circumstances you face when conducting searches and whether you believe the policy would be adequate to deal with the changes proposed.

That was the request I sent to the commissioner and is what he responded to.

To comment on what has been alluded to by members with regard to my comments made during the course of the debate, the member for Windermere on several occasions stated I had received a report from the commissioner. This is incorrect. I have never stated I have received any other information from the commissioner other than the letter dated 1 April 2019. On Wednesday, 3 April I stated, and it is recorded on *Hansard*, that I also consulted with the police commissioner and that while I did not circulate his letter because he requested me not to do so, he was supportive.

To clarify this statement, as members can see from the response I received from the commissioner and what I have just told members, in my request for advice from him I asked him about the policy adopted by police with regard to undertaking searches. His answer is clear with the specific question regarding the need to ensure searches carried out remain valid and lawful after noting the amendment he had access to. The commissioner clearly outlines the policy related to searches of individuals who are gender-diverse, including transgender and intersex individuals. He also noted the amendment I had proposed and his closing comments agree that protection was needed. I clarified this verbally with the commissioner regarding the specific comments related to the proposed amendment. This is the matter I referred to when I stated the commissioner was supportive.

As repeated by another member on 3 April 2019, I did say by interjection, and I am quoting from *Hansard* -

I will refer to that advice when we get to the section of the bill that relates to that. The overall advice was supportive of the legislation. As to the particular aspects that have any real implications for police, we will deal with it at a later time.

On 4 April 2019 I also stated in the Committee stage -

In speaking to the commissioner previously he said I could refer to his broad comments. I understand that from the letter that the police are broadly supportive of this legislation. They deal with this matter in practice now.

Clearly, I was referring to the matters related to searches as confined to the request and the response I received from the commissioner. Members can see from the letter to me from the commissioner, which they all have a copy of, once released by the Government, which was also provided with a copy of the letter that the commissioner sent to me, that my request for information related to the matters of relevance to the police, particularly with regard to search provisions in related legislation.

To be clear, my reference to legislation relates to this aspect of the legislation and the amendments I put. As noted in the email letter to the member for Windermere on 8 April 2019, the commissioner stated that -

Subsequent to this letter [the one I received he is referring to], I spoke to the member for Murchison and reiterated my support for the LGBTI community ...

That was a matter I reiterated in my comments during the Committee stage of the bill. As I said, that is what we talked about in my conversation with him.

I go on with the commissioner's comments in the letter to Mr Dean -

... and broadly indicated that any legislative amendments should protect the role of police. I do not express support or otherwise for the proposed bill, as that is not my role.

As I noted a short time ago, members can see my request for information related to the matters of relevance to the police, particularly with regard to search provisions in related legislation. So it is absolutely clear, my reference to legislation relates to this aspect of the legislation. Amendments are part of legislation. The commissioner's letter to the member for Windermere clarified that this conversation took place after he provided that letter to me, as I indicated in my comments in the Committee stage.

I also included the following comments on 4 April 2019 when in the Committee stage of the bill and I will repeat again here as it seemed no matter how many times I answered the question it was re-asked. I said -

The commissioner, as we all know, and his police department have done an enormous amount of work engaging with the LGBTI community. There has been an enormous effort to create inclusive workplaces for the police, for the people they deal with, and often the police deal with individuals in the most difficult of circumstances regardless of whether they are members of the LGBTI community or not. What I said was that the consultation I undertook with the commissioner indicated that any legislation that will strengthen and build on the work done by police to assist them in treating members of the LGBTI community fairly and equally, as we want them to treat all of us if we had to have dealings with them, is supported. That was the point I was making.

The police commissioner noted at the end of his letter on 8 April 2019 to the member for Windermere that -

The comments in *Hansard* made by the Member for Murchison are her personal interpretation of operational information and discussions with me. On that basis, I do not believe it is necessary to correct the record.

As members are aware, I was asked not to share the written communication I had received and as such, I had to rely on respecting this request while relating relevant details of our conversation referred to by the commissioner. As the commissioner said, he does not believe the record needs correcting and I acknowledge and share that view.

Mr President, I encourage members to take comments of all fellow members in context and seek to exercise kindness in our decision-making. As Andrew Iskander said -

Because that's what kindness is. It's not doing something for someone else because they can't, but because you can.

### **Tasmania Talks - Challenge to Labor Members**

[5.55 p.m.]

**Mr FARRELL** (Derwent) - Mr President, in question time today, the Leader of the Government questioned Labor members of this Chamber and challenged them to appear on the radio show *Tasmania Talks* to, in her words, plead the case around the important gender issue.

The answer is simple, straightforward, uncomplicated and fundamental. There is absolutely no possibility that any view opposing the view of the host of *Tasmania Talks* will be afforded a fair hearing on this program. The host of this program had a 12- or 13-minute on air conversation - if that is what it is called - with the Leader of this House on Tuesday, when he said, among other things -

It is a very strange set of laws and has outcomes and one outcome only, and that is yes, it might provide a little more certainty to the trans-genders but it produces a whole raft of uncertainty, potentially for those whose gender alignment is the same as their birth sex. If you are a heterosexual person and you feel like a bloke and you are born a bloke and you've got all the bloke's bits then you are a bloke. It's relatively simple. A DNA test is my bottom line for what it's worth.

The host went on to reel off what he claimed were a raft of 'unintended consequences', all of which showed he is uninformed, does not understand the changes to law, and most of which are just too offensive to repeat in this place. He has chosen to jump on board the shameful fear campaign that has been orchestrated about this issue. That was abundantly clear when he asked the Leader of this House how many times a person could potentially change their gender and actually asked, 'Could you do it every day?'

I appreciate this radio host has his views, but he should be compelled to reciprocate and allow anyone who appears on his show to state their views also without being verbally accosted and effectively shut down. That is why I would like to tell the Leader of this House that it would be a pointless exercise on behalf of Labor members. It was clear, listening to the Leader of the House during this broadcast of *Tasmania Talks*, that she was verballed at times and the host on more than

one occasion seemed determined to put words into her mouth. Given that experience, I would recommend that next time her advisers get a call from this radio program requesting an interview, perhaps she should say no.

In closing, I would like to ask that this 'Labor bloc' business stops. It is disrespectful, especially to the independent members, and you do not hear Labor members referring to people who support the Government line as 'the Liberal bloc'. Let us stop this childish politics; it is just lowering the tone of the Legislative Council and I think we are all a lot better than that.

**Motion agreed to.**

**The Council adjourned at 5.59 p.m.**