

PARLIAMENT OF TASMANIA
DEBATES OF THE HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY

DAILY HANSARD

Tuesday 18 August 2026

Preliminary Transcript

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UNCORRECTED PROOF

Tuesday 18 August 2026

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

MESSAGE FROM THE GOVERNOR

Resignation of Senator Peter Whish-Wilson

The SPEAKER - I wish to advise the House that I have received the following correspondence from Her Excellency the Governor:

Government House,
Hobart, Tasmania

14 August 2026

The Honourable Jacqui Petrusma MP
Speaker of the House of Assembly,
Parliament House,
Hobart TAS 7000
Dear Speaker,

I enclose a copy of a letter that I have received from the President of the Senate notifying me that, pursuant to the provisions of Section 21 of the Commonwealth of Australia Constitution, a vacancy has occurred on 14 August 2026 in the representation of the State of Tasmania as a result of the resignation of Senator Peter Whish-Wilson.

I have also written to the Premier and the President of the Legislative Council to advise them of the vacancy.

Yours sincerely,
C. WELLS, Governor.

QUESTIONS

Emergency Department Wait Times - Mental Health

Mr WILLIE question to TREASURER, Mr ABETZ

[10.03 a.m.]

New Australian Institute of Health and Welfare data shows that Tasmanians presenting to emergency departments with mental health issues are already forced to wait longer than almost anywhere else in the country. The median wait time in Tasmania is 48 minutes, more than twice the national median, which is 20 minutes. Just 35 per cent of Tasmanian mental health patients are now seen on time, down from 64 per cent a decade ago. This is the system

you are now demanding \$700 million of cuts from. How can you possibly cut \$700 million from Tasmania's health system without mental health patients waiting even longer for care?

ANSWER

I thank the Leader of the Opposition for the question. With respect, it may have been better directed to the minister for Health. I do have a brief here from the minister for Health, my bunker partner here in the parliament. This is the information I have: as a government, we recognise that people are increasingly seeking support and engaging with services for their mental ill health. That is why we are making the largest investment by any Tasmanian government in mental health, with over \$648 million invested since the 2014-2015 Budget. All presentations to hospital emergency departments of people with mental health needs are triaged according to the level of acuity to ensure the most urgent and complex cases are prioritised.

It's important to note that the emergency department is often not the best place for people with mental health needs; being supported to stay in a community environment can lead to better outcomes. That is why we, as a government, are investing in alternative mental health service models through the Tasmanian Mental Health Reform Program that enable people to receive care within community settings where appropriate and help to avoid unnecessary ED presentations or inpatient admissions. We are also building new inpatient mental health facilities in each region to ensure the availability of contemporary, high-quality services if hospital admission is required.

We will continue to drive these reforms through Rethink and Beyond, the state's next overarching mental health strategy. Mental health patients who present to an emergency department should have medical needs assessed prior to mental health assessment. This can sometimes result in extended wait times. Mental Health Services has implemented a range of strategies and processes to help provide support and treatment to consumers when there is a delay and patient flow issues, in addition to restructuring new services to reduce admissions and ED demand. Inpatient areas regularly review their clients to identify individuals who may be suitable for an earlier discharge from the service, which helps free up acute beds and therefore reduce pressure on the system. I invite the Labor Party in this state to get onto their federal colleagues in Canberra to ensure that those who do not have an aged care or disability facility to go to can be moved from the hospitals and save us over \$70 million per annum -

The SPEAKER - The honourable Treasurer's time has expired.

Supplementary Question

Mr WILLIE - The wait times in Tasmania are some of the worst in the country for mental health patients. My question was: how can you guarantee that it won't get worse when you're ripping \$700 million out of the Health department?

Mr ABETZ - We are committed to ensuring that the frontline services continue because we are about service delivery. The line in the budget which I would encourage honourable members to remember is that it is only a strong economy that enables us to provide a caring community. That is why, in the budget as a whole, we are concentrating to ensure that we get the right parameters to ensure that frontline services and the services that our fellow Tasmanians rely on are maintained, whilst ensuring that we make the savings. I remind the honourable member that he and his colleagues sent us to an early election on the pretext of

budget repair, and yet here they are again wanting increased expenditure. The two don't fit well together. What we're doing is right-sizing the budget whilst ensuring services are maintained.

The SPEAKER - The Treasurer's time has expired.

Allied Health Positions

Mr WILLIE question to TREASURER, Mr ABETZ

[10.08 a.m.]

You have ordered \$700 million in cuts from Tasmania's health system. Now, experienced allied health positions are being downgraded when they become vacant, with psychologists, physiotherapists, occupational therapists and social workers increasingly being replaced with cheaper, more junior staff. Clinicians say this will blow out waiting lists, reduce patient care and force experienced staff away from patients to supervise junior workers. Is replacing experienced frontline clinicians with cheaper, less experienced staff exactly the sort of cut you expected when you demanded \$700 million of savings from the Health department?

ANSWER

Can I give the Leader of the Opposition a bit of a memory refresher: there was a budget that was passed in this place without dissent -

Members interjecting.

The SPEAKER - Order.

Mr ABETZ - That is what occurred. Why did Labor allow the budget to pass without dissent? It was because they had no alternative to offer. While it is unfortunate that a particular seat is vacant today, that seat was also vacant halfway during the budget debate -

Mr WILLIE - Point of order, Speaker, 45, relevance. The question is a very serious one about clinicians in our health system. I ask the Treasurer to address the question. He might want to talk about other things but Tasmanians want to hear the answer to this question.

The SPEAKER - Order. I do draw the Treasurer to relevance because the question wasn't about the opposition.

Mr ABETZ - No, it wasn't, Speaker, but it was about the Budget and what we are doing in the Budget, and that is what I was seeking to address, but possibly not appropriately.

Ms Haddad - It's about downgrading frontline service delivery roles.

The SPEAKER - Order. Honourable member for Clark, Ms Haddad.

Mr ABETZ - In relation to the allegation of downgrading of allied health professionals, can I indicate that I'm advised that during the recent bargaining process for the new allied health practitioner agreement, Health and Community Services Union (HACSU) acknowledged the importance of stronger pathways for new graduates to enter the workforce and agreed to

changes to the career structure that will support reprofiling the allied health practitioner workforce. No existing staff are being reclassified through this process. I'm further advised that this change will ensure that positions are appropriately classified and the teams have the right mix of skills and experience. What I would invite the Leader of the Opposition to do is possibly talk to our friends in HACSU and make sure that his lines are correct in relation to that.

Speaker, I come back to the point that as a parliament, we were sent to an early, costly, unnecessary election on the basis of the need for budget repair. We, as a government, have embarked upon that without a single alternative from the Leader of the Opposition or those in the opposition. They didn't dissent from the Budget and yet here they are coming into the parliament condemning any changes in relation to the budgetary position, reminding those opposite that we are still borrowing money as we speak.

Members interjecting.

Mr ABETZ - What we are doing is borrowing less, so you can't have it both ways.

The SPEAKER - Order. Honourable Treasurer, your time has expired.

Supplementary Question

Mr WILLIE - Treasurer, frontline clinicians are saying these cuts will massively reduce service capacity, while HACSU says they will increase waiting lists and bed block. How can you claim this is not a cut when you are deliberately replacing experienced clinicians with cheaper, less experienced staff to save money?

Mr ABETZ - Speaker, I thank the honourable gentleman for raising the issue of bed blocking. I personally indicated when that term was used at an Estimates hearing -

Mr Willie - You're quoting HACSU. I am telling you what they're actually saying.

The SPEAKER - Order.

Mr ABETZ - I thought it was an unfortunate term, and Labor people took exception to it. I now note that the Leader of the Opposition uses the term without a single Labor person objecting to it.

Mr WILLIE - Point of order, Speaker. If the Treasurer wants to put words in a health union's mouth, I'm telling him exactly what they said about his cuts. It's a debating point.

The SPEAKER - Thank you, Leader of the Opposition. Honourable Treasurer.

Mr ABETZ - Speaker, and in relation to those who are in hospital beds who should not be in hospital beds, can I remind the honourable gentleman that this is costing this state over \$70 million per annum.

Mr Willie - You've got \$700 million more from the federal government. You pulled it out like an ATM.

The SPEAKER - Order. Honourable Leader of the Opposition, this is your first warning.

Mr ABETZ - Three wards in our public hospitals are full of patients -

Bird Flu in Tasmania - Preparedness

Dr WOODRUFF question to PREMIER, Mr ROCKLIFF

[10.13 a.m.]

Bird flu is on Tasmania's shores, and we've known this day was coming for some time. Your government has had two years to prepare to see the devastation and mass mortalities occurring in other countries and to develop strong defences for Tasmania's iconic wild bird species. We don't know what's going to happen or how bad an outbreak might be, but we do know that Tasmanians need to prepare to possibly be seeing native birds in distress and dying on beaches and in wild places. We have some indication of your government's response but people need more information about protections for high-risk bird species and communities. Premier, other than the orange-bellied parrot, what priority species have you developed species protection plans for? What specific plans are there to reduce the threats to Tasmania's birds and giving them the best chance of surviving whatever happens next?

ANSWER

Thank you, honourable member, for your question on a very, very serious matter indeed. We have been preparing for bird flu arriving at our shores for some time. I don't agree with the inference in the first part of your question that we were not prepared for this eventuality. I commend the Biosecurity Tasmania team and Parks and Wildlife team, who are all involved with the Department of Natural Resources and Environment Tasmania (NRET) - led by Secretary Jason Jacobi - for their extensive preparation when it comes to H5 bird flu and what continues to be undertaken as well. You might've seen reports about surveillance over the weekend of many kilometres of coastline around King Island, the west coast, Stanley and the Furneaux Group of islands as well, so extensive preparedness. Thankfully, my understanding is that that surveillance didn't result in any evidence of mass mortality, which is pleasing to this point, and thankfully, H5 bird flu has not come into the commercial poultry sector as yet either. Of course, there are already very robust biosecurity regimes within the commercial poultry sector, let alone with respect to bird flu.

More specifically on your question, we're concerned about the impact of H5 bird flu on our native wildlife and threatened species. It is reported that 600 species globally have been affected by the H5N1 virus. In other countries, outbreaks have had a devastating impact in wild bird and mammal colonies. For example, Argentina has reported losses in excess of 17,000 southern elephant seals linked to the H5N1 outbreak, and we recently received reports from the Australian Antarctic Division of around 13,000 elephant seal pups dying in the sub-Antarctic Heard Island which is not far from our shores. It is very distressing, and I do concur with your question when you mentioned how distressed the public can be and will be, no doubt, should mass mortality occur. Of course, everyone is trying to prevent that as best as possible. We do not know how Tasmanian species will respond or how many will be impacted at this stage.

Supplementary Question

Dr WOODRUFF - Thank you, Premier, and before I ask the supplementary question, I'll just correct the misinference that you took: I wasn't suggesting that the department hasn't been preparing, just noting that there has been time; we're the last continent for bird flu to arrive at. My supplementary question is restating the question I asked: other than the orange-bellied parrot, what priority species have you developed specific protection plans for? Shorebirds and waterfowls are expected to be at the highest risk, noting we don't know for sure. Specifically in relation to those types of birds, what are the specific plans in place?

Mr ROCKLIFF - As part of our response planning, the Tasmanian government partnered with the Australian Government Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water to deliver the H5 Bird Flu Protected Species and Places Preparedness and Response Planning Project. This project focuses on those species in Tasmania that are considered most at risk, and which are most likely to benefit from measures that reduce impact from other threats, such as cat predation, for example.

Species-specific plans have been developed for the orange-bellied parrot, Tasmanian devil, shy albatross, short-tailed shearwater, Furneaux white-fronted tern, fairy and little tern, Australian and long-nosed fur seal and the Australasian gannet. A further plan is under development for migratory shorebirds. Unfortunately, the experience in all jurisdictions internationally is that the H5 HPAI strain is not eradicable in the wild and treatment of infected animals by veterinarians is not likely to be successful.

Housing - New Social Houses

Ms BURNET question to MINISTER FOR HOUSING, Mr VINCENT

[10.19 a.m.]

In 2018, your government introduced the housing land supply bill, claiming it would help increase the supply of land for affordable and social housing at a critical time. By 2024, despite being amended twice, it has delivered just six social houses on rezoned government land. Minister, how many social houses have been constructed in the last two years as a consequence of land rezoned under a housing land supply order, and what is your timeline for legislating the transition of Homes Tasmania's functions back into a government department?

ANSWER

I thank the member for the question. This is something that we deal with every day at the moment. The transition back into government: we're working through some of the complications of the legislation and with the workforce and how that will fit. We were hoping for late this year, but to be realistic, we think that it will be far better off to aim for the end of the financial year of 2027 to do it properly. That does not mean that every single day we're not working to transition to more homes for everybody who needs them, regardless of whether it's crisis care or normal housing for social and affordable.

At the moment, I think we're up to - and I haven't checked in the last couple of weeks, but it's around 10 to a dozen that are now being started on Huntingfield Estate, with that increasing with the next parcel of land coming on shortly. There is also work to be done on

realigning some of the titles because, if you remember, it's been quite a few years, as I'm reminded all the time, since Huntingfield started, and with the changes to the layout of the subdivision, the easiest way was to do an amendment to the housing order there to tidy up those titles there. We're going through that process at the moment, but it is accelerating.

We have 17 housing supply orders through. We have one at Warrane that's under planning at the moment. We have another one at Kings Meadows that's before the council there; Howrah; the one at Romaine is being worked through at the moment with two there, and another 13 to go on it. There is also Cambridge Road that is subject to a development approval. Although we acknowledge that we started from a slow base, Homes Tasmania as it is presently sitting, has had a large amount of acceleration, the way to say it, over the next 12 months to two years in getting a lot more places started. I acknowledge that more could have been done earlier, but hence the issues that were there and what we've done to fix some of those issues. It is accelerating quite rapidly. Thank you.

Supplementary Question

Ms BURNET - My question was about how many houses have been delivered in the past two years. It's not the number of supply orders; it's the number of houses, social housing, that have been delivered.

Mr VINCENT - Can I just clarify that you mean on housing land supply orders, not the normal side of it?

Ms Burnet - Yes.

Mr VINCENT - I don't have all the full details but I'm happy to find out exactly what that is. To my limited knowledge on Huntingfield, it's at 10 to 12 at the moment but I'm not sure if there are any on the other titles. I will come back to you on that.

Mental Health Services - Cuts

Ms DOW question to TREASURER, Mr ABETZ

[10.23 a.m.]

You have demanded \$700 million worth of cuts from Health and as a direct result of these cuts, experienced clinicians are now being cut from Tasmania's mental health services. Stephen Hayes, who's the clinical lead at the Devonport Adult Community Mental Health Service, says his service already has so little capacity it mostly only accepts people who are involuntary. He says replacing experienced AHP3 (allied health professional) clinicians with more junior staff will massively reduce the service output. Treasurer, why are you making cuts that will reduce the capacity of a mental health system that is already unable to cope with excessive demand?

ANSWER

I would the honourable member to read the *Hansard* of my answer to the Leader of the Opposition. I detailed that to a significant extent -

Members interjecting.

The SPEAKER - Order.

Mr ABETZ - as to the increase in funding for the mental health wellbeing sector -

Mr Willie - So what the clinicians are saying is untrue, is it?

The SPEAKER - Order.

Mr ABETZ - Somebody may have said something, I haven't seen what he or she said. What I do know is what is in the Budget and what this government's commitment is to mental health and mental health and wellbeing - fundamentally important for our society. As a government with our budget - and might I correct the \$700 million; that's been repeated a number of times. Yes, there is a savings element in the Budget, but there is also an increased uplift in the Budget as well, and I would encourage you to look at the totality of the Budget and see what we are actually doing in an area which, can I remind you when you were last in government, health costs had exploded so outrageously that it was now up to 28 per cent of the budget, which was unsustainable. Today we are delivering about 35 per cent, a 7 per cent uplift, and it is sustainable under good economic management from this Liberal government -

Ms DOW - Point of order, Speaker, Standing Order 45, relevance. The Treasurer hasn't gone anywhere near to answering the question that I put to him. I asked him directly why he's making cuts that will reduce the capacity of the mental health system in an already overburdened system with huge demand.

The SPEAKER - Thank you, honourable member. The Treasurer is being relevant to the relevant policy area but I do draw the Treasurer to the question.

Mr ABETZ - Total expenditure on health will increase by \$583.6 million across the forward Estimates. Black on white -

Mr Willie - It's a cut: in real terms, it's a cut.

The SPEAKER - Order.

Mr ABETZ - Leader of the Opposition, black on white in the Budget, and you can try to spin it as much as you like but that is what is in the Budget -

Members interjecting.

The SPEAKER - Sorry, Treasurer. Honourable members to my left, you still have another four questions to ask. I understand the importance of this matter, but I do remind the honourable members, you're doing budget cuts during MPI, you have other forms of this House that you can use. I do ask, for the sake of *Hansard* and for those watching online, that the Treasurer is allowed to finish his answer, please.

Mr ABETZ - Can I thank the opposition spokesman for that point of order because it allowed me to confirm with the minister for Health that it's not a cut.

Supplementary Question

Ms DOW - Treasurer, experienced clinicians can immediately carry full caseloads. Junior clinicians require supervision and carry smaller caseloads. When you demand \$700 million in health savings and the result is fewer experienced clinicians treating patients across our health system, how is that anything other than a cut to frontline healthcare?

Mr ABETZ - Speaker, the wonder of mobile phones: I've been advised that what is occurring is a workforce development strategy that is about futureproofing our mental health system.

Mr Willie - You can spin it however you like.

Members interjecting.

The SPEAKER - Order. Honourable members to my left. The honourable Treasurer is the only one who is to be speaking right now.

Mr ABETZ - It is about ensuring positions are appropriately classified and the teams have the right mix of skills and experience. We need pathways for graduates to enter our workforce on a case-by-case basis –

Ms Haddad - He thinks 100 million won't have an effect on frontline service delivery: that's just crazy.

The SPEAKER - Honourable member for Clark, Ms Haddad.

Mr ABETZ - as any vacancy arises. That is what we are doing as a government, and I thank the minister for Health for providing me with the information to be able to answer the detail of those questions, which, under normal circumstances, should be directed to the relevant minister. That said, we are a team on this side, we know each other's business and we back each other in, unlike what the Leader of the Opposition is experiencing.

Ms Dow - These are people's lives.

The SPEAKER - Thank you, I've given the honourable member for Braddon, Ms Dow, her first warning too.

Tasmania Police - Disclosure Delays

Mr O'BYRNE question to MINISTER for POLICE, FIRE and EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT, Mr ELLIS

[10.29 a.m.]

The Babb review into the backlog in Tasmania's courts described the police disclosure of evidence processes as dysfunctional. In many cases, Tasmania Police wait until the defendant has entered a not-guilty plea before gathering crucial evidence such as witness statements. The review found a lack of early evidence disclosure was compounding the court delays which are crippling the Tasmanian justice system. The review recommends

investigating officers be made responsible for disclosing evidence directly to the prosecution and defence at an early stage but frontline police are already stretched to the limit, and you cannot just shift this responsibility onto an overstretched workforce without additional resources. Tasmania's clogged court system is having real-life consequences: matters are taking years to resolve and victims are forced to relive trauma through repeated delays. Minister, what is your response to the findings of the Babb review? What will you do to enable police to provide timely evidence disclosure?

ANSWER

I thank the member for Franklin for his question. He is right. The Babb review is an important piece of work, commissioned by the minister for Justice, with strong crossovers across the broader justice system, including police. We've accepted 19 of the 20 recommendations in full or in principle and one recommendation requires some further analysis. Tasmania Police are very much on board with the approach. We think there's some good opportunities for us to align with the system. There will be some changes in practice, as you mentioned, that are quite longstanding. We'll need to work through that process to ensure that we're getting it right and delivering the uplift to broader system efficiency but certainly, we take at face value that this is an opportunity for continuous improvement for Tasmania Police and also the broader justice system.

We will be receiving specific advice from the commissioner shortly about the intended approach for the rollout. I am happy to provide more information to you as that occurs, but at a high level, we received the report, we're going through the detailed analysis of it, but we can confidently accept the bulk of the recommendations. We do see that there are opportunities to improve the workings of our justice system, both from a courts perspective and from a police perspective, with the recommendations that have been provided. We know there are challenges in the court system in terms of timeliness and, as all people in this place know, justice delayed can be justice denied. So, this is really important for everyone who uses the system - the accused, the victims and the stewards of the system, which includes our courts and our police.

Supplementary Question

Mr O'BYRNE - I acknowledge the minister's answer and the commitment to seek advice from Tasmania Police on a response. Once you receive that response, will you release that advice and brief the community on Tasmania Police's response to the Babb review?

Mr ELLIS - I can't commit to releasing the advice until we see it but we will be happy to release a response that summarises that advice. We can work through that at the appropriate time.

Bird Flu in Tasmania - Habitat Protection

Mr BAYLEY question to MINISTER for ENVIRONMENT and CLIMATE CHANGE, Mr BARNETT

[10.33 a.m.]

There are multiple sites across Lutruwita/Tasmania identified as high importance for bird communities. Wildlife biologists and conservationists have long called for adequate formal

protection to no avail. Bird flu is now here and there's clear evidence birds at the highest risk are coastal colonial birds and waterfowl. We've already seen petrels, gulls and our precious crested terns affected. Despite theoretically being protected, activities like hunting, dog walking and four-wheel driving are permitted in areas where threatened wildlife live and breed. These birds are your responsibility, live in reserves but remain unprotected from significant threats. Given this, will you work with the Parks minister to exercise the precautionary principle and properly protect species in areas of significance, like the seabird islands of the Furneaux Group, St Helens Conservation Area, Moulting Lagoon and the Orford Bird Sanctuary?

ANSWER

I thank the honourable member for his question and his interest in this important matter, as it is an important matter for all of us, not just in this Chamber but across Tasmania. Like the Premier, I put on record my sincere thanks to the Department of Natural Resources and the Environment (NRE). They've done an incredible job. It's important that this parliament understands the level of preparation and effort undertaken by our department and agencies, Biosecurity Tasmania in particular. It has been an incredible job and I'm very grateful to Jason Jacobi and the team.

There have been a number of detections of H5 bird flu on King Island and the north-west coast. Surveillance has been very steadfast and appropriate. There have been no detections in terms of poultry or agriculture at the moment. You made particular reference to a range of seabirds and other birds; I'll come to that shortly. One of the key areas of preparation has been communication. That has included regular meetings with key stakeholders and members of parliament. There will be further briefings this week. 'Avoid, record, report' is the key for members of the community and members in this place. The hotline to do that is 1800 675 888.

Mr Bayley - Threatening activities in reserves, minister, please.

Mr BARNETT - Yes. I give a 100 per cent commitment to be working with the minister for Parks as the Minister for Environment and Climate Change and also with the Minister for Primary Industries and Water, who is responsible for biosecurity, agriculture and primary industries that are so important for Tasmania. You can be assured we have regular briefings. I met with my secretary this morning over the phone with a briefing, as I know the Minister for Primary Industries and Water did. In terms of wildlife and protected species, which was an earlier question from your honourable Leader to which the Premier responded, you've asked about some of those species. In the event of an outbreak in native wildlife, any response interventions would be based on risk assessment, considering matters such as animal welfare, biosecurity, public amenity, the number of animals and the practicality of removal or euthanasia. It's important to note that disturbing wildlife could cause unnecessary stress to the animal and it's paramount that biosecurity -

The SPEAKER - The honourable Deputy Premier's time has expired.

Supplementary Question

Mr BAYLEY - My question was explicit to threatening activities in reserves, such as hunting, dog walking and four-wheel driving. I mentioned a number of different reserves, including Moulting Lagoon and the Orford Bird Sanctuary. You said you were 100 per cent committed and working across the Cabinet in which case, what strong and specific actions are

you taking to protect individual species from these threats in these particular reserves? What steps to protect their habitat will you take into the future?

Mr BARNETT - I can confirm on the record: we do have species-specific plans in terms of the development of those already. Regarding orange-bellied parrots, I was at the captivity centre at Five Mile Beach, not far from Hobart, last Friday -

Dr Woodruff - Specifically coastal areas.

The SPEAKER - Order.

Mr BARNETT - Well, it was particularly important. They're critically endangered birds, and I'm very grateful for the tour that was provided to me.

Dr Woodruff - I know. We've heard a lot about them.

Mr Bayley - Threatening activities in reserves?

The SPEAKER - Order. Honourable members of the Greens, you do have another question that you can ask. I'll ask that, in the remaining time, the minister is heard.

Mr BARNETT - The Tasmanian devil, shy albatross, short-tailed shearwater, Furneaux white-fronted tern, fairy and little terns, Australian and long-nosed fur seals, and Australasian gannet, in terms of the communication, I spoke with the secretary this morning -

Mr Bayley - What about the threatening activities: the hunting, dog walking, four-wheel driving?

Mr BARNETT - and in terms of that, there is a very dedicate and focused approach -

The SPEAKER - Honourable Deputy Leader of the Greens, this is your first warning.

Mr BARNETT - to those birds to which you make reference.

Industry Financial Assistance

Ms JOHNSTON question to TREASURER, Mr ABETZ, referred to MINISTER for BUSINESS, INDUSTRY and RESOURCES, Mr ELLIS

[10.38 a.m.]

demands for financial support are piling up. Your 2026 Economic Diversification and Investment Strategy has four key decision-making principles: build on Tasmania's comparative advantage; use public resources strategically; make trade-offs transparently; and measure outcomes, not just activity. These principles matter more than ever in these economic times. Treasurer, do you endorse and are you applying these principles to current demands from industry? Should they be the basis for decision-making when it comes to any industry assistance?

ANSWER

I thank the member for Clark for her question. One of those key areas is a major employer in the seat of Clark, the Hobart zinc works; we've been really pleased to work with the South Australian government and the federal government on a substantial package so that we can ensure long-term viability while we're seeing significant global instability. It needs to be acknowledged that these smelters have a range of different challenges, and some of them are quite different. In the case of the Hobart zinc works owned by Nyrstar, that is very much a case of market distortion coming out of China. They are a market player and a market participant but they are competing against the significant state distortion that comes in those areas.

Now, the Economic Diversification and Investment Strategy is out for consultation at the moment; we'd really appreciate feedback from right across the community. This is an important document. One of the strengths of Tasmania is our inherent diversity in our economy. We have a range of strings to our bow. We have some of the world's best farmlands and agricultural practice. We have an incredible forest industry that's worth \$1.2 billion. We have a mining sector that provides more than half of the goods exported for our state, and we have extraordinary tourism opportunities that are realised as one of our largest employers and sectors across our economy. You're right: we need to work through a process when we're thinking about government support that maximises the ultimate economic development for our state. That's what we're seeking from the community and those are some of the things that we are needing to weigh up as a government as we work through uncertain times. Indeed, when we look to the situation at Bell Bay, it's part of the reason why we're so keen to ensure that we can deliver a partnership that has Rio Tinto as the owner of that commercial facility.

Obviously, our state government and the federal government were seeking to invest in the future of economic development in northern Tasmania and built around the long-term opportunities of that smelter. That will be key in our approach in delivering a long-term deal from the state, and I appreciate all of those in this place who backed in the motion to bring the federal government back to the table so that we can continue a productive negotiation. Ultimately, in that case in the case of the zinc works, neither of these challenges can be solved by the Tasmanian government alone. It needs partnership and that includes with the company and with the larger jurisdiction, that is, the Commonwealth Government. I encourage all people in the community who have a strong interest in the future of our economy to make a submission to that draft and we will continue to work to ensure that we can deliver a strategy that recognises the extraordinary abundance that we have on our island that will be supported as we continue to diversify our economy.

Supplementary Question

Ms JOHNSTON - The minister talked about current industry support but he hasn't articulated whether he's applying those principles currently to demands that have been made on the government at the moment and who are not applying those particular principles: build on Tasmania's comparative advantage; use public resources strategically; make trade-offs transparently and measure outcomes, not just activity. What principles are you applying instead?

Mr ELLIS - No, maybe if I wasn't being clear, these are some of the principles that we are seeking to apply. Members in this place will have heard, in the discussion about Bell Bay Aluminium, the fact that with the publicly-owned hydroelectric resources that we have in our

state, every dollar that we commit to a cheaper power price is one that ultimately is a trade-off, particularly for Tasmanian taxpayers who are seeking essential services like schools, hospitals and police. The minister outlined that there's about a \$60 million gap per year under that proposed -

Ms Finlay - When did that gap exist? On what measure?

The SPEAKER - Honourable Deputy Leader of the Opposition.

Ms Finlay - In what context?

The SPEAKER - Honourable Deputy Leader of the Opposition.

Mr ELLIS - Look, you had a terrible week last week and you're going the right way to have another one this week.

The SPEAKER - Order. Honourable minister, I ask you to focus on the question, please.

Mr ELLIS - Thank you, Speaker. I appreciate your guidance. There are trade-offs that we will need to work through in all those processes. It is undoubtedly a strength of Tasmania's. We have, as I mentioned before, more than 50 per cent of our goods exported from mining -

The SPEAKER - The honourable minister's time has expired.

Health Department Job Advertising

Mrs GREENE question to TREASURER, Mr ABETZ

[10.44 a.m.]

You have imposed a non-essential hiring freeze across the state service and ordered \$700 million in cuts to Health yet the Health Department is currently advertising for a government relations manager who will earn up to \$150,000 a year. Honestly, what job could be less essential than somebody to manage the government's own relations between the government and itself? Treasurer, why does the Health Department need to hire a highly-paid government relations manager to advise it on dealing with the government? How can that possibly be considered essential while frontline health services are being cut?

ANSWER

Thank you, Speaker. Can I, first of all, correct, yet again, the Labor assertion about cuts to Health: the Budget clearly shows \$583 million extra -

Members interjecting.

The SPEAKER - Order.

Mr ABETZ - for the Health Budget over the forward Estimates. Why the Labor Party are not willing to recognise that is beyond me, other than possibly for cheap politics, because we are concerned about the health and wellbeing of our fellow Tasmanians. That is why, today,

the amount spent on Health is 35 per cent. Go back to when Labor-Greens were in power. It was 28 per cent, and according to them it was unsustainable, at unsustainable levels. We are showing today that 35 per cent is sustainable if you pull the levers the right way.

Members interjecting.

The SPEAKER - Order.

Mr ABETZ - In relation to the specifics of the question of Mrs Greene, the Labor member for Bass, the person who I understand is being sought for this particular position is for, and I stress this, federal government relations, noting that -

Mr Willie - Don't you have a Health secretary?

The SPEAKER - Order. Honourable Leader of the Opposition, this is your second warning.

Mr ABETZ - the federal government had promised 45 per cent of the cost of our public hospitals and is not delivering.

Ms Haddad - Doesn't your minister get paid to do that? Isn't that what she's elected to do?

The SPEAKER - Honourable member for Clark, Ms Haddad, your first warning.

Mr ABETZ - The federal government is pulling back substantially on private health insurance, which will have the impact of increased demand on our public hospital system. The federal government is also neglecting its duty to the aged and the disabled in our community -

Ms Haddad - The federal government's just invested \$700 million in the state's health system and you've ripped it back out again.

The SPEAKER - Ms Haddad, this is your second warning.

Mr ABETZ - in ensuring that there are places for them once their hospital needs have been catered for, costing the state well over \$70 million per annum: unnecessary cost. Three wards are currently occupied by people in the aged and disability sectors who should be discharged. If you're concerned about people's mental wellbeing, the clinical advice is very clear that as soon as you are ready for discharge, you should be discharged, because maintaining such people in hospital unnecessarily is not good for their mental wellbeing. Please be consistent in relation to these matters. What we need is somebody to assist us because the state Labor opposition won't do the job that they ought to do. That is why we need to have somebody to deal with federal relations.

Members interjecting.

The SPEAKER - Order. I do ask the members of the government, when they do give a reply, if they invite interjections from the other members, it is very hard for me to control the parliament as well, so I do ask that language is considered, please.

Supplementary Question

Mrs GREENE - Treasurer, Tasmanians would reasonably ask why the Health Department needs what amounts to an internal government lobbyist on more than \$150,000 a year, when surely, managing the government's relationships is already the job of the Health minister, the department secretary, the deputy secretary and other senior executives? Why are taxpayers being asked to fund another highly-paid bureaucratic position while hospitals are being told to find hundreds of millions of dollars of savings and frontline services are being cut?

The SPEAKER - The member's time has expired.

Mr ABETZ - Speaker, it's so difficult to contain oneself when one is asked such provocative questions but I will seek to do my best in accordance with your ruling. Can I say to the honourable member for Bass, Mrs Greene, that this is not internal government lobbying; we don't have to lobby ourselves. We know what needs to be done. Unfortunately, Canberra does not know what needs to be done. That is why we are calling on state Labor to join us in team Tasmania to ensure that we get our fair deal in relation to public hospital expenditure -

Members interjecting.

The SPEAKER - Order. Members to my left.

Mr ABETZ - ensuring that private health insurance is maintained, to keep pressure off our public hospital system, and to ensure that the aged and disabled in our community who are ready for discharge from hospital are able to be so discharged -

Ms Finlay - You were offered money for that and you declined. The money was on the table and you didn't accept it.

The SPEAKER - Deputy Leader of the Opposition, this is your first warning.

Mr ABETZ - costing the public hospital system an extra \$70-plus million a year.

The SPEAKER - Deputy Leader of the Opposition, this is your first warning.

AI Data Centre Approvals

Mr GEORGE question to MINISTER for INNOVATION, SCIENCE and the DIGITAL ECONOMY, Mr ELLIS

[10.50 a.m.]

The South Australian minister has established a data centre strategy, the Minister for Artificial Intelligence and the Office for Artificial Intelligence. The demand to build new data centres is already on us in Tasmania before we understand the full impact on our water and power resources, and upon our communities. Considering deep uncertainty about the costs and benefits of data centres and the growing resistance from communities globally, will you impose a pause on further approvals until the federal government has determined its position and Tasmania has had a chance to establish its own framework?

ANSWER

I thank the member for Franklin for his important question. As I flagged last week, we'll be seeking to release our statement of expectations for AI data centres in this 100-day period. It will be coming out shortly, but as I identified in my response last week, there are some significant opportunities and some challenges that come with data centre development. We are already seeing data centres being developed here. That's a process that we are continuing to work through because as we scale, there are new challenges. As I outlined last week, one of the core principles to that is about what is different with these very large data centres and that is ultimately about very high energy use. Depending on the kinds of technology used - and this is not necessarily the case in one of our leading proponents in Firmus, but depending on the kind of technology used, you can also see significant water usage. It's important from a high-level principle that we ensure data centre developments pay their way on water and energy, and when I say energy, that is a commercial price for the power that's been provided but it's also a commercial price for the transmission costs of that development.

That will be important because that will provide a benefit to the community as well. Other large users that don't require new transmission to necessarily be built to the same scale can help share some of the cost that would otherwise be shared across our community. Indeed, we've talked before about how our major industrial users share some of the costs for transmission and help protect households and other consumers from the cost of that. That will be really important for us as we establish those principles. They're the principles we will continue to operate under. In Tasmania more broadly, we have a strong planning system and strong environmental regulations. Some of the challenges with data centres can be managed under our existing regulations but when it comes to energy use and transmission, and water use and transmission, that will be some of the key features of the AI data centre statement of expectation we are looking to release in coming days.

Supplementary Question

Mr GEORGE - Minister, you didn't address the core of the question, which is: will you impose a moratorium on further development or further processes on data centres until the Tasmanian policy has been decided through public consultation and passed through this parliament?

Mr ELLIS - The answer is no. We wouldn't be seeking a moratorium but the proponents who are coming to Tasmania and leading some of these developments already have a policy of delivering 2 MW of capacity of new renewables brought through for every 1 MW they use. There is already a proponent building on the basis of bringing their own energy and bringing a significant uplift in the capacity -

Ms Finlay - Where's the new energy for St Leonards?

Mr ELLIS - Ms Finlay, I know you can't figure out whether you support the stadium, whether you support Marinus Link or whether you support data centres, but I think for the rest of us who want to have a discussion -

The SPEAKER - Order. Honourable minister, I return you to the question, please.

Mr ELLIS - a mature discussion about this important issue. Where we see proponents coming through who are already offering to bring their own energy and do so with an expanded capacity, and, in this case, don't use a great amount of water because they have direct-to-chip cooling and -

The SPEAKER - The honourable minister's time has expired.

Children on Remand

Ms ROSOL question to MINISTER for JUSTICE, CORRECTIONS and REHABILITATION, Mr BARNETT

[10.55 a.m.]

Children continue to be held in adult prison watch houses despite a clear recommendation from the Custodial Inspector last year that this practice must stop. These children are exposed to violence, abuse and threats, and their rights are violated by what is effectively a form of state-sanctioned child abuse. After everything we learned through the commission of inquiry (COI), this is completely unacceptable. It was reported yesterday that the Department of Justice is looking into whether part of a Tasmanian court can be redeveloped into a child-specific remand area to avoid putting children in adult prison watch houses. This sounds like little more than a vague possibility designed to distract from consistent inaction. Do you have a plan, with timelines, to stop the use of adult watch houses for children or not?

ANSWER

I thank the honourable member for her question. Caring for children at any stage is important for our government, particularly in our justice and corrections systems. It's Corrections and Rehabilitation; that's why I often stress the importance of rehabilitation. Regarding watch houses, you will be aware of the work we are undertaking on a business case for the Launceston Reception Prison and the work my department is doing with the Department for Education, Children and Young People. That work is ongoing. I'm happy to provide further updates to you and honourable members of this House. I think your question was about the Hobart Reception Prison. I'm happy to get that information and come back to you.

Supplementary Question

Ms ROSOL - Thank you, minister, for the promise of more information. The COI recommendation 12.11(c) calls for increasing the minimum age of detention, including in remand, to 16 years, and the Minister for Children and Youth has effectively passed off responsibility for children held in prison watch houses. Given that there's so little work on alternatives in the prison, will you commit to prioritising this COI recommendation as an alternative approach to ending children's detention in prison watch houses?

Mr BARNETT - We do consider a priority for the response to the Commission of Inquiry, 191 recommendations of which we have committed to. We are progressing our work through those over a number of years. There's a huge amount of work that's been going into that. We've committed to implementing those recommendations and that's progressing. The safety of our children is a top priority, including in our corrective services. In terms of the detention of young people in watch houses, it's not a Tasmanian-specific issue. I think you're

aware of the use of watch house facilities for adults and young people across all jurisdictions for transitional periods during justice processes. You know that's required. We're working our way through that. In terms of the earlier question that you asked, I will respond to the honourable member.

Health Department Job Advertising

Mrs GREENE question to MINISTER for HEALTH, MENTAL HEALTH and WELLBEING, Mrs ARCHER

[10.58 a.m.]

The position description of your new \$150,000-a-year government relations manager makes this even more extraordinary. This manager will report to a general manager for government relations and manage a government relations team. One of their specific duties is to manage inter and intra-government negotiations. Your government is hiring a manager to report to another manager to manage a team whose job includes managing the government's relations with itself. How can you justify this sort of bureaucratic waste while the Treasurer is cutting \$700 million from Health? What services are being cut to pay for this waste?

ANSWER

I thank the honourable member for her question. I can see why you appear to be confused, because every question that you have asked in here today demonstrates your confusion as to what is necessary. Your confusion extends to the fact that you took us to an unnecessary election last year. On the premise of budget repair -

Members interjecting.

Mr WILLIE - Point of order, honourable Speaker, Standing Order 45, relevance. It's about a \$150,000 bureaucratic position. Why are they cutting \$700 million from Health?

The SPEAKER - I do bring the minister back to the question because it wasn't on going to an election. I ask the minister to return to the question, please.

Mrs ARCHER - I reject the assertion that it is unnecessary. If you had any understanding whatsoever of the Tasmanian health system, you would understand -

Mr Mitchell - This is disgraceful.

The SPEAKER - Order. Honourable member for Lyons, Mr Mitchell, you've made a number of interjections today. This is your first warning.

Ms Finlay - I'm not sure that anyone was being personal in the questions.

The SPEAKER - Order.

Mrs ARCHER - that many of our health agreements are negotiated at an inter-government level. This is a critical part to provide that strategic advice as we enter into those arrangements, including the negotiation this year of the next mental health suicide

agreement as well. You have, in the same question time, attempted to characterise there being cuts to services and then spending on services. As the Treasurer has said to you earlier, the 2026-2027 Budget continues our plan to deliver better healthcare for Tasmanians with record investment of \$15 billion into our health system across the forward Estimates.

Members interjecting.

The SPEAKER - Order.

Mrs ARCHER - \$10 million every single day into the health system. As the Treasurer previously referenced, when we came to government, the Labor government -

Ms Finlay - Did you say that someone was bitten by a rat in the emergency at the LGH?

The SPEAKER - Order. Deputy Leader of the Opposition, second warning.

Mrs ARCHER - was investing about 28 per cent of the entire state budget into Health and was closing beds and sacking a nurse a day. We don't hear anything from those opposite about what your plans are or what you would do differently but we know what your record says and we know what our record says: that Health spending has increased since we came to government, and it increases across this Budget.

Members interjecting.

The SPEAKER - Order. Sorry, minister. Honourable members to my left, you are making it impossible for *Hansard* to record the answer. If you're not interested in what the minister has to say, we will go on to the next question. I ask all members to respect each other and interjections to cease. Honourable minister.

Mrs ARCHER - Thank you, honourable Speaker. There are no cuts to Health spending. While those opposite are always too scared to say anything and stand up to their overlords in Canberra, we will continue -

The SPEAKER - The honourable minister's time has expired.

Supplementary Question.

Mrs GREENE - Minister, at a time when hospitals are being forced to find hundreds of millions of dollars of savings, how many layers of highly-paid government relation managers does the Department of Health actually need and what frontline services are being cut to help pay for them?

Mrs ARCHER - There are no cuts to Health.

Members interjecting.

Firefighters - Sorell Emergency Services Hub

Mr Di FALCO question to MINISTER for POLICE, FIRE and EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT, Mr ELLIS

[11.03 a.m.]

Your government has spent millions of dollars on the Emergency Services Hub in Sorell, which includes facilities for SES (State Emergency Services) and TFS (Tasmanian Fire Service) volunteers, and employed police and firefighters. Sorell is a growing population area and we need to ensure that we have an effective emergency response capability available for fires and floods. Minister, could you advise if there are any plans for career firefighters to be rostered at the Sorell hub?

ANSWER

I thank the member for Lyons for his important question. I also thank the member for Prosser, who was a key partner for us in delivering this facility. It's an amazing location. It was actually delivered to us from the Sorell Council with the mayor at the time, Kerry Vincent, for a dollar, a really outstanding partnership that's made such a big difference for the emergency service capability right across the south-east.

It is a future-proof facility. It is an outstanding facility, and as the community grows, future consideration could be given to career firefighters in that location.

We've been keen to expand our career firefighting capability across the state. We have been working with Kingston, as a growing community down there, to deliver a day crew. Often we find we have some outstanding volunteers right around our state, but in larger towns that have very high call volumes, sometimes it is more challenging to get a response during the day because many people are at work or in different locations. Being able to bolster that capacity is important. The north-west day crew will be the other key strategic rollout for us in terms of the next career firefighter locations, and then a discussion can be had about other fast-growing areas.

When you look at the regional land use strategies (RLUS), there is significant growth that's being projected to occur at Sorell as our government continues our plan to deliver land for 10,000 new homes. The development - I think it's Sorell East, and I'm sure minister Vincent will correct me on the name for the new large-scale subdivision there - but as we look to continue to grow there, it will become increasingly important for us to look at capability for career firefighters at that location. We built the hub with a future-proofing mindset - and I pay tribute to my predecessors, in particular Mrs Petrusma and Mr Shelton right next to you - that approach, I think, will stand the Sorell and broader south-east community in really good stead as the community continues to grow.

Mr Mitchell - Is the answer, not yet? I'm just trying to get some clarity.

The SPEAKER - Order. The only one who has the call right now is the honourable Leader of Opposition Business.

Supreme Court Proceedings - Former Chair of Heritage Council

Ms HADDAD question to ATTORNEY-GENERAL, Mr BARNETT

[11.06 a.m.]

Your government has confirmed that Cabinet approved up to \$108,000 in taxpayer-funded legal assistance for the former chair of the Heritage Council to take action in the Supreme Court. When minister Duigan was asked by Labor about this in parliament last week, whether the Supreme Court action involves the Integrity Commission, he refused to answer the question. Attorney-General, I'm asking you this today: does this taxpayer-funded Supreme Court action involve the Integrity Commission or not?

ANSWER

I thank the honourable member for her question. She's made reference to the honourable minister's answer last week. Firstly, I wouldn't want to add further to the answer of the honourable minister, and I'm also advised the matter has a confidentiality obligation around it, so I certainly wouldn't be adding to that. I want to indicate, in terms of some parts of the question that you made reference to, that as the state's first law officer and Attorney-General I regularly take actions or intervene in legal matters on behalf of the state, as a respondent to matters on behalf of the state, or take advice from legal officers in the course of undertaking my duties as Attorney-General. In terms of matters with respect to the honourable minister, I'm not able to add anything further to the answer that was provided last week.

Supplementary Question

Ms HADDAD - The minister, when asked by Labor last week, didn't answer the question. It's clear that Tasmanians are paying the bill and Cabinet approved the funding. We're asking you today: can you confirm whether the matter involves the Integrity Commission and why you're refusing to tell Tasmanians whether their money is being used to fund yet another Supreme Court action involving the Integrity Commission?

Mr BARNETT - First of all, through you, Speaker, I just want to make it clear: we've got confidence in the Integrity Commission. You're aware of the full body of reforms that we're taking through this parliament, the first stage already -

Ms Haddad - This is about Cabinet approving legal fees, not about the performance of the Integrity Commission.

Mr BARNETT - second stage very well progressed, and the third stage ahead of us. We take it very seriously and we have confidence accordingly -

Ms HADDAD - Speaker, point of order, Standing Order 45, relevance: it's not about the performance of the Integrity Commission, it's about Cabinet approving legal fees to be spent on matters potentially involving the Integrity Commission.

The SPEAKER - Thank you, Attorney-General. I do ask you to return to the question.

Mr BARNETT - Well, I think members in this place are fully aware of the views of the Integrity Commission with respect to confidentiality around Integrity Commission matters.

You would be aware of what was said by the Chief Commissioner of the Integrity Commission in recent months on the public record. You're aware of discussion around this matter and it's very important.

The SPEAKER - The honourable member's time has expired.

Respirable Crystalline Silica Dust Monitoring at Wynyard

Mr GARLAND question to PREMIER, Mr ROCKLIFF

[11.10 a.m.]

Premier, more than six months ago, I raised serious concerns about potential respirable crystalline silica (RCS) health risks to Wynyard residents from the West Wynyard silica processing facility. Since then, despite repeated questions and briefings, the EPA has declined to undertake the RCS dust monitoring recommended in an independent report provided to it in June. On Monday night, because of continuing community concern, Waratah-Wynyard Council passed two motions to undertake independent testing. Premier, will you now intervene and direct your ministers to undertake proper RCS dust monitoring across residential areas of Wynyard? After six months of government inaction, can you, yes or no, assure Wynyard residents that they are safe from respirable crystalline silica dust?

ANSWER

I thank the honourable member for his question and his advocacy for his constituents locally, to where the honourable member has his office. This is a very serious matter and I do thank you for the question. I do also assure you that our independent regulators take this issue very seriously as well and so too are the relevant ministers, including myself as Premier. In relation to complaints regarding potential workplace exposure to respirable crystalline silica from Tasmanian Advanced Minerals, I can confirm that WorkSafe Tasmania has previously investigated the site and assessed the company as compliant with Tasmania's work health and safety laws. WorkSafe Tasmania and the EPA have assessed operations at Tasmanian Advanced Minerals and neighbouring industrial sites in response to a recent complaint. WorkSafe Tasmania has advised that findings indicate there is no exposure to the silica above the prescribed occupational exposure standard. WorkSafe Tasmania has advised that proactive audits have been undertaken at the Tasmanian Advanced Mineral site over a number of years as part of its ongoing compliance program. In addition, site visits have been conducted in response to concerns raised directly by employees.

Ongoing compliance visits from WorkSafe Tasmania and EPA regulators will continue, to ensure that risk control measures remain substantive and fit for purpose in minimising the risk so far as it is reasonably practicable. I can confirm I'm advised appropriate risk controls, personal protective equipment and exposure monitoring arrangements are in place at the site in accordance with work health and safety requirements. All reports are assessed and investigated as appropriate in line with established compliance and enforcement processes. Our independent regulators have a robust framework in place to protect workers and the companies. That's the advice I have. Thank you.

Supplementary Question

Mr GARLAND - Premier, if you haven't tested for respirable crystalline silica, you cannot ascertain that there isn't a risk. There is no safe level, so will you direct the EPA to put the testing out there for respirable crystalline silica? Until you do that, we have no idea what's going on.

Mr ROCKLIFF - I've mentioned the independent regulatory authorities, being WorkSafe Tasmania and the EPA, and I take your question in the seriousness that it has been asked, and indeed the events as well. In relation to Tasmanian Advanced Minerals at Wynyard, in response to a complaint, WorkSafe Tasmania required Tasmanian Advanced Minerals and other neighbouring businesses to undertake dust monitoring at their respective property boundaries. The testing indicates that RCS levels at the boundaries are well below harmful thresholds and do not present risk to nearby businesses or bordering communities.

Taxpayer-Funded Legal Assistance for Integrity Commission Matters

Ms HADDAD question to ATTORNEY-GENERAL, Mr BARNETT

[11.15 a.m.]

If the case does involve the Integrity Commission, it would mean that Cabinet has now approved taxpayer-funded legal assistance for at least three secret legal matters involving the Integrity Commission and the Supreme Court. We know that Supreme Court action can prevent Integrity Commission reports from being released. Is there a deliberate strategy within your government to use public money to take Integrity Commission matters to the Supreme Court to prevent its investigations from being made public?

ANSWER

I thank the honourable member for her question. If she was listening to my earlier answer, it would've been very clear what the laws are with respect to revealing these matters on the public record when it comes to the Integrity Commission. When it comes to these matters, the Chief Commissioner of the Integrity Commission has likewise expressed views on the public record, in the public domain, in the last two months, which the shadow attorney-general would be well aware of, as to why certain matters cannot be revealed publicly for the purposes of procedural fairness in terms of natural justice and in terms of what's written in the law, our *Integrity Commission Act 2009*. I have no intention, as an attorney-general, to breach the law and reveal information for which it is totally inappropriate and unlawful to reveal.

Supplementary Question

Ms HADDAD - No-one's asking the Attorney-General to reveal information about the individual cases but there is a pattern emerging here: secret proceedings, taxpayer-funded lawyers and Integrity Commission matters being tied up in the Supreme Court due to government money being used to take those actions. Attorney-General, can you categorically rule out that Cabinet is using taxpayer-funded legal action as a strategy to prevent Integrity Commission findings from being made public?

Mr BARNETT - To make it very clear: I do not accept the basis of your question in any way, shape or form.

Members interjecting.

The SPEAKER - Order.

Mr BARNETT - The allegations are unfair, unfounded and are not accepted in any way, shape or form. I draw your attention to an answer from the honourable Nick Duigan to a question from the honourable Sarah Lovell in the Legislative Council, I'm advised, dated 4 August, where the honourable minister has responded in similar terms to his response last week.

Time expired.

CONSTITUENCY QUESTIONS

Partition Act 1869 and Productive Agricultural Land

Ms BUTLER question to ATTORNEY-GENERAL, Mr BARNETT

[11.18 a.m.]

My question is from Fiona Hume of the upper Derwent. Tasmania's *Partition Act 1869* is legislation that dates back more than 150 years. The concern is that a minority owner of a property may be able to pursue the sale of an entire holding even where that property is a longstanding productive family farm and the majority owners wish to continue operating it. While this issue also has arisen in relation to Arundel Farm in the Derwent Valley, the broader public policy question is whether Tasmania's laws strike the right balance between resolving co-ownership disputes and protecting productive agricultural land, family farming businesses and regional economic activity. Will the Attorney-General undertake a review of the *Partition Act 1869* and advise whether reforms are needed to provide courts with greater discretion when determining applications involving productive agricultural land?

Screen Tasmania - Funding

Mr GEORGE question to MINISTER for ARTS, Mr Jaensch

My question comes from Mike Gissing of Cygnet. Minister, Screen Tasmania has lost three staff and now operates with just 1.5 full-time equivalent positions, and the screen industry is deeply concerned about ongoing viability. You said the \$10 million funding boost over four years shows the government's commitment to the arts, but funding is meaningless without someone to deploy it. Given Screen Tasmania is being folded into a combined agency with Brand Tasmania and the Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery (TMAG), can you guarantee in writing that it will retain a dedicated, senior, industry-facing leader and not just grant administrators?

Bushfire Resilience Funding for Far South

Dr WOODRUFF question to MINISTER for POLICE, FIRE and EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT, Mr ELLIS

On Saturday night I went to the River Run's Kraken event in Strathblane, and a question on many people's lips to me was: where is the money promised for the far south's 2018-2019 bushfire recovery? Those fires had a devastating impact on Geeveston and the far south. The Huon Valley remains highly exposed to bushfire risk, increasing with climate change and this summer's coming El Niño. The case for building community resilience is even stronger than in 2019. Recently, the Huon Valley Council adopted Councillor Paul Gibson's motion to seek the state government's redirection of approximately \$23 million of promised community recovery funding made in the 2018-2019 bushfire recovery final plan. They agree it should go to a community-led resilience program to be delivered in partnership with The Resilience Canopy and working with the community and council. Minister, will you commit to redirecting those millions of dollars urgently, so that Geeveston and far south communities can be supported to develop locally led solutions in the unique social and environmental challenges they face?

Residential Parks Legislation Information for Residents

Ms FINLAY question to MINISTER for BUSINESS, INDUSTRY and RESOURCES, Mr ELLIS

My question comes from Michelle and Kathleen, both residents at the Beauty Point Tourist Park. Residents across Tasmania are eagerly awaiting clear information about what the new Residential Parks legislation will mean to them, including when they'll be able to sell their homes and what rights will apply. When will your government provide a plain-English fact sheet setting out exactly when the new laws will commence, how residents can sell their homes and what protections will apply in the meantime?

Deployment of New Police Graduates

Mr VERMEY question to MINISTER for POLICE, FIRE and EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT, Mr ELLIS

Kate from West Hobart was pleased to see that 19 new constables graduated from the police academy in July this year. She asks where these new constables will be assigned and what duties they will be performing. She also asks how many more constables are expected to be graduated by the end of the year.

Circular Head Paramedic Services

Mr GARLAND question to PREMIER, Mr ROCKLIFF

My question is from a constituent in my area. At both the 2024 and 2025 elections, your government promised three additional paramedics for Smithton and a paramedic rostered 24 hours a day. Circular Head Council first raised this issue with me in 2024. The community

remains concerned that when Smithton's ambulance is already responding to an emergency, another ambulance may have to come from Wynyard or Burnie. This morning on ABC radio, Mayor Gerard Blizzard again raised the community's frustration that this promise remains unfulfilled. Mr Blizzard is in Hobart this week for the Local Government Association conference. Premier, will you or your Health minister meet with him and provide a firm timeline for delivery? When will the government's promise of additional paramedics for Smithton be delivered in full?

Ticket to Wellbeing Application Process

Mr FAIRS question to MINISTER for SPORT, Mr DUIGAN

Mark from Legana contacted me recently to express his disappointment at missing out on the Ticket to Wellbeing program when it was released earlier this year. Even though they applied quickly, by the time they did their application, the program had closed. His question is: how is the government making it easier for people to access this important program?

East Coast Rock Lobster Fleet Support

Ms FINLAY question to MINISTER for PRIMARY INDUSTRIES and WATER, Mr PEARCE

My question is from Jeff at St Helens. He wants to know how your work is going keeping east coast-ported rock lobster vessels, for small businesses in particular, fishing out of their local ports. He says that if you don't get the work done soon, some of these operators are going to get out of the game because it's not financially viable for them to keep going with the current arrangements.

MESSAGE FROM THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL

Senate Vacancy - Joint Sitting and Rules

The SPEAKER - I am in receipt of a message from the Legislative Council, which I shall ask the Clerk of the House to read.

Honourable Speaker,

The Legislative Council having agreed to the following Resolution, now transmits the same to the House of Assembly, and requests its concurrence therein:-

That on Thursday, 20 August 2026 at 10.00 o'clock in the forenoon the Legislative Council meet the House of Assembly in the House of Assembly Chamber for the purpose of sitting and voting together to choose a person to hold a place in the Senate of the Parliament of the Commonwealth of Australia rendered vacant by the resignation of Senator Peter Whish-Wilson;

and further, the Legislative Council proposes the following Rules for the Joint Sitting:

1. PARLIAMENTARY USAGE TO BE FOLLOWED IN DEBATE –

That on any Debate arising, the same shall be conducted according to the Standing Rules and Orders of the House of Assembly. On all points of order, and on all questions arising during the proceedings for choosing a person to fill the vacant place in the Senate, the ruling of the Presiding Officer shall be absolute and final.

2. RULES OF PROCEDURE -

- (1) The Presiding Officer shall call for nominations of persons to fill the seat rendered vacant by the resignation of Senator Peter Whish-Wilson. Each nomination shall be in writing, signed by the proposer, who shall certify on the form of nomination that the person so nominated is willing to hold the seat if chosen and is not disqualified from so doing. The proposer shall also certify that the nominee is a member of the Australian Greens. Nominations shall be handed to the Clerk, who upon being satisfied that they are in order, shall proceed with the preparation of the ballot paper. In the event that one or more nominees are certified to be members of the appropriate Party, those nominees only shall be taken to have been validly proposed to fill the vacancy, and no names other than theirs shall be included on the ballot paper as candidates for the vacant seat.
- (2) If only one person be nominated for the vacant seat, the Presiding Officer shall propose the Question “That (name of proposed person) be chosen to hold the place in the Senate rendered vacant by the resignation of Senator Peter Whish-Wilson and, should such Question be passed in the affirmative, shall so declare.
- (3) If more than one person be nominated for the vacant seat, a ballot shall be taken in the manner hereinafter provided to determine which of such persons shall be chosen to hold the vacant place. Each of such persons so duly nominated is hereinafter referred to as ‘a candidate’.
- (4) The Presiding Officer shall announce the names of the candidates who have been nominated, and shall then direct that a ballot be proceeded with, after which no other person shall be nominated; and the Clerk shall turn a two-minute sand-glass, to be kept on the table for that purpose, and the division bells of the House of Assembly shall be rung, and the doors shall not be closed till after the lapse of two minutes, as indicated by the said sand-glass. The doors shall be locked as soon after the lapse of two minutes as the Presiding Officer shall think proper to direct, and, unless otherwise ordered, shall remain locked until it shall have been declared in the manner provided in Rule 2 that a candidate has been chosen to hold the vacant place: provided that the Clerk and two Scrutineers may retire from the Chamber in order to prepare the ballot papers, and subsequently, to count the votes.

- (5) The Presiding Officer shall appoint a Member of each House to be a Scrutineer to assist the Clerk of the Joint Sitting (herein referred to as the 'Clerk') in ascertaining the number of votes cast for each candidate.
- (6) As soon as practicable after the Presiding Officer has announced that the ballot will be proceeded with each Member present shall be provided with a ballot paper initialled by the Clerk.
- (7) Each Member voting shall forthwith mark on the ballot-paper the order of his or her preference for all candidates, and any ballot paper not so marked shall be rejected as informal.
- (8) The Member shall then fold and place the ballot paper so marked in the ballot box.
- (9) If there are only two candidates, the Clerk shall report to the Presiding Officer the number of valid votes cast for each candidate, and the Presiding Officer shall declare in the manner provided in Rule 2 that the candidate who has the larger number of votes has been chosen to hold the vacant place.
- (10) If there are more than two candidates, the method of counting the votes prescribed by Schedule 5 of the Electoral Act 2004, for cases in which only one Member is to be elected shall, so far as practicable, and not inconsistent with these rules, be observed.
- (11) As soon as it is ascertained that any candidate has obtained an absolute majority of the valid votes recorded by the Members voting, the Clerk shall so report to the Presiding Officer, and the Presiding Officer shall declare in the manner provided in Rule 2 that such candidate has been chosen to hold the vacant place.
- (12) If at any stage in the count, two or more of the candidates have an equal number of votes, and one of them has to be excluded, the Clerk shall forthwith report to the Presiding Officer the results of the count at that stage. The Members shall thereupon proceed to a special ballot to ascertain which of such candidates shall be excluded, but so that if there are more than two of such persons with an equality of votes only one shall be excluded.
- (13) In all cases not provided for in these Rules resort shall be had to the procedure laid down in the Electoral Act 2004, so far as the same may in the opinion of the Presiding Officer be applicable and not inconsistent with these Rules.

Legislative Council, 18 August 2026.
C.M. FARRELL, President.

Mr ABETZ (Franklin - Leader of the House) - Speaker, I move -

That the last-mentioned message be taken into consideration at a later hour.

Motion agreed to.

SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDERS

Standing Order 343 - Joint Sitting

Mr ABETZ (Franklin - Leader of the House) - Honourable Speaker, I move -

That so much of Standing Order 343 be suspended as would prevent the joint sitting to choose a new senator from taking place within seven days of receipt of the Governor's message.

Motion agreed to.

MOTION

Senate Vacancy - Joint Sitting

Mr ABETZ (Franklin - Leader of the House) - Speaker, I call on the consideration of the message of the Legislative Council for a joint sitting to choose a new senator. I move -

That the resolution of the Legislative Council be agreed to.

Motion agreed to.

SITTING TIMES

Mr ABETZ (Franklin - Leader of the House) - Honourable Speaker, I move -

That the House, at its rising on Wednesday 19 August 2026, adjourn until 10.30 o'clock a.m. on Thursday 20 August 2026.

Motion agreed to.

SENTENCING AMENDMENT GOOD CHARACTER BILL 2026 (No. 28)

First Reading

Bill Presented by Mr Barnett and read the first time.

UNCORRECTED PROOF

SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDERS

Order of the Day No. 17

[11.28 a.m.]

Mr ABETZ (Franklin - Leader of the House) - Honourable Speaker. I move -

That so much of Standing Orders be suspended as would prevent the following item of private members business from being dealt with during government business time, namely Order of the Day No. 17, Police Offences Amendment (Increased Penalties for Damage to Tasmanian War Memorials) Bill 2026, Bill No. 5. Consideration of amendments of the Legislative Council.

Motion agreed to.

MATTER OF PUBLIC IMPORTANCE

Budget Cuts

[11.29 a.m.]

Ms DOW (Braddon) - Honourable Speaker, I move -

That the House take note of the following matter: budget cuts.

I rise this morning to speak about this very important matter of public importance. Today is almost 12 months on from the formation of this minority Liberal government, which followed an early election the Premier called. After that election, this premier and government, in forming a minority government, promised to do things differently. However, the anniversary this week offers very little hope of change to the Tasmanian people. One year ago, the Premier promised stability - and lots of things, actually, but I would run out of time if I were to go through all of those things - but instead, under the stewardship of the Premier, and Treasurer Eric Abetz, this parliament has been chaotic, with a number of ministerial resignations, and now Treasurer Eric Abetz has demanded \$1.5 billion in spending cuts across the forward Estimates. He might call them operational efficiencies, but these cuts will bring great instability to the essential services that Tasmanians rely on each and every day, and will hit our economy at a time when Tasmania needs our economy to grow.

We on this side of the House are told by the government that this is a necessary exercise in fiscal discipline to curb net debt but a budget is not just a ledger of numbers to be balanced at any cost. It's a declaration of priorities from a government, and 12 months on from the formation of this minority Liberal government, the priorities of the Liberals have never looked more warped. The economic reality of the past 12 months speaks for itself. Before the election, the Premier famously warned that a minority parliament would completely destabilise our economy. Ironically, it's the only promise that he's managed to deliver on. Since his latest minority government took shape, propped up by the crossbench, our economy has spiralled into a full-blown jobs crisis. Latest data reveals a staggering 7000 jobs have been lost across the Tasmanian economy in this time. That's 7000 fewer incomes circulating in our local shops, cafes and small businesses - yet the government's response to a stalling economy and

decreasing consumer demand is to double down on its budget cuts. You cannot drain resources from a small economy and expect the foundational structures not to crack under the pressure.

What makes these deep cuts so offensive is that the Treasurer stands in this place blaming a tight fiscal environment while actively ignoring his own government's legacy of reckless waste. They tell us there is no money to keep workers on the state payroll, yet this is the exact same government responsible for the biggest infrastructure disaster in this state's history. The ferry fiasco has blown out by a jaw-dropping \$717 million and counting. We currently have brand new state-of-the-art ships sitting completely idle and costing taxpayers millions just in parking fees because the minister literally forgot to build a berth in Devonport. Then there is the waste of early elections and the cost of putting the Liberal Party before Tasmania every time. Treasurer Eric Abetz can find half a billion dollars to bail out his government's incompetence but when it comes to frontline services, the cupboard is suddenly bare. We heard only this morning in Question Time that that you are cutting frontline services.

Nowhere is the cost of this incompetence and these cuts more devastating than across our healthcare system. Despite the desperate political spin that we heard again today in this place trying to deny the facts, the Budget contains more than \$700 million in health cuts, tucked away under the banner of efficiencies. To demand \$700 million in savings from a system already bleeding resources will put public safety at risk. Right now, our hospital system is entirely gridlocked. The AMA (Australian Medical Association) and the ANMF (Australian Nursing & Midwifery Foundation) have explicitly warned that our emergency departments are completely overwhelmed, staff are exhausted, and patients are being harmed.

I've witnessed that pressure just this weekend in the emergency department at the North West Regional Hospital where I spent some time. There's nothing left to cut on the frontline. The staff do an amazing job, and I want to put my thanks to them on the record. Tasmanians are asked to accept a broken health system, cuts to essential services and job losses in the public service and our wider economy, while millions have been wasted in bad governance by the Liberals. The people of Tasmania are resilient but economic and budget repair cannot be built on the backs of exhausted nurses, teachers, struggling families and local workers. Austerity won't fix this state's problems and neither will blaming everybody else for the problems that this government has created. Treasurer Eric Abetz's deep cuts in this budget will have enduring economic and social consequences for all Tasmanians. It's a little bit too late for an economic diversification plan. Thank you.

[11.34 am]

Mr ABETZ (Franklin - Treasurer) - Speaker, it's somewhat strange that the Labor opposition now gets up to celebrate the anniversary of the re-election of the Rockliff government but I can understand why they would seek to celebrate it. It is because they are so unprepared to form government. We on this side don't celebrate. We understand the full responsibility that the people of Tasmania have given us to ensure that we deliver the best possible economy for our state, to ensure that we can be the most caring community we possibly can be.

Deputy Speaker, I recall that at that last election, Labor went to the people with a whole list of complaints and got an historic low vote, the lowest vote ever. The Liberal Party got a three per cent uplift in its support, despite the relentless negativity of those opposite. Having sent us to an early election on the pretext of budget repair, we now have Labor railing against any right-sizing of the expenditure. Let's be clear: the party that sent us to a costly, unnecessary

early election on the basis of budget repair didn't oppose our Budget, didn't provide an alternate budget, and had their shadow treasurer away for about half of the budget debate. So certain were they of their economic credentials internally that they sought a treasurer from outside their ranks. With that pedigree, Labor has the audacity to come into this Chamber to harangue, hector and harass the government for its Budget - a budget which, I remind the House, is still borrowing to make ends meet.

As we wean ourselves off deficit spending, the economic geniuses in Labor would have us engage in budget repair, in spending more and not right-sizing the budget, and then they assert that all these inherently contradictory positions are somehow achievable: and they say this with a straight face. Really, if ever Labor has voluntarily and fully displayed their incapacity for government, it is today in this matter. If we want a caring community, as indeed those on this side do, we need a strong economy. We won't be getting a stronger economy by following Labor's recipe of borrowing even more. Consistency is a prerequisite for any alternate government. Have a look: be it on gaming machines, be it on stadium, be it the merger of TT-Line and TasPorts - remember that one in the budget reply? Sunk without a trace: or the idea of selling ferries and then leasing them back, somehow making the debt disappear, not understanding that the debt would simply be transferred from TT-Line onto the government budget. The debt would still remain.

We have a number of positions where Labor have done somersaults and really don't know where they stand or why they stand where they do. As a government, as a Cabinet, and as a party room, we have committed ourselves to ensuring that the extra expenditure that occurred during COVID and thereafter, something that occurred in every state around Australia and indeed in Canberra, the Commonwealth, now has to be brought back into line. What's federal Labor doing? Right-sizing the federal public service. What's Labor in Victoria doing? Right-sizing their public service, and yet the state opposition here want to condemn us but remain strangely silent in relation to their federal colleagues and their state colleagues elsewhere. They know what needs to be done. They simply don't have the acuity, the capacity and the backbone to do that which the Labor colleagues in Canberra, Victoria, New South Wales and elsewhere know needs to be done.

[11.40 a.m.]

Mr BAYLEY (Clark) - I rise to add my contribution to this MPI on budget cuts, and we have been here before through the budget process. I make the point again that any budget is a demonstration of a government's priorities, its choices, its values, its belief in who's important, its belief in who's not. We were highly critical through the budget process that this Budget got things significantly wrong. It got its priorities significantly wrong. It's abandoned people and it's backed in big, ugly developments such as a stadium at Macquarie Point. In the Estimates process, we uncovered the scale and the specificity of some of the cuts, but helpfully, budget paper 4 had them in black and white on page 103. Health, Education, Children and Young People: \$228 million; Health: \$700 million; Justice: \$67 million; Natural Resources and Environment: \$59 million; Police, Fire and Emergency Management: \$72.3 million; State Growth: \$264 million. All up \$1.4 billion across the forward Estimates. It's a massive amount of cuts that will have real impacts on people here in this state.

It will have real impacts in places like child protection. Child safety services are expected to find millions, and we know that's going to impact on children and on the people who are trying to care for children. On Health, we've seen the situation of downgrading positions from senior positions to junior positions, and we cannot deny that \$700 million of efficiencies in the

Health Department are not cuts. We're asking serious questions in the context of bird flu around biosecurity and the Department of Natural Resources and Environment. You know, \$59 million for NRE. At this time, with this emergency facing us, we need to make sure that those cuts don't find their way to critical services like biosecurity. We do acknowledge the good work that's being done by Parks officers and others to get across this but this is a situation where we cannot do too much when it comes to bird flu.

In education, in Estimates we identified and unpacked the fact that school-based positions are indeed going to be cut. It's simply not good enough. When it comes to things like the arts, last week we asked some questions explicitly ahead of the story on Sunday about the 1.5 positions that remain in Screen Tasmania. I gave an adjournment on arts, and Graeme Murphy, a Tasmanian internationally famous for dancing, lamenting the cuts to the arts sector, despite the fact that the government itself commissioned a report that measured the economic contribution of arts and culture to the Tasmanian economy. These are priorities, these are choices and it just simply doesn't have to be that way. We Greens published an alternative budget in response to the Budget and identified where genuine savings could be made. We identified where revenue raising could be made as well because the advice from the experts, including Treasury itself in Tasmania's Fiscal Sustainability Report 2026 from February, is that we actually have to pull all levers. I quote from this, it's a key finding:

Budget repair can be achieved through actions such as increasing revenue and reducing capital and operating expenditure, as well as efficiencies.

Yet the government is choosing to just pull one. They're just trying to deliver a budget outcome through a single action of cuts - cuts to the public service, cuts to jobs, cuts to the services that we Tasmanians need and deserve. I'll say again, Treasury are explicit here:

No single action will be sufficient on its own, and all measures are needed to return the State to a sustainable pathway.

We need to be cutting infrastructure spending. We need to be making sure that we're raising revenue from those industries that don't pay their fair share, things like the mining sector, things like the stadium - sorry, the salmon industry.

I do want to finish on the stadium. The Labor Party may well point to the *Spirits* and the fiasco there, and indeed, that cost us dearly, but we have to acknowledge that we're walking into a similar mess when it comes to the stadium: \$1.13 billion, and that doesn't include the extras. It doesn't include the inevitable cost increase that we're going to have to pay that the government and Labor are keeping secret and, of course, it doesn't include \$40 million-plus that we have to borrow every single year to pay for the borrowings to build the stadium. Every time we hear the Labor Party lament about cuts, jobs, and impacts on services, we have to remind ourselves that support for the stadium enabled those cuts.

[11.44 a.m.]

Mrs GREENE (Bass) - We keep hearing about cuts from this government and we're told that frontline services are protected and only non-essential roles are being cut from the state service. I want to tell the House today what that actually looks like on the ground in my electorate of Bass.

At Exeter Primary School, a grade 4 teacher is currently taking leave for terms 3 and 4, and that position has not been backfilled. Instead, those students are being split across other classes, and that means a lot of disruption for those young learners. It means bigger class sizes and it means more pressure on our teachers and support staff. I ask this House: if those teachers are not essential workers, then who is? This is how cuts happen by stealth. I saw it time and time again as a public sector union organiser for a decade, and I can tell you that these cuts do have consequences. Exeter Primary School is not alone in this. It's happening everywhere. A recent survey of principals by the Australian Education Union found that six in 10 schools were starting term 3 without the teachers that they needed. On average, those schools were short almost two full-time teachers. We know that principals and assistant principals are being dragged away from leading their schools and back into classrooms, simply to keep their classes covered.

Teachers warned about this last year when they were taking industrial action. They spoke about their crushing workloads, they spoke about retention problems, and they talked about experienced teachers walking away. They said that they were exhausted. The warnings were clear, but those opposite failed to act. Education is just one example. I've already spoken in this House this morning about cuts in Health - cuts that were denied by the Health minister, but we know that at the Mersey, for example, pharmacy services have been cut altogether on Saturdays. The Launceston General Hospital (LGH) has continual maintenance issues. I was hearing reports that there was a rat in the emergency department on the weekend that actually bit a patient. Just last week, there was water streaming out of the ceiling on the maternity ward. We know that allied health vacancies are currently being downgraded. Yet again and again, the government are saying that frontline services are protected. Well, that is not what I'm seeing on the ground in my electorate of Bass.

How far behind the frontline does someone actually have to stand before the government decides that their job doesn't matter? Public services work in teams, and if you cut enough people behind the frontline, then eventually the frontline suffers too. We now have workers being invited to put in expressions of interest (EOI) for redundancies. We know that staff in agencies have been putting their hand up, but workers and unions are warning that these cuts are not strategic. In some cases, people who are already approaching retirement have put in EOIs, and that's been accepted. We know that that might help the government reach their numbers on a spreadsheet in terms of FTE reduction, but it doesn't really help us answer the really basic questions: who's going to be doing this work? Where's the workforce planning? Where are the service impact assessments? Where is the transparency around which functions will disappear, which workloads will be redistributed and which remaining workers will simply be expected to pick up the slack?

If the government were proud of these cuts, it wouldn't be working so hard to hide them. You do not run a public service by announcing a jobs target first and then working out the consequences later. Many of these workers have spent years, sometimes decades, building knowledge about how their agency works, how to solve problems and how to keep services moving. When they leave, that knowledge leaves with them, and frankly, I think it shows very little respect for the work that these public sector workers actually do.

The last thing I'd like to touch on today is Service Tasmania. I was speaking recently with workers at Service Tasmania who have long raised concerns about queues and changing opening hours, particularly in our regional Service Tasmania locations. The queues in the Launceston shop are particularly problematic and have been for a very long time. At this rate,

the staff are joking behind the scenes that maybe we should just call it 'Self-Service Tasmania': walk in, go to an empty desk, take a number, call yourself up when your number's called, process your own licence renewal. Perhaps there'll be a QR code where a staff member used to sit. It wouldn't be so funny if services weren't actually being impacted, if people actually weren't feeling the consequences of these cuts, but they are. This is what public sector cuts by slow death looks like. There isn't always a big announcement; it happens bit by bit. A TasTAFE teacher is cut and then a course disappears, a vacancy disappears and everyone's workload increases.

Time expired.

[11.49 a.m.]

Mrs ARCHER (Bass - Minister for Health, Mental Health and Wellbeing) - I am pleased to speak about this important topic and particularly how it relates to our health system, given that those opposite didn't direct most of their questions to me during question time. I'd like to start by again rejecting Labor's misleading characterisations that we see consistently. We are not cutting health spending. We are in fact increasing health spending with more than \$15 billion across the forward Estimates, a clear increase on last year's Budget. There are no cuts to health spending, and while you might not like it, it is spelled out in black and white in the budget papers. This record investment is proof that the government is investing in the services and infrastructure needed to meet growing demand and continue delivering the essential services Tasmanians expect and deserve. This includes \$1.2 billion for emergency departments, supporting timely quality emergency care for Tasmanians and strengthening the frontline of the hospital system, including in mental health.

In relation to the assertions today relating to allied health staff, let me reiterate that we are not cutting our health staff. What we are doing is preparing for the future and delivering a workforce development strategy to ensure that we are future-proofing our mental health system. This will ensure that positions are appropriately classified and that teams have the right mix of skills and experience. We need pathways for graduates to enter our workforce on a case-by-case basis as any vacancies arise. This is sensible, appropriate and in the best interests of Tasmanians. It has nothing to do with reducing spend on health, as I've outlined, but again, Labor is all over the place.

As the Treasurer pointed out, they sent us to an election just over 12 months ago on the pretext of budget repair, and are yet now complaining that we want our health system to be more efficient, to stop spending money on locums and to focus on digital transformation to be more efficient. They have no idea what they're doing and are clearly too internally divided to change. Of course, we expect the Health department to focus on delivery of frontline services and ensure that every single dollar of taxpayer money is used wisely. That's what Tasmanians would expect and we're already doing this. I look forward to speaking more about this shortly, in particular how we're reducing the reliance on locum and agency costs.

I want to highlight again that we are still spending too much state money propping up areas of Commonwealth responsibility such as primary care. Where is Tasmanian Labor on this? Nowhere. Federal Labor tried their best to shortchange us on the National Health Reform Agreement and avoid paying their fair share of health funding, but we fought against it and secured significant investment. Added to that, we have the issue of stranded patients, which continues to cost us around \$108 million and 38,000 bed days each year, equivalent to acute care for around 8700 patients. That, Ms Dow, Member for Braddon, is exactly the issue that

you would have experienced over the weekend. We've delayed discharge patients, creating access issues to the North West Regional Hospital. Now the Commonwealth is also slugging older Tasmanians with higher private health insurance fees, which will only drive them into the public system and make the problem worse.

We have the cost of no 100 per cent bulk-billing in Tasmania, as the federal government promised, and they're clearly wiping their hands of any primary care services outside of urgent care clinics. This again leaves the state government to step in, where we've spent more than \$50 million since 2022 on primary care initiatives that should have been covered by the federal government. We've spent \$9 million in state funds to support the operation of the Hobart Clinic, including \$2 million this year, where we acted as quickly as possible, with appropriate safeguards, to ensure continued access to private mental health services. We have a dental agreement that has remained at the same amount with no indexation for years, and the federal government has also cut their comprehensive Palliative Care in Aged Care Program in Tasmania this year. If this were a Coalition government, state Labor would be shouting it from the rooftops, but what we get instead is silence, and that is shameful. It's time for those opposite to show some backbone, stand up for Tasmania, stop being apologists for Canberra, and start demanding more action from the federal Labor government.

[11.54 a.m.]

Ms BROWN (Franklin) - Thank you, honourable Deputy Speaker. I rise today to speak on the matter of public importance regarding budget cuts, and let's be frank, there are cuts right across this Budget. I'm yet to see a portfolio that hasn't been given the treatment of the red pen of the honourable Treasurer, Eric Abetz. Today, I want to speak about the arts sector and what these cuts mean for the arts sector and the screen industries. The Premier likes to stand in this place and boast about his commitment to the arts sector. He talks about the arts as an economic driver and he's absolutely right. The arts are an economic driver. They create jobs, attract visitors, support local businesses and put Tassie on the map, but I have news for the Premier: he can't just come in here and talk about the arts and sit back whilst the Treasurer then takes to it with the cuts, with the red pen. He has to do more than just stand and talk about how good it is; he has to stand up for it too. Thanks for joining us, Premier.

I look to what's happening at Screen Tasmania. Screen Tasmania is Tasmania's film, television and digital media funding and support agency. It is an organisation that helps build productions here in the state, supports local talent, and creates economic activity right across Tasmania and yet, following voluntary redundancies and the ending of contracts, Screen Tasmania now has been reduced to only 1.8 FTE across the whole state. That means two staff members are effectively being asked to carry the responsibility of the whole of Tasmania, one focused on the gaming sector and one focused on everything else.

This is not a serious level of resourcing for an industry that has demonstrated the ability to bring millions of dollars into Tasmania. When you cut the capacity of Screen Tasmania, you're not only just cutting government jobs, you are also cutting the capacity of our state to attract and support the industry that generates so much economic value, and I would have thought that a treasurer would know that. The sector itself has made it quite plain how they feel about these budget cuts. They have said that they are brutal and short-sighted, particularly because of the value that it has to Tasmania. I think that Tasmanians deserve better than short-sightedness. They deserve a government that's going to stand up and back them.

The bad news doesn't stop there. The current cuts may be absorbed through staff redundancies and winding back capacity, but the industry is also facing a significant reduction in funding in 2027-28, with \$300,000 being ripped from the Screen Tasmania's budget. The physical cliff is coming. They know it, the industry knows it, but the question is: what are they going to do about it, because this is where the Premier's rhetoric and reality meet. It's easy to stand in this Chamber and say you support the arts. It's easy to say that you support the economic contribution and the creative industry that it brings to Tasmania. It's easy to praise the Tasmanian filmmakers when their work is winning awards or being seen across the country, but supporting the arts means more than just making speeches about it. It means funding it. It means maintaining the institutions that support our creative industries. It means listening to the people who actually work in these industries.

Unlike the Premier, I as shadow minister for the arts, and Tasmanian Labor, will always stand with the arts community. We stand with them not only because of the economic value that it brings, but because it's who we are as Tasmanians. Our stories matter, our artists matter and our filmmakers matter. Speaker, I call on the honourable Roger Jaensch to make meeting with the filmmakers alliance a matter of urgency, to make sure that they are listened to, that they are heard and that they act in this space.

Time expired.

Matter noted.

POLICE OFFENCES AMENDMENT (INCREASED PENALTIES FOR DAMAGE TO TASMANIAN WAR MEMORIALS) BILL 2026 (No. 5)

In Committee - Consideration of Amendments of the Legislative Council

[12.00 p.m.]

Mr FERGUSON (Bass) - Thank you very much, Chair, and thank you to the House for the opportunity to deal with this amendment from the Legislative Council. Before I address the amendment returned to the House, I just want to acknowledge the particular significance of this day. Today is Vietnam Veteran's Day, and this year marks the 60th anniversary of the Battle of Long Tan, fought on 18 August 1966. As a result of that one battle, 18 Australians lost their lives, the costliest single Australian engagement of that war. More than 60,000 Australians served in Vietnam and over 500 died as a result of that war. More than 2000 Tasmanians served in Vietnam, with 17 losing their lives in our country's service, and today I know that we all want to honour those who did not return, those who did return but carried consequences of their service with them, and the families who shared that burden.

I felt it was especially fitting that it is on this day the House is being asked to take the final steps in legislation the very purpose of which is to strengthen the protection of the places where we remember and honour their service and sacrifice. I also want to begin, in my acknowledgement of the debate in the other place, with pointing out that that House was overwhelmingly supportive of the purpose and principles of this bill. Those members recognise that our war memorials are very special places and that deliberate interference with them warrants a serious response.

Importantly, that debate recognised the three-part approach, which really has been at the heart of this bill, what it's motivated by and what it seeks to achieve. These three particular things are deterrence, punishment and restorative justice: all three. Now, the Legislative Council has amended one aspect of that framework: reducing the proposed maximum term of imprisonment from what I proposed as a private member, and what this House supported, being seven years - it's now sent back an amendment reducing that to three years, so I regret that amendment. The seven-year maximum was deliberately proposed to provide the court with the capacity to respond to the most serious examples of this offending, and to send the strongest possible deterrent message. I want to acknowledge as well that while I have enjoyed and appreciated working with Ms Butler on behalf of the Labor Party, I am disappointed that that party, the opposition, has voted differently in the other House than in this House. That's the extent of my negative observations on this, because overwhelmingly I really feel that Ms Butler and the Labor opposition deserve a lot of credit for helping this bill to pass this House, and to pass the other place.

Nevertheless, the amended bill still represents a very substantial strengthening of our existing laws. The present maximum imprisonment term is 12 months, so if the House agrees today with the Council amendment, then the maximum will effectively triple from one year to three years. I also want to acknowledge that the opposition did not support other amendments that were proposed in the Legislative Council, which would, in my opinion, have really undermined the bill much more substantially, and so I repeat that acknowledgement. The minimum fine of 25 penalty units remains, and an attempt to remove that was defeated as well, thankfully. Finally, the important distinction between the minimum financial penalty and restorative community services has been preserved. Chair and colleagues, while I would have of course preferred the bill to be returned to us with the seven-year maximum intact, I don't want any of us to lose sight of what has been achieved, which is something really solid.

The bill before us still substantially strengthens the penalties, retains the minimum financial consequence, provides for restorative community service, and ensures that those responsible for damage are brought within the mandatory compensation framework. I believe that we can come out of this debate with a really strong message from the Tasmanian Parliament: damage war memorials and you will face the most comprehensive legal response in Australia. For those reasons, while noting my observations around the one amendment, I really do strongly support the bill proceeding with the amendment made by the Legislative Council today and move that the amendment be adopted.

[12.05 p.m.]

Ms BUTLER - I'm pleased to rise today to support the amendments from the other place. It is timely when we consider the importance of our war memorials, and also on today being the day that we consider, reflect, and pay our respects to our Vietnam veterans. Today, together with Australians across our nation, and also here in Tasmania, we gather to remember and honour those who served in the Vietnam War. It would have been probably a respectful gesture, maybe, for this to have been done in formal business time, potentially, where most members of parliament would have been able to provide some insights and speech on the importance of Vietnam Veterans' Day.

However, I would like to speak to that now, but maybe next year we could have more of a formal understanding, if parliament sits on Vietnam Veterans' Day. We could have potentially postponed parliament to sit a little bit later and maybe visited the Cenotaph today as well. That could have been something that we did as a parliament, and maybe had more of a formal way

to talk about Vietnam Veterans' Day today, especially considering that this year holds special significance as we mark the 60th anniversary of the Battle of Long Tan, fought on 18 August 1966, and we commemorate Vietnam Veterans' day, a day dedicated to recognising the service and sacrifice of the near 60,000 Australians who served during that conflict.

For Tasmania, this day is particularly important. Hundreds of Tasmanians answered the call to serve in Vietnam, leaving behind their families, friends and communities to represent our nation in a distant and difficult war. Many returned carrying physical and psychological wounds. Some never returned home. Today we reflect on their service, their courage, and the lasting impact of the war on veterans, their families and our communities. We also pay tribute to the families of Vietnam veterans. Their support, resilience and sacrifice are an important part of this story. They stood beside those who served through the challenges of deployment, through difficult homecomings, and through the long years that followed; and for that, we thank them.

The Vietnam War was the longest conflict of the 20th century involving Australia. More than 60,000 Australians served, including many young men conscripted under the National Service Scheme. The average Australian combat soldier was just 20 years old. The cost of the war was immense. More than 2 million people lost their lives, Australia lost 521 service personnel and civilians, and more than 3000 Australians were wounded. Behind every number is a story of courage, loss and sacrifice. When many Vietnam veterans returned home, they faced challenges that extended well beyond the battlefield. Too often, they were not welcomed home in the way that they deserved. Many struggled with the physical and emotional impacts of war, and many carried those burdens for decades. Yet their service never diminished, and neither did their commitment to their mates, their communities, and their country.

Today, on the 60th anniversary of Long Tan, it is fitting that we make a special mention of the 108 men of D Company, 6th Battalion, Royal Australian Regiment, who fought one of Australia's most famous military battles. On that day, against overwhelming odds and in torrential monsoonal rain, they stood their ground against a vastly larger enemy force, and 18 Australians lost their lives and 24 were wounded. Their courage, determination and mateship under fire have become part of our national story. As one veteran of Long Tan recalled:

Never underestimate the horror of combat operations at the best of times, let alone in the teeming rain in a rubber plantation when you are outnumbered 20 to one.

Those words remind us of the reality of war and the extraordinary bravery of those who served. Today we acknowledge the courage, mateship and enduring spirit displayed by all who served in Vietnam, and we honour those who returned, those who continue to live with the consequences of their service and those who made the ultimate sacrifice. We also recognise the important role of the RSL and veterans' organisations across Tasmania that have provided support, friendship and understanding for generations of veterans and their families. As we mark Vietnam Veterans Day and the 60th anniversary of Long Tan, let us recommit ourselves to remembering their service, honouring their sacrifice, supporting our veterans and their families, and ensuring that future generations understand what they gave for our country. We will always remember them. Lest we forget.

Members - Lest we forget.

DEPUTY CHAIR - I've given quite a lot of leeway today. We should be talking about the amendment but, given the anniversary, that leeway is for everybody who wants to speak.

Ms BADGER - Deputy Chair, thank you very much for that ruling. I'm going to keep my contribution brief. Mr Bayley has some other content to add in relation to the bill as it stands, with the amendment as well. Members will recall that when this bill was initially debated in this place, it was done in private members' time, which had a limit on it, restricting members' ability to be able to contribute to what is a significant application of the law in Tasmania, as Mr Ferguson pointed out. It would have been good at that time to be able to talk about it more broadly. I want to make sure we have time for Mr Bayley, the Greens' veterans spokesperson, to be able to contribute today. The amendment put forward by Ms Webb, the member for Nelson, changes the imprisonment for a term not exceeding seven years to three years. From reading the contributions made in the other place, I believe that is a step in the right direction, but it doesn't fully amend all of the issues with this bill.

Having a maximum of three years put on it does better align with the offences under the *Police Offences Act*, but we still have the excessive fines and everything else in relation to this bill that the Greens opposed both the first time it was debated in this place and in the Legislative Council. I echo the comments made by our colleague, Ms O'Connor, in the other place. She pointed out that we have existing offences for interfering with a war memorial and, as I have outlined, they already exceed other jurisdictions. To be clear: the Greens are not condoning vandalism of war memorials. We are opposing this bill because it is a significant misapplication of the law. We support the member for Nelson, Ms Webb's amendment, but the Greens still oppose this bill.

Mr PEARCE - Deputy Speaker, I thank the member for Bass, Mr Ferguson, for this well-thought-out, significant motion aimed at deterring desecration of our war memorials, our most sacred places in our communities: well done. In relation to the amendment, Mr Ferguson has conceded that it is something we will live with. I'm not going to delve into the punitive aspects of this bill but, rather, what our war memorials mean to our communities. I believe the community service provisions that we apply in part of the scheduling of penalties is going to be a very important tool. I'm not going to justify, elevate, support or augment the grubs that do this - and they are grubs - but that needs to be held up in front of a community. We need to understand exactly why that community stands in front of their war memorials. It's because it's part of them, part of their culture, part of their ethos. It's their flesh and blood, basically. As somebody who was involved in the commemorations for the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier, when an unknown body was brought back from the Western Front to lie at rest in the war memorial, the significance around that unknown soldier is unable to be articulated in any form of words. It's sacrosanct. As a former soldier, I want to get across to this place the importance the brotherhood of arms and the sisterhood of arms has for those who remain.

On this day, Long Tan Day, known as Vietnam Veterans Memorial Day, it's particularly important that we think about the family of our defence veterans. This includes those young people who are serving, those young people who have served and are now maybe a little older. I know how they feel you never forget. From the day I picked up a Bible in my right hand and swore an oath to defend the country, its people and interests, and its sovereign, your life changes. When you go to our recruit training battalions at Kapooka, Edinburgh, or Cerberus, if you're in the Navy, that's reinforced. All of a sudden, you as an individual and your rights as an individual seem to disappear. Instead, it is the right of the team and the mission of the team

that take precedence. That in itself is a very simple statement but, in reality, it's a very moving thing. It's something that never leaves you. The person on your right or left is actually the person you would give your life for. That importance, that significance, that soul-changing event is what really underlines and bolsters the importance of our war memorials right across the country.

Our communities recognise this also. We have to understand why our communities built these things in the first place, at the conclusion of the First and Second World Wars. There's a family on the north-west coast that lost six sons. Those six sons' names remain on a war memorial. Can we see now the significance and the connection to that rural community? It's all they have left of part of them. While this is an important motion, while it is important to recognise the legalities of all of this - and that has certainly been elevated - the point I want to make today is the real importance to a community.

My little girl is five years old. Her name is Elsie. Today at Somerset she laid a wreath for the soldiers from Vietnam, she told me on the phone this morning. She sent me a photo. The wreath is actually bigger than little Elsie. That kid understands more about today's significance than a lot of people who are committing these acts. To Elsie and all those young kids out there, to those communities, to our veterans, to those serving, to those kids who are at school right now, listening to this, I want you to know that a career in the defence force is a worthwhile career. Defending your country is an honourable thing to do. The skills, knowledge, attitude and soul-changing experience that you will go through in defence is not replicated anywhere else. The skills that you will learn in the defence force, protecting our country and its interests, are going to stay with you for the rest of your life. My point today is for those kids, our next generation, those who go ahead of us, remember these important lessons as you choose maybe to even take up a career in defence because Australia and those communities that I've talked so fondly of, honour, cherish and absolutely respect all those who stand in front of our country with a rifle and defend it with their lives. Thank you.

[12.20 p.m.]

Mr WILLIE - I rise to speak on the Police Offences Amendment (Increased Penalties for Damage to Tasmanian War Memorials) Bill 2026. I will start at the outset by commending the previous speaker, the member for Braddon. That's him at his best: explaining his experiences in serving our country. I really value those sorts of contributions from you. I just want to commend you for that. I don't do this very often either, but I'll also commend the member for Bass for moving a private member's bill through the parliament in a fairly constructive way.

I know he's lamenting an amendment from the Legislative Council, but having served in the Legislative Council for eight years, it is a House of review. This is how our parliament works, and our members there play a role in the House of review where they work with the parliament. They take their job very seriously, and this amendment relates to making sure that this act is consistent with other acts, making sure that the penalty is relevant to other acts. He may lament that, but he did also compliment my colleague, the member for Lyons, on being constructive, and I think that's the parliament at its best: when we do that, when we can find common ground. We can't always, but on matters like this, we should.

Mr FERGUSON - There's a lot of common ground.

Mr WILLIE - Yes, and to the member for Braddon: I have a daughter called Elsie, too, and I make sure that I take my children to commemorations and events in our community. Just recently, for Anzac Day this year, we were in Bicheno on a family holiday and we went to the Bicheno cenotaph and engaged with the community there. I met some people who'd lived in Bicheno for many, many years. They told me how important that is for the community there and those days. My little Elsie was standing there listening to the whole conversation.

Today, on Vietnam Veterans Day, we honour the Australians who served during one of the most challenging and divisive conflicts in our nation's history. We stand together not only to remember the Battle of Long Tan, fought on this day in 1966, but to acknowledge every man and woman who wore our nation's uniform throughout the Vietnam War. We remember the courage of those who served in the jungles, on the water, in the air, and in the medical support units that kept our forces going. We remember the Australians who never returned home, and the thousands more who came back carrying wounds, both visible and invisible. For many veterans, the return home was not met with the recognition or gratitude they deserved. Today, we acknowledge that pain. We recognise the years of silence, years of struggle, and the years of healing. We say, with clarity and conviction: your service matters, your sacrifice matters, your story matters.

Vietnam Veterans Day is not only about remembrance; it's about responsibility: the responsibility to ensure that every veteran receives the care, respect and support they earned. The responsibility to teach future generations about the cost of war and the value of peace - a very important message in today's world - and the responsibility to listen, to truly listen, to the experiences of those who served. To the families of veterans, your strength carried our servicemen and women through their darkest moments. You bore the weight of uncertainty, fear and long absences. Your contribution is woven into the fabric of this day. To the veterans here with us and those who could not be: thank you. Thank you for your service, your resilience and your enduring commitment to Australia. Your legacy is one of courage, mateship and quiet determination. As we reflect today, let us recommit ourselves to ensuring that no veteran of any conflict is ever left to walk the path alone. Let us honour the fallen by supporting the living, and let us carry forward the lessons of Vietnam with humility, compassion and respect. Lest we forget.

Members - Lest we forget.

[12.24 p.m.]

Mr BARNETT - I firstly want to acknowledge the service of the honourable Gavin Pearce, our Minister for Veterans' Affairs, of some 20 years in the service, and for his powerful and passionate contribution on this bill today, and thank him again for his service.

I'd like to thank and acknowledge my colleague and friend Michael Ferguson for bringing forward this legislation, having the insight, and responding to community concern and working through the parliament in a very collaborative way, including in the upper House as well. I want to acknowledge the contributions of Jen Butler, the Leader for the Opposition; and, of course, other members in this place. This is a very important matter, I know, for all members of the community, and we're representing them today. The Police Offences Amendment (Increased Penalties for Damage to Tasmanian War Memorials) Bill is very important. It is legislation that I'm very, very proud to support.

Certainly, as Attorney-General and minister for Justice, just to make the point, the rule of law is so important. The law has an educative role. This legislation sends a message that our community respects and honours not just the war memorials - they're not just stone or brass or timber - they represent our veterans and their families. They represent us and they tell a story for which I am very proud, and I know others in our community are as well. The penalties have been reduced from seven years back to three years, but it's increased from one year. It's still a tripling to three years, and that's why we can support this amendment today, in my view, and I back in Michael Ferguson 100 per cent with that view. This will strengthen the law, it will increase the penalties, it will send a message that we show respect and honour to our veterans, especially on this day.

I was there at St Helens soon after the cenotaph was damaged and pulled down, sadly, and it was a massive shock to the community in and around St Helens last year. I met with the mayor and I met with the veterans. We discussed the grief and sadness that swept across the community in the Break O'Day municipality. This has happened before, and I've been involved, as a former veterans' affairs minister, at Sheffield and other places where those cenotaphs and memorials have been defaced. It is such a heartbreaking situation for the community and particularly for the veterans in that community. We have an estimated 17,500 veterans in Tasmanian and, of course, today is a very special day. To our Vietnam veterans, we say thank you for your service, for your sacrifice. We appreciate you. To your families, thank you for serving us on this special day.

We acknowledge that the Battle of Long Tan, as has been mentioned during debate, was held on this day 60 years ago. It was Captain Major Harry Smith, who was born and raised in Hobart, Tasmania, who led D Company amidst the torrential rain in the rubber plantation where, sadly, 18 lost their lives. One of those 18 was a Tasmanian. That Tasmanian was Private Albert Frederick McCormack. I know a number of McCormacks and I've reached out to them today. They appreciate the contact. They are feeling it today like it was yesterday, and yet it was 60 years ago today. To the McCormack family - and there are many McCormacks, particularly across the north-west coast of Tasmania, but across this great state: condolences and sympathies yet again and best wishes, as today is a tough day for you and your family.

We want to recognise those who've served, those who have sacrificed. I also want to acknowledge the President of RSL Tasmania, Mike Gallagher, for his leadership and his support. He is in Hobart laying a cenotaph today as we speak, or about an hour or so ago. Likewise in Launceston, Terry Rowe, who's been an absolute outstanding leader for and on behalf of our Vietnam veterans: I've had so much to do with Terry Rowe and so much respect and honour for him, for his commitment to our Vietnam veterans, not just in Tasmania, but at a national level. It was great to be able to contact him earlier today and pass on my best wishes for this special day. Likewise, to Brian Harper, who's a great dear friend from up north, who again was president of the Vietnam veterans for many years and has done so much for our veterans in this state. I want to acknowledge them and all our 17,500 Tasmanian veterans and their families on this very special day.

Tasmania has a proud record. We know, of course, that we have 15 Victoria Cross recipients, one of the most recent being Teddy Sheean VC, but today is for all of our veterans to acknowledge them and to say thank you for your service. In terms of the cenotaphs, of course most of them were built soon after World War I, when they came back and families were just overwhelmed with grief. They needed to do something, and they built those cenotaphs and those war memorials at the time. Of course, 60,000 Aussies lost their lives, making the supreme

sacrifice. Some 15,000 Tasmanians enlisted and served in World War I. An estimated 3000 lost their lives. You can see the community all across Tasmania, not just in the capital city or the big cities, in all the towns and cities across Tasmania there are war memorials. This law will send a message that we respect and honour our veterans and their families and I'm so pleased and proud to back it in 100 per cent. Again, I thank Michael Ferguson for his commitment and his leadership and indeed members of parliament who supported this legislation. Thank you so much. Lest we forget.

Members - Lest we forget.

[12.32 p.m.]

Mr GEORGE - Thank you, honourable Chair. I rise with some reluctance. I recognise the honourable member for Bass, Mr Ferguson, and his deep, heartfelt reason for bringing this legislation to the parliament. I recognise the passionate address to the House by the honourable minister Pearce that comes from deep-seated experience. I also recognise that this should not be a debate for party politics, but should come from a place in which common good takes precedence over all else. This is legislation which I would like to support but find that I cannot. I wish to, since no sane person condones vandalism or desecration of war memorials. They are mindless, they're offensive and they're hurtful to veterans and to their families. They deserve serious consequences.

I've been with Australian forces in areas of conflict and recognise their service, but this legislation seeks to slip in an issue that is counter to good public policy and the administration of justice in this state. I am and always have been opposed to the imposition of mandatory minimum penalties. This legislation imposes a minimum penalty of 25 points, which may not be a huge sum but is significant. I know there was strong argument in the Legislative Council to seek to amend the bill on this very matter, along with reducing the maximum sentence from seven years to three. I find myself accepting this amendment but opposing the bill because of its imposition of this minimum penalty and the precedent that it sets.

A mandatory minimum fine is a significant departure from sound sentencing principles. It's not for this parliament to set minimum sentences or penalties as a matter of principle; it is a matter for judges and magistrates to impose penalties and sentences that fit the particular circumstances of the crime and of the offender. Courts consider intent, mental health, age, capacity to pay, prior offending, remorse and prospects of rehabilitation. What courts don't do, and nor should they, is impose one-size-fits-all penalties. Serious offending should attract serious punishment, but that punishment should be imposed by the courts, not by the parliament. This legislation sets a serious, unwarranted precedent for when we impose mandatory minimums, we are at the top of a very slippery slope.

Today we honour about 60,000 Australians who served in Vietnam, many who still bear the mental scars of that conflict. We acknowledge and mourn the 523 Australians who died in the conflict and the thousands who were wounded. It's therefore a melancholy duty to oppose this legislation on this day. However, this parliament should not impose inflexible and ultimately inconsistent conditions that undermine sound sentencing principles.

[12.35 p.m.]

Mr BAYLEY - I rise to speak to this bill. As spokesperson for the Greens on veterans' affairs, I want to make a brief contribution. I did not get the chance to speak on this bill when it came through our House because of the hour-long tight timeframe of the debate. I want to

make a few comments, acknowledging that my colleague, Ms Badger, has well articulated the Greens position and their concerns with the bill. The amendment, while it improves it, doesn't sufficiently change it to warrant our support. I echo the concerns I just heard from the member for Franklin and concur with that position.

I will take a moment briefly to acknowledge the significance of the day on which we debate this bill, Vietnam Veterans' Day. This is a conflict that's quite large in my life, given my father and mother's generation's experience. My grandfather went to war, but the Vietnam War resonates strongly in my head, not least because of friends and their parents who did serve. I intend to give an adjournment tonight on this issue to properly acknowledge the significance of the day, to acknowledge the significance that it was a war that involved conscription, which is highly controversial and no longer the case in Tasmania, and of course those who did serve faced what must have been an utterly damaging and confusing reception when they returned to Australia. On the anniversary of the Battle of Long Tan, I want to give a contribution, and I'll save that for the adjournment tonight.

I want to put on record, as I will tonight, that we Greens abhor war. We stand against it at every opportunity. We reject war as a solution to difference, and we prefer diplomacy and humanity as opposed to war. In saying that, where the situation is the case where our servicemen and women go to serve, we stand with them and we honour their sacrifice and their commitment. Not only the soldiers, but the support staff and their families need to be recognised. We stand with them. We continually turn up, we support and respect the RSL. The most recent event at the South Arm RSL I found particularly inspiring, where the South Arm branch was unveiling some plaques to commemorate nurses who served in numerous wars and had some blank slabs there ready to acknowledge Aboriginal soldiers who served as well. That was really heartening. We've turned up for the RSL in terms of legislation as well.

I want to unequivocally condemn vandalism of our war memorials. There is no place for it anywhere and it cannot be condoned. I concur with just about every speaker who has put their position on the record here. They are sacred sites. They are really important, not only to soldiers and servicemen and women themselves, but to their families and their communities. They are really, really important places, so we unequivocally condemn the vandalism of those sites. I do note that it happens rarely. I do note also that some of the - at least the St Helens case that has been cited in the House just today, I understand it was somewhat of an accident. I might be incorrect there, but it was somewhat of an accident. In saying that, we utterly condemn vandalism.

Ms Badger, as I said, has well prosecuted the Greens' concerns in relation to this bill and what we see as a significant misapplication of the law, and hence why we don't support this. When I was looking for an opportunity when the bill was debated to get onto my feet, I wanted to raise the issues of prevention, diversion and education and ask the government about investment in some of those measures. I know there are there are various programs that are in place that help students to properly understand the significance of service. From our perspective, there's always a preference to go for preventative and educative measures to address a problem as opposed to punitive ones. In saying that I want to reiterate again that there is no place for vandalism. They're sacred, longstanding and coveted memorials.

I also want to take the opportunity to remind the House that one of the greatest acts of vandalism of the state war memorial at the moment is currently state-sponsored and state-sanctioned. It's actually a state project, and as I listen to the debate here, I don't want to

dwelling on this, but I cannot help but hear the hypocrisy in some positions when we consider that this parliament has approved an order to construct a stadium in front of the state war memorial that not only attracted the opposition of the RSL itself, attracted the opposition of the Friends of Soldiers Memorial, the opposition of veterans and other communities, but it was demonstrated by the process that we applied to assess it to have a negative impact on the values of the Cenotaph. The sightlines from the Cenotaph down the Derwent River and across Sullivan's Cove, the reverential ambience of the Cenotaph: all will be diminished by a stadium at Macquarie Point. While we are passing a punitive law to tackle acts of vandalism inflicted by individual or individuals on the state war memorial, or indeed regional war memorials, it has to be said that the stadium represents the biggest state-sponsored vandalism of the state war memorial, and that is something that I struggle with.

We stood with the RSL and put forward into this House a mechanism that would try to protect those values of the House. It wasn't supported by both sides of this parliament, but long will that decision be lamented, I believe, because people will continue to go to the Cenotaph on days of memorial and they will have their experience demonstrably diminished. Chair, I'm going to leave it there. I felt that had to be said. This law will pass. We condemn vandalism. These sites are incredibly important to the people who serve their families, their communities and the wider community. We won't support this legislation because we do not believe this is the way that you can properly protect those places.

Mr FERGUSON - Thank you, Chair. I would like to respond to some of the observations that have been made. Thank you, Chair, for that opportunity. I appreciate very warmly the comments that have been made, in the main, around the Chamber that support the position which has been presented through the amended bill that's come back to us from the other place. To respond: I heard again incorrect terminology claiming that this is a misapplication of the law. That claim has been thoroughly debunked, and I've heard it again today and I need to put it to bed. Even if the amendment had not carried, this would have been a fully legal, legally-drafted, robustly-drafted application of the law that was provided in a very hasty response to a surprising claim that came from the Greens in my five minutes of summing up back in March. It was further confirmed in the Legislative Council debate on this very matter that we now find ourselves debating. It was dealt with, including with correspondence from the minister with the benefit of formal legal advice. I never want to hear it again. It is a false claim.

That said, the maximum jail term that's provided for now in the revised bill or the shortly to be revised bill, brings it into three years anyway. So, the arguments around the length of maximum sentence that should be provided in the summary court has now reached that point. The maximum of the usual three years has been provided for, and I shouldn't have to, and I won't in the time available, deal with the fact that there is other legislation on the statute books which exceeds three years and is still a summary offence. I just want to make that point as I wind up. In terms of comments on mandatory minimum by the honourable member for Franklin, Mr George, again, briefly, there are other laws on the statute books in Tasmania that this House has previously agreed should impose mandatory minimum financial penalties. Those matters have already been raised in the House, including drug and alcohol and biosecurity laws.

As I wind up, Chair, if you'll allow me, I just want to thank a few important people who have contributed to where we've arrived at today. I really want to place on record my sincere thanks to the RSL Tasmania, its President, Mike Gallagher, its CEO, John Hardy, its northern Director, Peter Williams, and Clair Norton of the St Helens RSL sub-branch. I also want to

extend my thanks to other ex-service organisations in Tasmania, who have, together with the RSL, strongly supported and encouraged members of each House to find it within themselves to support this legislation. I've already thanked the Labor Party. I would also like to thank my own party colleagues, in particular the Premier, minister Ellis, who's responsible for the *Police Offences Act*, minister Pearce, minister Barnett and their offices.

May I particularly record a word of thanks to Rachael Murray in minister Ellis's office who supported the debate in the upper House, and may I thank as well the honourable member for McIntyre in the other House, Tania Rattray, who wished to, and did take this legislation through on our behalf in that House. Finally, to thank Katherine Woodward and the Office of Parliamentary Counsel. We had great expertise and commitment to bring the policy objectives into legislation that will shortly become law. I'm very grateful to her. Colleagues and friends listening, I want to say that this bill is the result of a largely bipartisan effort, and indeed, including most members of independent quarters of both Houses, responding to an incident that really shook our state in a regional community of Tasmania at St Helens. That event shocked Tasmanians and it shocked many people across the country. It wasn't the first act of vandalism on a war memorial in the country, and sadly it won't be the last.

When that event occurred, a number of members of the government, including Mr Shelton, a member for Lyons, immediately were thinking: how can we support this local community, this local RSL and the council? Before the government was in a position to provide some potential support, the community dealt with the vandalism itself. When I reflect upon the response as a Tasmanian, I feel so very proud. I want to mention Dobson's Monumental Works who did the work. They contacted that RSL, they said they wanted to do the repair, there will be no cost and they actually travelled from Hobart to St Helens, a long way, and performed the work with a group of men who travelled all the way from Hobart, and they did it in less than one or two days. Job done, job finished. No role for government: the community values these special places. I wrote to Dobson's back in the day and I said to them:

Dear team at Dobson's, may I sincerely thank you so much for your generosity to the St Helens community by repairing the local war memorial. That was extremely proactive, generous, Australian and fast. I really feel so thankful for you all. Hope to meet you sometime. God bless you all for your goodness during a traumatic time for the ex-service and wider community.

Michael.

And this was the response I got back:

As humble and as modest as the best of Australia, thank you, Michael. We were happy that we could help and make a difference. Sounds great. Thank you.

Shaun Dobson.

This bill has never been about politicians or politics; it's about what our country believes, our state believes about the men and women who have served this country, far too many of whom have paid the ultimate price of losing their own lives, the potential future life they could have had back home with the people they love, the children and the grandchildren they could have

enjoyed, also, for the living who returned never the same and their families really challenged by the scars that war can cause.

Thank you to all of those who've played a role in seeing this bill, which is so close to my heart, become law. I believe it will serve as a model for laws in other jurisdictions as we now have the toughest, most comprehensive laws in the country to protect these special places of remembrance. While we have the role to remember those who gave their all and who served our country, the least we can do as civilians is to honour that memory and never allow that remembrance to pass from our daily life. Lest we forget.

Members - Lest we forget.

Legislative Council amendments agreed to.

**HOUSING LAND SUPPLY (MISCELLANEOUS AMENDMENTS) BILL 2026
(No. 15)**

Second Reading

[12.52 p.m.]

Mr ELLIS (Braddon - Minister for Business, Industry and Resources) - Honourable Speaker, I move -

That the bill be now read the second time.

This amendment bill proposes to amend the *Housing Land Supply Act 2018* to introduce efficiencies and time savings to the current process of rezoning land through the Housing Land Supply Order. It also proposes a minor amendment to the *Community Housing Providers National Law (Tasmania) Act 2013* to correct outdated references to other legislation.

The *Housing Land Supply Act* was developed following the then-premier's housing summit in 2018. The introduction of the act was unanimously supported by both Houses of parliament as a more direct process for rezoning and modifying planning scheme requirements for eligible government land to facilitate housing, particularly for social and affordable housing developments. The *Housing Land Supply Act* targets land that is suitable for residential purposes and replaces the normal planning scheme amendments process under the *Land Use Planning and Approvals Act 1993*. It maintains the same rigorous assessment criteria from the normal amendment process, along with specific criteria for determining the suitability of land for housing. It provides a more comprehensive public consultation process with more stakeholders directly notified and more locations available to view the draft order and supporting documents during the consultation period.

The main benefit of the housing land supply order process is its focus on social and affordable housing. The making of a housing land supply order vests the land with Homes Tasmania for delivery through the *Homes Tasmania Act 2022*. This ensures that a share of the new housing construction is allocated to those most in need. I acknowledge that we are in the process of transferring Homes Tasmania into the new Building Tasmania entity. This will result in legislative and administrative changes that will be resolved in the near future. To date, 18 housing land supply orders have been made for land across the three regions of our state.

More than 70 hectares has now been rezoned for housing purposes and transferred to Homes Tasmania for delivery, which could deliver around 1000 new homes. More draft orders are currently being progressed and are part-way through the assessment process under the act. I understand Homes Tasmania is preparing several others.

We have amended the *Housing Land Supply Act* twice in recent times: firstly to allow Homes Tasmania to bring forward newly acquired land and most recently, in 2023, to extend the period for making housing land supply orders until the end of 2032. The success of the act for rezoning land underpins the need for further improvement in its operation. With the continued demand for housing, more is being done across a number of sectors, with interventions ranging well beyond the planning scheme. Most importantly, the bill will allow housing land supply orders to be finalised sooner to rapidly rezone suitable land. This gives Homes Tasmania the confidence to continue to identify new areas of land suitable for residential development and provide more housing options for Tasmanians.

The other proposed administrative savings reduce unnecessary administrative tasks, providing savings to the departments. Currently, the process requires that the five-sitting-day disallowance period must be completed in both Houses of parliament before a housing land supply order can be made. This process works fine when we have available sitting periods; however, since 2018 there have been seven times when an order has been ready to be made but we have had to wait up to three months until the parliament resumes after the summer recess. This has caused considerable delays for getting land rezoned, particularly at a time of increased housing need. A total of 18 housing land supply orders have now been made with scrutiny by this parliament with no disallowance motions put forward. We should all have the confidence that the process is being used appropriately. Consequently, the bill proposes to move the disallowance period to after the making of the order, therefore treating it as if it were a regulation under the *Acts Interpretation Act 1931*. The change, importantly, maintains parliament's scrutiny but does not unnecessarily delay the making of the order. It also provides a longer disallowance period of 15 days, consistent with other regulations.

As I've mentioned, there are housing land supply orders currently going through the assessment process. The bill includes a transitional provision for these orders. These orders will continue to be assessed in accordance with the current processes, including the disallowance period before the making of the order. This provides certainty and continuity of the assessment process for the current processes. The bill also introduces a variety of other efficiencies for making housing land supply orders. I'll now outline these key elements. Currently, the making of a housing land supply order involves the State Planning Office liaising with the Office of Parliamentary Counsel (OPC) several times to prepare a draft order ready for public consultation, tabling in parliament and to make and give effect to the order. Each stage of this process requires redrafting, which only adds to the administrative tasks of the OPC and the State Planning Office.

The bill cuts down these administrative steps by enabling the State Planning Office to draft these orders. This is achieved by not requiring an order to be a statutory rule for the purpose of the *Rules Publication Act 1953*. The bill also provides a more streamlined process for making and giving effect to an order, instead of the current two-step process with two different *Gazette* notices having to be published. This further reduces unnecessary administration for all involved in those processes. The bill also enables the housing land supply order to clearly express the proposed planning requirements as they would appear in the planning scheme, such as the introduction of the specific area plan. This is particularly

important in circumstances where modifications to the planning scheme requirements are proposed and assist the public consultation process by providing greater clarity on the proposed changes. Currently, orders must contain a schedule listing planning provisions which are later redrafted by the Tasmanian Planning Commission to create a specific area plan for inclusion in the planning scheme. This is a further administrative saving. The bill also removes references to the *Housing Land Supply Act* in the *Housing Land Supply Act* -

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

**HOUSING LAND SUPPLY (MISCELLANEOUS AMENDMENTS)
BILL 2026 (No. 15)**

Second Reading

Resumed from above.

Mr ELLIS (Braddon - Minister for Business, Industry and Resources) - The bill also removes a reference in the *Housing Land Supply Act* to an old planning scheme that is no longer in effect. Finally, the bill proposes amendments to clarify who the relevant minister is for the purposes of the *Community Housing Provider National Law (Tasmania) Act 2013*. This act currently references the former *Homes Act 1935*, which has been replaced with the *Homes Tasmania Act 2022*. The bill updates this reference to the current legislation. Future amendments will be likely in the near future to correspond with the transfer of Homes Tasmania into the new Building Tasmania entity. The bill proposes to improve the efficiency of the process, reduce costs to government to administer the process, and enables housing land supply orders to be made sooner, all without reducing the rigour and scrutiny of the process. Honourable Speaker, I commend the bill to the House.

[2.31 p.m.]

Ms BROWN (Franklin) - I rise to speak on the Housing Land Supply (Miscellaneous Amendments) Bill 2026 as the shadow minister for housing. It wouldn't be a Liberal planning bill if it didn't find the most wackadoo way possible to undertake planning reform, so here we are. Mr Ellis has already outlined the key changes contained in this bill, so I won't repeat them, but I do have a number of questions that I hope the minister can address in his response. The first relates to the changes to the community housing legislation. The bill updates reference to the community housing providers legislation, replacing the outdated reference to the *Homes Act 1935* with the *Homes Tasmania Act 2022*. So, on the face of it, it looks like a very straightforward administrative amendment.

However, I note the minister for Housing's contribution this morning in response to the honourable Deputy Speaker, where he advised the House that the legislation to change Homes Tasmania to Building Tasmania would not be introduced until around June next year. This raises some fairly obvious questions. We have a government that has announced this major structural change to the agency responsible for delivering housing, but the legislation to actually establish it won't be in the Chamber until June next year: as if we needed any more evidence that this was just a Jeremy Rockliff special, where he's plucked it off a whiteboard somewhere.

The SPEAKER - Honourable Premier.

Ms BROWN - An honourable Premier Jeremy Rockliff special, where he's plucked it off a whiteboard somewhere along the way, maybe in a back office somewhere, where he has announced something without a single shred of evidence of a plan to deliver it. It's obviously not good enough, because thousands of Tasmanians are seeking a roof over their head, so it must be so disappointing for them to hear these things and not see any real change on the ground. With that, my first question to the minister is: will there be any tax, financial or contractual implications for projects, builds or orders that have commenced under Homes Tasmania when it's transferred into the new entity of Building Tasmania? If so, can the minister advise the House what costs are anticipated, and who will ultimately bear the cost of those?

My second question relates to the safeguarding of the planning system if the parliament disallows a housing land supply order. The new section 25A provides that planning scheme amendments made because of the housing land supply order become void if the underlining order is later voided or disallowed under the *Acts Interpretation Act*. Importantly, this bill provides that actions already taken under those planning scheme amendments remain valid. This is where the government is very backwards in coming forward. There are some fairly significant practical questions here: what happens if the housing land supply order is made, planning scheme amendments take place, development activity begins, perhaps approvals may be issued, contracts are entered into, and construction may even commence, and then the parliament subsequently disallows the underlying order? This bill talks about what legally happens, but I'd like it to be clear for the Chamber what happens at the departmental level. What processes will be applied if the parliament successfully disallows a housing land supply order, to ensure that no planning amendment or development process is effectively left orphaned through this process? Further, what consequences arise for communities, developers, and residents, where planning amendments have already taken effect, approvals have been issued, or development activity has already commenced, before the underlying order is disallowed? These are pretty important questions, because planning reform is not just changing some legislation. There needs to be certainty for everybody it affects, and I'm talking about real people in our communities.

Overall, this Housing Land Supply (Miscellaneous Amendments) Bill 2026 is fundamentally about speed and it's about process efficiency. The intention of this is to accelerate the rezoning of land for housing by removing administrative steps and allowing housing land supply orders to take effect before the parliamentary disallowance process is concluded. If implemented properly, it could reduce delays, lower administrative costs and help bring forward more social and affordable housing, which we desperately, desperately need, because people are doing it tough. More and more Tasmanians are seeking a roof over their head, and as the shadow minister for housing, I hear about these experiences every single day. Labor will always support measures to genuinely increase the supply of social and affordable housing and help get more homes built faster.

All that being said, we do need to look at the track record of those opposite, because the concerns are not just simply whether this bill is capable of speeding up the process. The question is: is this government actually capable of delivering the houses at the end of the process? For that, we only need to look to Huntingfield. Huntingfield has been a talked-about major housing development for years. It has been announced and then re-announced. It's been delayed and then subject to cost pressures and many changes along the way. Despite all of this, all of the talk, all of the delays, Tasmanians have been the ones paying the price, and they have been the ones waiting for the houses to be on the ground. That is the fundamental problem that

we see with this government. They have become very good at announcements and announcements and announcements, but they have been very poor at delivering announcements when it comes to housing.

I sincerely hope that this bill, should it pass, does what the government intends it to do. I hope it actually does streamline processes and removes the delays that the government says that it will. Most importantly, I do hope that it gets more homes on the ground, because Tasmanians need them. Like I said, this government has developed a very serious pattern of overpromise and underdeliver. Tasmanians don't need more announcements; they don't need more rebrands; they don't need more promises; they need more homes, and they need proper reform that's actually going to deliver that. Labor will support measures that genuinely help achieve that outcome, but I say to the minister for Housing, I will be scrutinising this every step of the way. Thank you.

[2.39 p.m.]

Mr BAYLEY (Clark) - Honourable Speaker, I rise to speak to the Housing Land Supply (Miscellaneous Amendments) Bill 2026 and indicate upfront that we intend to oppose this bill. We are fundamental believers in a proper planning process that takes it out of the hands of the minister. We have the Tasmanian Planning Commission which is eminently qualified to do this work. We have heard from numerous stakeholders about the problems associated with this bill, the subversion of the planning process and some frankly nonsensical processes in relation to how the revised process stages the approval of an order and the ability for action upon an order, versus the parliamentary process in that regard.

The Greens are strong supporters of action to tackle the housing crisis. It's a complicated space where the responsibilities sit across all levels of government: local, state and federal. We've seen the federal government recently act, belatedly, to partially address some of the issues associated with capital gains tax and the like. That's really welcome, but here in Tasmania we continually seem to be bashing our heads against a brick wall in terms of tangible action that's going to make a difference for people. The member who just resumed her seat mentioned the Homes Tasmania housing waitlist. She didn't mention the number, but it's 5655. I understand that is a record. From questions in Estimates, that figure represents 9000-plus people, and one in three of those are children. This is a fundamental challenge for us as a society. We do need to be building more houses and investing more money in building those houses, and making sure that people's human rights to have a home are met. However, we don't think the planning process needs to be subverted to do that.

There are other things this government could be doing to immediately address supply issues. Stopping the bleed of whole-home rentals into short-stay accommodation is one such area, and it's one area where the government consistently refuses to act. It could address this issue at a planning directive level but, instead, it has fought things all the way. We now have councils taking the matter into their own hands, including upping application fees or rates. The Hobart City Council has also made an application to the Tasmanian Planning Commission to try to regain some control over the application of permits across houses in the residential zone.

We did some analysis of development applications in the Hobart City Council area over the last six months and there have been 41 homes converted to short-stay accommodation. One in four of those has a known rental history. You can search them and see that they have been rented. There may be more that we couldn't find, but one in four of those homes, 11 of those 40 homes had been rentals. The balance could have been first homes, they could have been

rentals, but they're going into short-stay accommodation, and this is having a tangible impact on supply. When it comes to steps the government can take to address the supply issue, top of the list should be short-stay accommodation. We know that renters are struggling in a cost-of-living crisis. We have been loud and proud about wanting to support renters' rights. It was welcomed that the government listened to some of those calls from advocates and others around pets in rentals and very minor modifications, but we need to be improving renters' rights when it comes to rent control, no-cause eviction, minimum standards and the like. I will take a moment to read out an email I received at 8.56 pm last night from Xavier, one of my constituents. He has given me permission to read relevant bits into the *Hansard*. Xavier writes:

My 12- and 15-year-old kids and I have just been through, and are still going through, the reality of trying to find and maintain secure housing in this environment. We've lived in South Hobart for the past ten years, in the same house for about seven of those years. Then one evening in early July we came home to find a notice to vacate by 13 August on our front door with no explanation from either the real estate agency or the owner, who lives interstate. There has been no incident or issue that would have justified this, and the agent had been telling me that our lease would be extended, so it came as a real shock. Finding another suitable rental in South Hobart for the three of us has proved almost impossible. Only around five to 10 properties were becoming available each week on average and competition was intense, with more than 30 people attending inspections. Yet, in comparison, there are more than 500 homes in South Hobart listed on Airbnb. The disparity is incredibly frustrating and, frankly, the lack of consideration for the needs of other Tasmanians is bewildering.

So, for the next couple of months we were effectively homeless. The rental we eventually managed to secure in Fern Tree through a friend is 50 per cent more expensive than our previous home and will take up around 75 per cent of my weekly apprentice wage. Unfortunately, it isn't available till mid-October. In the meantime, we're staying with friends for four weeks, after which I'll be visiting family overseas. I've had to take leave from my apprenticeship in carpentry because I simply can't couch surf for two months while trying to work and study.

It's been incredibly stressful and unsettling for all of us, and it has made the housing crisis feel very immediate and personal. The role of short-term accommodation in reducing the supply of long-term rentals is something I've seen reflected directly in our experience. I wanted to share our story with you because I think it's important that the human cost, particularly for children and families, remains part of the conversation about housing policy.

My office and, I'm sure, other members' offices get contacted by people with housing issues almost daily, and Xavier's situation is not unique. We know that there are more and more people homeless. We've just been through Homelessness Week and the advocates in the homelessness space are calling on government to invest more in homelessness services, in building houses and making sure that we meet Tasmanians' needs. To the bill specifically, as I mentioned, we have some real concerns. The *Housing Land Supply Act* is amended to provide the same commencement rules in respect of disallowance as regulations; principally that they commence when the order is made, rather than at the conclusion of a disallowance period,

although it does extend the disallowance timeframe from five to 15 days. The exact implications of this are unclear.

For example, I'm unsure what the status of a project would be if a planning permit had been approved and works commenced but the order was subsequently revoked. That's a question I'd appreciate you and your officials turning your minds to. I understand from what I have read and been briefed on, that part of the motivation for this is for the ability to make an order and get it happening at times when, perhaps, parliament has risen for the winter break or summer break. It could be many months between an order being made under this revised process and the parliament actually having an opportunity to disallow that order. If parliament does subsequently disallow an order where work has commenced clearing land, signing contracts and other things, what happens to the permit that applies to that land? It is unclear, and it is an issue that's been raised by several of the stakeholders we've been talking to. I give a particular shout-out to the Planning Matters Alliance Tasmania, Sophie Underwood and others who do a power of work in the planning space. The alliance has made a submission in relation to this bill, and they are deeply concerned and raise that question about what happens if that is the case.

At the moment, the minister makes the order. If there's no disallowance, the minister directs the commission to implement the order and the order takes effect and can be acted upon by Homes Tasmania. The flow chart in the bill pack is relatively easy but you can see that the revised process means that the order can be made and acted on ahead of the parliamentary process. I heard in the second reading speech that none of the 17 - I think it's now 18 housing land supply orders have been disallowed by this parliament. That may well be the case. I take that at face value, but that is not the point. We shouldn't be making law in this place because of what has happened to date in terms of the 17 or 18 housing land supply orders that have been put. We should be making laws based on good process and what could happen. It absolutely is a possibility that this parliament may one day disagree with a housing land supply order that the minister has made, and move to disallow it many months after it was made and many months after it's acted upon by Homes Tasmania or Building Tasmania. Minister, if we could address that question, that would be much appreciated. We don't have a problem with the bill removing the application of rezoning orders to the residential zone under the Flinders Island Planning Scheme. That scheme is no longer in effect. The bill also allows for an order to provide site-specific qualifications and a specific area plan.

Fundamentally, we don't support this bill, not only because it gives a remarkable amount of power to the minister and into the minister's hands, but it subverts a process of parliament that at a principal level we also think should sit with the Tasmanian Planning Commission. The Tasmanian Planning Commission is the body that is best placed to look at rezoning applications and for these housing land supply orders to be coming through parliament. In the first place, it creates a number of different problems, but for them to be coming through at the hand of the minister, to be implemented, to be potentially acted upon before they've even passed the parliament really does subvert the process and I think sets things up absolutely back to front.

We know that there's a sense of urgency, there's a real urgency that we all feel in relation to the need to build houses I don't think anyone questions that. As has been mentioned, the Huntingfield example highlights how when something is fast-tracked for seven years but only just starting to hit the market now, the whole notion of needing to bypass the Planning Commission, bypass councils, et cetera, and also speed up the parliamentary process - I guess it makes a mockery of it when you see the evidence of what's happened with Huntingfield:

theoretically, an urgent action that came out of the 2018 Housing Summit, but only now we're just getting a handful of houses starting to be built and a handful of blocks that are sold.

I think we do have time to do planning properly. We need to make sure we do planning properly in this state so that we bring community along so that services and all the other machinery of community actually keep up with housing land supply orders, keep up with subdivisions, keep up with development, so that we know that the people who are going to be moving into those suburbs in the years and decades to come actually have the facilities and services that they need to make sure that it's a functioning community, that it's a connected community, that they have opportunities to participate fully in our society and are not left - as has happened in the past in communities that are either suffering from transport poverty or insufficient infrastructure to actually deal with the level of population that's living there. I don't have a whole lot to add. We don't support this bill. We have serious problems with the staging when it comes to the process for the approval or the disallowance of housing land supply orders and we don't think this bill is worthy of support. Thank you.

[2.53 p.m.]

Mr VERMEY (Clark) - Thank you, honourable Speaker. I'm pleased to rise today as a strong supporter of the Housing Land Supply (Miscellaneous Amendments) Bill 2026. This bill underscores the government's commitment to increasing the rezoning of sustainable government land to support delivery of more homes for Tasmanians who need them the most. It demonstrates a government that is actively planning for the future, tackling challenges, embracing opportunities and ensuring Tasmania remains a great place to live, work, invest and raise a family. This government has every reason to be proud of the progress they've already made. Since its commencement in 2018, the *Housing Land Supply Act* has proven effective in rezoning suitable government land for residential development. In total, 18 housing land supply orders have been made and more than 70 hectares of land rezoned for housing.

This has created opportunities to rezone land for development of up to 1000 new residential lots. Importantly, no disallowance motions have been put forward by parliament, and this should give us all confidence that the process is being used appropriately.

Initially introducing this as a short-term response to increase the land supply of land for five years, amendments were first made in 2001 to broaden the scope of eligible government land for rezoning. Further amendments in 2023 extended the timeframe for making orders until the end of 2032, to align with the government's ambitious target to deliver an additional 10,000 social and affordable homes. This is about identifying where suitable land exists for more residential development, and ensuring these lots can be brought on as quickly and as responsibly as possible. Good governments plan ahead, and that's exactly what this government is doing. Housing provides one of the clearest examples of why performing reform matters. Tasmania needs more homes and more housing choice.

This bill achieves a number of objectives. Firstly, it can reduce the time for an order to be made and ensures the land can be rezoned for housing sooner. The current process requires a five-day sitting disallowance period in both Houses of parliament before a housing land supply order can be made. Since 2018, there have been seven occasions when an order was ready to be made, but delays of up to three months occurred while waiting for parliament to resume. Amendments in this bill maintain a disallowance period, however, it moves to offer after an order has been made. This treats the making of an order as if it were a regulation under the *Acts Interpretation Act 1931*, and ensures suitable land can be rezoned for housing faster.

In moving this disallowance period, the bill also extends it from five to 15 sitting days, consistent with other regulations. Not only does it provide for a longer disallowance period, it maintains necessary parliamentary scrutiny.

The bill also creates additional effectiveness in making of the housing land supply order. Importantly, it reduces the burden of the Office of Parliamentary Counsel who are required to prepare model drafts of orders in conjunction with the State Planning Office. This bill allows changes to allow the state planning office to draft housing land supply orders, which is achieved by not requiring an order to be a statutory rule for the purpose of the *Rules Publication Act 1953*. This streamlined approach also extends to the process of making and giving effect to an order by removing the current two-step process requiring the publication of two different *Gazette* notices.

A further administrative saving allows the housing land supply order to express the proposed requirements as they would appear in the planning scheme, such as with specific area plans. This amendment amends the current process, which requires orders to contain the schedule listing planning provision, which must then be redrafted by the Tasmanian Planning Commission to create a specific area plan. Finally, the *Community Housing Providers National Law (Tasmania) Act 2013* currently refers to the former *Homes Act 1935*. We're clarifying who the relevant minister is. Amendments in this bill replace the reference to the former *Homes Act 1935* with the *Homes Tasmania Act 2022*, noting a further amendment will likely be required in the near future to correspond with Homes Tasmania's transfer into the government's new PlanBuild Tasmania.

Increasing efficiencies and bringing forward the timeline for rezoning suitable government land for residential development is at the heart of this bill. I support progression of this bill.

[3.00 p.m.]

Mr O'BYRNE (Franklin) - Honourable Speaker, I rise to speak on this bill and indicate my support for the bill at the outset. It is administrative in nature and it reflects, I think, the feedback in terms of how we support the land supply orders and the process of identifying land and hopefully getting parcels of land to market and getting homes and houses built in and across Tasmania. Having said that, I have a bit of history on this: the contribution by the member who just resumed his seat and some of the broad, sweeping, visionary statements probably don't reflect reality. Essentially, I remember the announcement from the then-premier Will Hodgman, a number of premiers ago in 2018, saying we have a housing crisis and we're going to fast-track, I think it was 720,000 square metres, to be rezoned for social and affordable housing as a part of a promised fast track to getting more homes built. I believe we confirmed that there's been six houses built on that 'fast track land' since 2018.

I'm not going to reflect on the current minister, because I think he is, in my dealings with minister Vincent, absolutely committed to driving change and building homes, and he's inherited a sorry tale of failure of delivery. I know his intent is to drive hard and get houses built, but the numbers do not lie. A housing crisis, acknowledged by the incoming government in 2018, and it was a broadly respected and supported response of identifying land - Crown land predominantly, all Crown land - that could be fast-tracked; because of the issue around development applications in getting homes built, we all agreed to change the rules, effectively, back towards the end of 2018 heading into 2019, on the intent that this would be a key effort, a key piece of red tape/green tape cut to allow houses to be built. Well, we agreed to it. I don't

think it was red and green tape that was stopping houses getting built. Arguably, it was the incompetence of the government. This is a sorry, sorry tale, because the consequences are - the waiting list for housing, young families wanting to get their first home, social and affordable homes, the stories we hear every day of people suffering and not able to get access to either public housing or social and affordable housing.

The other answer, apart from fast-tracking, was the creation in 2022 of Homes Tasmania. Whilst I acknowledge the recent refreshed leadership, which is clearly showing results, and I will acknowledge the change in leadership in Homes Tasmania, the frolic of the government to deflect from their responsibility to respond to the housing crisis by creating an arms-length authority - now we find out, well, not only was that a bad idea at the beginning, the government acknowledged that in the Budget, and I think earlier this year in the state of the state speech, the Premier acknowledged that it wasn't working and they were bringing it back in-house. Then we find out today that that won't actually occur until next financial year. Now, I understand the timing of these things, and the complexity, but how much money and time and effort has been wasted since 2018? How much money has been wasted with the frolic with Homes Tasmania? It was stupid: just a ridiculous idea at the beginning. It was a deflection. It was a political response to a policy failure. You respond to policy failure by just getting better policy and doing the job, not just some political deflection to an organisation, despite a whole lot of good-willed people in what used to be Housing Tasmania, and now in Homes Tasmania. This is not a personal reflection on them; this is a structural leadership issue. I've spoken to many people in Homes Tasmania who previously worked in Housing Tas who are good, decent people, who care about the work they do and who want to get results for the Tasmanian community. Yet structurally, the political leadership has failed them, so here we are.

I acknowledge the fact that we've already had, under the 2018 rules, the 18 land supply orders that have not been controversial, that have not been subject to a disallowance motion, so the inherent thought behind the change that this legislation will do will have to be supported. I judge a government by their actions, not by their rhetoric. With the previous land supply orders, they've not been controversial, they've gone through, and that piece of the work is being done. Therefore, that gives me confidence that if the government and the departments continue to work within that frame, this is not going to be controversial. What does give me some comfort is that we have an opportunity to bring in a disallowance motion if the government strays from the path that they've been walking with the previous land supply orders. I understand the philosophical opposition to fast-tracking of land supply orders. I understand that. I believe, on balance, with all of the considerations and requirements under the state government for these kinds of orders, we achieve the same kind of accountability and checks and balances, but we do save time.

Just imagine how long it would've taken had we gone through council - it begs the question. Either that would've been quicker or slower. That's for others to make an assessment of that. The case in point was Huntingfield. In 2018, there was a rezoning order for the construction of about 450 new homes, and it was only in 2026 that the first blocks went to market: eight years. That's not this parliament's fault; that's the government's fault. It's a sorry, sorry tale. I think we heard - and I'm waiting confirmation by the minister - there are 10 to 12 homes now under construction after seven years of, really, nothing. So, from 2026, early when the blocks went to market, we're finally starting to build it. I'll give credit to Mr Vincent: he has leant into the detail, into the weeds, that a minister sometimes has to do to get things going, but it's a sorry, sorry tale that he's had to clean up. I repeat my

acknowledgement of the refreshed leadership of Homes Tasmania and pay credit to them to do what they can with the job and the task in front of them.

Whenever we talk about housing, let's not fall into the sophistry of the government in terms of their track record or their vision. We have to deal with the confronting numbers. The fact is that as of June this year, 5655 applicants were on the social housing waiting list. There were 3809 applicants on the waiting list in January 2021, which was an increase of 48 per cent in five-and-a-half years. The average wait for priority applicants now to get a house is 88.6 weeks. Whilst the government can say, we're cutting red and green tape, we're driving forward with fast-track housing, the numbers don't lie. Behind each number is a life, is a person, is a family who are suffering the consequences of this level of incompetence.

I won't oppose this bill. This is a smart administrative amendment that will make things, hopefully, better without signing away checks and balances which are important, and powers of parliament to disallow, if there is any negative or egregious act by the government. The fact that we still have that power is very, very important, in my view, given the exception that this - I won't call it fast track - this is a change in identifying blocks of land or areas of Crown land where we can build social and affordable homes. With that 'do better' speech from this member, I will support the amendment bill.

[3.10 p.m.]

Ms BURNET (Clark) – Thank you, honourable Speaker. I rise to speak to this bill and I won't speak for too long. The previous two speakers have provided some figures and concerns for everybody in this House in relation to the delivery of housing, which is a fundamental right for every Tasmanian, and how this government is failing in that objective. I'm going to start off by listing a few questions and then give my contribution, as I'm probably one of the last speakers to this today. My questions for the minister responsible for the passage of this bill in this House, Mr Ellis, are: what percentage or portion of land rezoned under a housing land supply order is required to be made available for (a) social housing; and (b) affordable housing? It would also be good to know the guarantees that any land developed as a result of a housing land supply order would comply with the principles expressed in the Tasmanian Planning Provisions, which commenced in July. We've talked a bit about the proportion of social housing to affordable housing in these land supply orders.

I thank the people and organisations who have put in submissions in relation to this bill. It's important to read those submissions from the Australian Institute of Architects, the Planning Matters Alliance and the Northeast Bioregional Network, amongst others. Even the City of Hobart has raised some concerns. I also thank the State Planning Office and Mr Vincent's staff for answering some of the questions we had in relation to this over time. Generally speaking, the bill isn't contentious and many of the issues raised were really of consideration when the substantive act was considered. In some senses, the horse has bolted. As Mr O'Byrne has said, this is mainly administrative.

The concerns that Mr Bayley, Mr O'Byrne and others have raised are fundamental. Of course, the provision of housing for all Tasmanians is a fundamental failing of this government until such time as it can be delivered. I look to the review of the *Residential Tenancy Act* to address some of these fundamental issues and flaws in housing delivery in Tasmania, and the protection of renters' rights. That's certainly in the pipeline. I won't be opposing this bill. As I've said, it's mainly administrative, but I do seek those answers from the minister who is taking this bill through this House.

[3.15 p.m.]

Ms HOWLETT (Lyons) - Honourable Speaker, I rise to support the Housing Land Supply (Miscellaneous Amendments) Bill 2026. This bill reflects the government's focus on increasing the rezoning of appropriate government land so more homes can be delivered for Tasmanians who need them most. It shows a government that is planning for the future, responding to challenges, pursuing opportunities and ensuring Tasmania remains a great place to live, work and invest, and raise a family. We can also be confident that the progress has already been achieved. Since the *Housing Land Supply Act* commenced in 2018 it has delivered real outcomes. In total, 18 housing land supply orders have been made and more than 70 hectares have been rezoned for housing, creating pathways to support up to 1000 additional residential lots. It is also notable that no disallowance motions have been advanced by parliament. That provides confidence that the process is operating appropriately.

The housing land supply framework was first introduced as a short-term measure to boost supply for five years. In 2021, amendments broaden the categories of eligible government land available to rezoning. Then in 2023, further amendments extended the timeframe for making orders to the end of 2032, aligning with the government's ambitious goal to deliver an additional 10,000 social and affordable homes. At its core, this bill is about identifying where suitable land exists for further residential development and ensuring those lots can be brought forward as promptly and responsibly as possible. This is exactly why planning reform matters. Tasmania needs more homes and it needs more housing choice. The bill delivers a set of practical improvements.

First, it reduces the time it takes to make an order, allowing rezoning for housing to begin sooner. Under the current model, a housing land supply order (HLSO) cannot be made until after a five-sitting-day disallowance period in both Houses of parliament. Since 2018, there have been several occasions where an order was ready yet delays of up to three months occurred while waiting for parliament to resume. The bill retains a disallowance mechanism, but moves it to after an order is made. The intent is to treat the making of an order in a way similar to a regulation under the *Acts Interpretation Act 1931*, enabling suitable land to be rezoned faster. Alongside this, the bill increases the disallowance period from five to 15 sitting days, consistent with other regulations. This provides greater time for parliamentary scrutiny while still improving timeframes.

Second, the bill streamlines a process for preparing HLSOs and reduces administrative burden, particularly on the Office of Parliamentary Counsel, which has previously been required to prepare multiple drafts of orders, together with the State Planning Office. To deliver this, the bill allows the State Planning Office to draft HLSOs, achieved by removing the requirement for an order to be treated as a statutory rule for the purpose of the *Rules Publication Act 1953*. This streamlined approach is also reflected in how orders are made and given effect. The bill removes the current two-step requirement involving publication of two different gazetted notices. The bill also delivers a further administrative efficiency by allowing an HLSO to set up the proposed planning requirements in the form they would appear in the planning scheme. For example, for a particular area plan, this updates the existing approach, which requires orders to include a schedule of planning provisions that then have to be redrafted by the Tasmanian Planning Commission in order to produce a specific area plan.

Finally, the bill makes a necessary reference update. The *Community Housing Providers National Law (Tasmania) Act 2013* currently refers to the former *Homes Act 1935* when

clarifying who the relevant minister is. This bill replaces that reference with the *Homes Tasmania Act 2022* and acknowledges that a further amendment may be needed soon to reflect Homes Tasmania's transfer into the new government department, Building Tasmania. In summary, bringing efficiencies and accelerating the rezoning pathway for suitable government land is the purpose of the bill. I support the progression of this bill.

[3.20 p.m.]

Mr MITCHELL (Lyons) - Honourable Speaker, I hadn't intended to speak but I can't let the contributions of the honourable member for Clark, Mr Vermey, and the honourable member for Lyons, Ms Howlett, pass without comment. This is a fairly benign administrative bill that the opposition is supporting but the comments of the government members suggesting that this is somehow a government in control, and a government doing good government, just can't pass without comment. This government has been in power for nigh-on 13 years. The public housing waiting list has more than doubled. We have more than 5000 applicants, which represents more than 9000 families on that waiting list. It takes 88 weeks before you get a place, so that's nearly two years before you get emergency housing and they're crowing about a fairly benign administrative arrangement which frees up some land, after 13 years.

Housing policy under this government has been an absolute bin fire for 13 years. Rentals are unaffordable in Hobart and, dare I say, Launceston. Not only can people not buy homes which are unaffordable, but they can't rent homes because they're also unaffordable and unavailable. This all comes down to the failure of policy by this government over 13 years. We've had the Premier wandering around this week having discovered modular housing, as if it's some new invention. No doubt, he's going to come into the House at some stage and announce something to do with modular housing. We have swathes of disused government land throughout this state which could be freed up for housing. That's all under this government's control. If they're serious about fixing housing availability and affordability in this state, they have the means and resources to do something about it, and not subject the parliament and the public to endless spin and endless media opportunities.

[3.22 p.m.]

Mr ELLIS (Braddon - Minister for Business, Industry and Resources) - Honourable Speaker, I thank everyone for their contributions on the bill. We had a range of different questions. Ms Brown notices that the bill updates references to community housing legislation. The minister for Housing has advised new legislation will not be introduced until late next year. The preparation of this bill occurred before the Premier's announcement regarding the restructure of the Department of State Growth and Homes Tasmania. The changes to the act are considered necessary and relevant, even if Homes Tasmania sits within a government department rather than operating as an independent statutory body. Further legislative changes to the *Homes Tasmania Act 2022* will likely have consequential amendments to the *Housing Land Supply Act* to align with the future administrative arrangements and roles of Homes Tasmania within Building Tasmania.

Ms Brown asked whether there would be any tax or financial implications for Homes Tasmania as it transfers into Building Tasmania, and who would pay. I'm advised that there will be no taxation or financial implications for Homes Tasmania under the miscellaneous amendments to this bill as it transfers to Building Tasmania. Ms Brown also asked what happens if an order is disallowed, what processes will apply at a departmental level to make sure that no amendments are orphaned and what happens when developments have already commenced? If the order is disallowed, it will cease to be in effect and any amendments to the

planning scheme will be void, meaning the minister will be required to direct the Tasmanian Planning Commission to change the planning scheme back to what it was prior to the order being made. The planning zone for the land will revert to its original zoning prior to the making of the order. If a planning permit has been issued and is in place, then the permit can still be acted upon because the new section 25A(2) of the bill, or clause 22, specifies that any action taken after the land is rezoned is not invalid if an order is disallowed. Once the planning permit is issued, it remains valid until it lapses or it is substantially commenced, which means it is then in place in perpetuity unless the permit has a specified time limit. Even with the disallowance period occurring after an order is made, Homes Tasmania should continue to have confidence to progress development proposals and other arrangements for the delivery of housing. There have been no orders disallowed by the parliament to date, and this is due to the comprehensive eligibility and assessment criteria which ensures that any land rezoning is appropriate for housing. We expect the process to continue to be used appropriately to avoid an order being later disallowed by parliament. The disallowance safeguard remains and is consistent with how other regulations are made. We think this is an appropriate balance of executive efficiency with legislative oversight by the parliament.

Mr Bayley - Did you say the permit persists even if parliament disallows it?

Mr ELLIS - Yes, that's correct.

Mr Bayley - What's the point of parliament in that context?

Mr ELLIS - There won't be a rezone, so you wouldn't be able to effectively progress with it, and because the proponent is Homes Tasmania, they would be very well aware of the legislative constraints around that. I'll just look to make sure that is correct. Yes, it is. We'll move through. I had a question about delivery. Orders have facilitated the rezoning of about 70 hectares of land, supporting the delivery of over 1000 lots. The *Housing Land Supply Act* is just one process for rezoning land. It adds to a broader pipeline of housing construction. The *Housing Land Supply Act 2018* is one cog in a larger machine that's addressing homelessness and housing affordability.

Mr Bayley, you expressed a view that the proposed bill does not go far enough. In our view, the bill is part of a broader housing reform. The government's committed to housing delivery and is progressing a number of reforms to support the right housing in the right locations. The state planning office is working on a package of amendments to the State Planning Provisions that will make it easier to approve medium-density housing in the right locations. This work involves considering reduced lot sizes in the main residential zones and tailored planning provisions to suit housing developments on those small lots, such as terraces and townhouses. The work also includes a new apartment code for application in business zones, and the consideration of an additional residential zone. Consultation on this proposal has just recently finished and the state planning office will now work on preventing a suite of draft amendments to the State Planning Provisions.

All three regional land use strategies are also being reviewed and updated, ensuring the suitable supply of land for housing into the future, in accordance with the recently introduced Tasmanian Planning Policies (TPPs). TPPs require at least a 15-year supply of land into the future for growth to meet demand for residential, commercial, industrial, recreational and community land. The updated regional land use strategies will inform rezoning proposals, and integrated infrastructure planning will assist with boosting housing supply. You also raised

concerns that have been addressed in relation to Ms Brown about concerns on the disallowance. I'll just add that the parliament has previously agreed to this act in 2018, allowing the parliament and the minister to make rezoning decisions for suitable government land. The bill is not changing that. Also, currently the parliament has five sitting days in which to disallow an order; under the bill, by aligning the disallowance period with that for regulations under Section 47(4) of the *Acts Interpretation Act 1931*, parliament will now have 15 sitting days - five compared to 15 days in which to allow the order, which is an increase of 10 sitting days from the current setting.

The bill allows land to be rezoned for housing sooner while still preserving the safeguard, with parliament retaining power to veto an order if it considers it to be inappropriate. You should also remember that parliament's role has never been to assess and make a decision on each housing land supply order. Their role has been to scrutinise the decision-making of the minister, and be able to stop or cancel an order if it is considered inappropriate. We should have confidence that the *Housing Land Supply Act 2018* and the process are being operated appropriately, and will continue to do so with the safeguards provided. As I mentioned, of the 18 orders made to date, no disallowance motions have ever been put forward by the parliament. I'll just double check, Mr Bayley, did you have anything else?

Mr Bayley - No.

Mr ELLIS - You mentioned it does not truly address delivery speed. There have been seven examples that have been delayed in the approval process through the current act out of the 18 that have been made to date, that the bill would ensure land can be rezoned sooner. That would allow Homes Tasmania to lodge applications sooner and organise the delivery of housing through other means under the *Homes Tasmania Act 2022*. This reduces the overall timeframe for getting land ready for development. Mr Vermey recognised the importance of the act - I appreciate that, Mr Vermey - and of ensuring land can be rezoned faster and allowing for a longer disallowance to maintain parliamentary scrutiny.

Mr O'Byrne supported the bill. He recognised the importance of getting land for homes faster, with concern that there still does need to be more done to move faster. We're committed to delivering land faster; to date, across the 18 housing land supply orders declared, the following developments have been approved or are in train:

- West Moonah, 62 Ashbourne Grove: development applications approved now for 15 dwellings, with a builder now awarded for construction;
- Rokeby, 18 Burtonia Street: 47 lots, subdivisions completed with 19 dwellings constructed and another 18 sold, some with new dwellings under construction including the land sold;
- Devonport, 39A Fenton Street: an 11-lot subdivision is complete; one dwelling is constructed with DA approval for 42 new social and affordable dwellings which have now been awarded to Fairbrother;
- Newnham, 49 George Town Road: a six-unit youth housing facility completed in 2023;
- two further projects to deliver around 40 new homes for older people is currently out for pricing;

- Huntingfield, 1287 Channel Highway: the civil construction is underway for a 468-lot subdivision, with the first 33 lots complete, with sales progressing, including to applicants for MyHome and First Home Owners;
- Warrane, 213 Cambridge Road: planning is in progress for construction and sale of dwellings of the 100,000 Homes for First Home Buyers federal government initiative;
- Romaine, Roslyn Avenue: 13 dwellings are under construction;
- Burnie, 16-20 Mooreville Road: a 55-lot subdivision is under construction;
- Howrah, Merindah Street: the contractor is procured for a single dwelling;
- Howrah, Clarence Street: subdivisions planned for two lots;
- Chigwell, Allunga Road: development applications are approved for six dwellings;
- Ravenswood, 50 Wildor Crescent: development application approved for a 100-lot subdivision;
- Penguin, Lester Road: planning is in progress for a single lot;
- Kings Meadows, Techno Park Drive: development application is now approved for a 104-lot subdivision;
- Brighton, William Street: planning in progress for a four-lot subdivision;
- Mornington, Binalong Road: planning is in progress for 47 dwellings;
- Warrane, Cambridge Road: planning is in progress for around 75 dwellings; and
- Sulphur Creek, Preservation Drive: order and rezoning came into effect on 1 July 2026.

Mr O'Byrne also asked questions regarding delivery at Huntingfield. At 28 January, 33 lots have been committed to under contract and there are currently six dwellings under construction. The second stage of 11 lots has just been released to market, with three committed to. Ms Burnet asked what percentage of land rezoning is required to be available for social and affordable housing. I'll have to take that on notice, I think - further down, amalgamate the two questions together - but I'm seeing 15 per cent is about the number. What guarantees are there that the land development needs to comply with the Tasmanian planning policies - and hopefully this answers both. Housing land supply orders do not need to specify social and affordable housing requirements as the order vests the land into the ownership and operation of Homes Tasmania. In turn, Homes Tasmania have their own policy for providing social and affordable housing at each site.

The proportion of houses delivered as social housing is determined by appropriate planning that considers the nature of any project, its location, its scale, the services available in the local area and the tenure mix of surrounding suburbs. It can only be achieved by considering each project on its merits and then applying a tenure mix that is appropriate for that project. A larger area of land will be utilised for a mix of tenures, including private housing and affordable home ownership, and in those cases, it may result in developments with around 15 per cent social housing.

Some small land release projects, especially those providing supported accommodation, may be set aside entirely for social housing. One of the main roles for Homes Tasmania is to provide housing assistance for those who need it and to enable the integration of those people into existing and new housing communities. The *Housing Land Supply Act* provides an important vehicle for the rezoning of government land to ensure a share of housing is provided for social and affordable housing outcomes and appropriate integration into the new and existing communities. The assessment criteria under the *Housing Land Supply Act* delivers the same sound strategic planning outcomes already embedded in Tasmania's planning system. This is because the assessment criteria are the same as the standard rezoning process under the *Land Use Planning and Approval Act (1993)* which delivers the strategic planning outcomes embedded in the objects of the resource management and planning system; the state policies under the *State Policies and Projects Act 1993*; the Tasmanian planning policies; and the three regional land use strategies.

The *Housing Land Supply Act 2018* actually goes further and establishes specific criteria to ensure the land is suitable for social and affordable housing outcomes, including: the suitability of the land for residential use and its proximity to public and commercial services; public transport and employment opportunities; ensuring that residential use and development will not be significantly restricted by requirements that apply through any codes under the planning scheme, for example: heritage, environment, natural hazard or scenic issues; and minimising land use conflicts and enabling the land to be developed at an appropriate density. Ms Howlett recognised the importance of the bill for Tasmania, the progress that has been achieved and certainly concurs that the government recognises we need more homes, and this bill will support this by allowing rezoning sooner. Mr Mitchell, I'll take your speech as a comment, as they say on the ABC. I thank our team from the department at Homes Tasmania for all their work and being here to help me as an ex-minister get my head back around some of these important issues. I commend the bill to the House.

The SPEAKER (Mrs Petrusma) - The question is that the bill be now read a second time.

The House divided -

AYES 25

Mr Abetz
Mrs Archer
Mr Barnett
Dr Broad
Ms Brown
Ms Burnet
Ms Butler
Mr Di Falco
Ms Dow
Mr Ellis
Mr Fairs
Mr Ferguson
Ms Finlay
Mr Garland
Mrs Greene

NOES 6

Ms Badger
Mr Bayley
Ms Johnston
Ms Rosol
Dr Woodruff
Mr George (Teller)

Ms Haddad
Mr Jaensch
Mr Mitchell
Mr O'Byrne
Ms Ogilvie
Mr Pearce
Mr Shelton
Mr Vermey
Mr Willie
Ms Howlett (Teller)

Bill read the second time.

**HOUSING LAND SUPPLY (MISCELLANEOUS AMENDMENTS) BILL 2026
(No. 15)**

Third Reading

Bill read the third time.

ELECTORAL AMENDMENT BILL 2025 (No. 62)

Second Reading

Resumed from 28 May 2026 (Page 79).

[3.44 p.m.]

Dr WOODRUFF (Franklin - Leader of the Greens) - Honourable Speaker, following the Director of Public Prosecutions' (DPP's) decision, the Electoral Commissioner, Andrew Hawkey, wrote to Ms O'Connor on 22 September 2020 saying that he understood the DPP would not be prosecuting the matter. In light of the process, and the advice the Electoral Commissioner received from the DPP, he made a number of points which are relevant to this bill. Mr Hawkey said:

The Act became law before the development of social media and the use of social media for electoral and election discourse.

While the definition of "publish" in the Act includes by publication on the internet, section 196(1) was written to primarily refer to physical actions (print, publish, and distribute) with physical items (advertisement, "how-to-vote" card, handbill pamphlet, poster or notice).

The Act does not establish any similar restrictions on the use of a candidate's name in a political speech, personal conversation, or on talk back radio.

The relatively recent rise of social media appears to fall between the historical discourse of delivered material and verbal social/personal communication.

It may be arguable that the Facebook post is political discourse that could be considered closer to a radio interview or public debate than a handbill, "how-to-vote" card or notice.

A breach of section 196 is a criminal offence which has severe consequences: that is a "fine not exceeding 300 penalty units or imprisonment for a term not exceeding 12 months, or both."

A wide interpretation of the term notice to include such comments could be seen as seriously infringing freedom of speech and political communications.

Over the years, section 196 has consistently been used to prevent legitimate political discourse during election campaigns, and it was found to have been misapplied in that instance. Over the years, it has had a chilling effect on the freedom of speech among community groups that do not have the resources to take on a case. Such groups are typically over-assiduous in making sure they avoid any risk of falling foul of the law, which can result in no reference being made of any individual member's names in relation to their policy positions during an election campaign. By not providing this information to voters, community members and groups are effectively restricting the information available to voters about the political views and positions of different candidates putting their hand up to represent them in an election. That does not promote truth and transparency or accountability at a following point for positions that people have publicly stated. It does not advance our democracy.

The Electoral Commissioner has also discussed the potential chilling effect of section 196, and it's clear the commissioner has an appetite for the clarity that this amendment in the bill before us provides. It will allow people to go about their business of honestly campaigning and representing the views of other candidates honestly, as community groups reflecting the diversity of views of candidates, particularly the ones that align with the areas their groups are trying to achieve, and fairly criticising candidates who have views that do not seek to achieve what individuals, community groups or organisations are trying to get as an outcome during an election.

This is what a robust democracy needs. It looks like people having conversation. I think of a Facebook post, and most people would agree it's a bit like being in a public town hall meeting. The point is about whether the comments being made are true or false, whether they mislead about the words or intention of a candidate. These are related and important matters. I want to acknowledge that a number of members of the Legislative Council, and also the organisation The Australia Institute, have previously raised concerns about removing section 196 from this act without also accompanying the change with the addition of truth and political advertising laws. The Greens understand their concerns. We have long advocated for truth in political advertising. We have previously proposed an amendment to this bill to introduce truth in political advertising.

On the basis of previous comments, we've had a conversation with the Chair of the Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters recently, to ascertain whether it would be appropriate to refer this amendment to that committee for them to consider - an amendment to the matter of truth in political advertising, I mean. The Chair has indicated that that would be appropriate. It was our intention, as we have previously flagged, that at this point we would move an amendment to this bill to refer the Electoral Amendment Bill to the Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters for them to consider our proposed amendment to insert a new clause to

deal with truth in electoral advertising. As it happens, the minister has since indicated that the government will be moving that the bill gets referred to the joint standing committee to consider this very matter. We are pleased to hear that. That's a fantastic outcome.

I have spoken to members previously about our proposed amendment, that we would refer this bill to the joint standing committee to look at. I've circulated it for people to view. As I've said before, I'm not moving this as an amendment to this bill, but Ms O'Connor, who has the integrity and democracy portfolio, and myself will write to the Chair to formally refer this to them for their consideration in the matter that the government will be referring this bill to discuss. I will read our proposed motion in now, which would be a new clause A to follow clause 4 in the electoral amendment bill before us:

A, section 197 substituted:

Section 197 of the Principal Act is repealed and the following sections are substituted:

197. Communication of misleading electoral matter.

A person must not communicate or permit or authorise the communication of any electoral matter that -

- (a) is intended, is likely, or has the capacity, to mislead or deceive an elector in or in relation to the recording of electors' votes; or
- (b) contains incorrect or misleading information about whether a person is or is not,
 - (i) a candidate; or
 - (ii) a candidate for a particular division; or
 - (iii) a registered member of a registered party, or a party; or
 - (iv) a registered party; or
- (c) uses -
 - (i) the name, an abbreviation or acronym of the name, or a derivative of the name of a registered party, or a name or abbreviation resembling such a name, abbreviation, acronym, or derivative in a way that is intended or is likely to mislead an elector; or
 - (ii) the word *independent* and the name or an abbreviation or acronym of the name, or a derivative of the name, of a registered party in a way that suggests or indicates an affiliation with that party; or
- (d) could result in an elector casting an informal vote; or
- (e) contains a statement, whether express or implied, to the effect that voting is not compulsory; or

- (f) contains a statement intended or likely to mislead an elector in relation to whether the electoral matter is an official communication from the Commissioner or the Commission.

Penalty: Fine not exceeding 200 penalty units, or imprisonment for a term not exceeding 6 months, or both.

197A. A person not to authorise or publish misleading electoral advertising

- (1) In this section *electoral advertisement* means electoral matter that is published on the payment or transfer, or the promise of payment or transfer, of consideration or other reward or compensation.
- (2) A person must not authorise, or cause, or permit the publication of an electoral advertisement if the advertisement contains a statement that -
 - (a) is or purports to be a statement of fact; and
 - (b) is inaccurate or misleading in respect of a material particular.

Penalty: Fine not exceeding 200 penalty units, or imprisonment for a term not exceeding 6 months, or both.

- (3) It is a defence in proceedings for an offence under subsection (2) in respect of an electoral advertisement if the defendant establishes that -
 - (a) the defendant did not have the authority or permission to correct the material particular in the electoral advertisement that was misleading, inaccurate or incorrect, or
 - (b) the defendant did not know, and could not reasonably be expected to know, that the material particular in the electoral advertisement was inaccurate or misleading, or
 - (c) the electoral advertisement was published for a dominant purpose that is satirical, academic or artistic.

4. In the proceedings for an offence under subsection 2 in respect of an electoral advertisement, the relevant court for the proceedings may, in addition to making any other order or imposing a penalty or sanction in respect of the offence, make one or more of the following orders -

- (a) that the defendant is to withdraw the advertisement from further publication.

(b) that the defendant is to publish a retraction in the matter and on the terms specified in the order.

(c) that the defendant is to pay the costs of another person, as specified in the order, that were reasonably incurred by the other person in correcting or contesting or disproving the inaccurate or misleading material particular in the advertisement.

5. If the Commissioner is satisfied that an electoral advertisement is inaccurate or misleading in respect of a material particular, the Commissioner may require the person who authorised or published the electoral advertisement to do one or more of the following -

(a) to withdraw the advertisement from further publication;

(b) to publish a retraction in the manner and on the terms as specified by the Commissioner;

(c) To pay the costs of another person, as specified by the Commissioner, that the Commissioner is satisfied were reasonably incurred by the other person in correcting or contesting or disproving the inaccurate or misleading material particular in the advertisement.

6. If the Commissioner requires a person to take an action under subsection 5, the person must comply with that requirement.

Penalty: Fine not exceeding 200 penalty units or imprisonment for a term not exceeding six months, or both.

Honourable Deputy Speaker, we look forward to hearing the consideration of the Joint Standing Committee for Electoral Matters on this and any other matter related to truth in political advertising they see fit. The Greens have long campaigned for the change in this bill and we're pleased to see it finally going through, albeit with a little circuitous route through the joint standing committee. It's well past time. The most recent example of the ridiculous application of section 196 was during the last election.

Finally, a question about how-to-vote cards. Minister, can you confirm that there will be, for the avoidance of doubt, no problem for people who would be doing what many community groups do, which is to present candidates' views in an election campaign and how they line up with the community group's interests, for example, through a tick-a-box kind of list ranking them, or a cross-tick sort of scorecard. I understand the change before us today in section 196, would mean that that form of communication, like other communications that mention a candidate's name, would be a valid form of communication and would not fall foul of the law anymore. Therefore, people would be able to rest easy at the next election, whenever that may be, and feel comfortable in accurately reflecting the views they've heard from candidates and not being charged for doing so.

In closing, I give particular thanks to our Electoral Commissioner, Andrew Hawkey, for his professionalism and integrity, for the team he leads and the work they do. They are an

essential guardian of our democratic processes in elections in Tasmania, and we are lucky to have their hard work, perseverance, good humour and thorough decency in the work that they do. It's always a pleasure engaging with them. I think all of us in this place understand that we are here as a result of an impeccable process of election management and counting, and that rigour puts us in stark contrast to many other countries around the world with democracies that are in a parlous state. Long may it remain that way.

[3.59 p.m.]

Mr ABETZ (Franklin - Treasurer) - Deputy Speaker, the government supports the intent of this bill and remains committed to seeing it proceed. The bill aims to address longstanding concerns about section 196 of the *Electoral Act 2004* by limiting its operation to how-to-vote cards. This is an important and sensible reform that responds to recommendations arising from the *Electoral Act* review. However, the bill was referred, in the last parliament, by the other place, to the Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters. It is appropriate that the committee resume that work and report back to the parliament. The Attorney-General committed to supporting the referral. At the same time, he quite properly wanted members of this House to have the opportunity to speak to the bill and place their views on the parliamentary record before the referral occurred. That opportunity is now being provided.

The referral should not be interpreted as any weakening of the government's support for the intent of the bill. The committee's consideration will allow the relevant legal, practical and electoral issues to be examined while providing an opportunity for interested parties to contribute to the inquiry. The government looks forward to receiving the committee's report and progressing this important reform.

Therefore, Acting Deputy Speaker, I move, in the amendment that I understand has been circulated in my name –

Leave out all words after 'that'

Insert instead 'The Electoral Amendment Bill 2025 (No 62) be referred to the Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters for inquiry and report thereon.'

I understand that has the support of the House.

Amendments agreed to.

Motion, as amended, agreed to.

TASMANIAN COMMUNITY FUND AMENDMENT BILL 2025 (No. 55)

Second Reading

[4.02 p.m.]

Mr JAENSCH (Braddon - Minister for Community and Multicultural Affairs) - Thank you, honourable Deputy Speaker. I move -

That the bill be now read the second time.

Firstly, I would like to acknowledge the outstanding work undertaken by the Tasmanian Community Fund board and staff. I'd also like to thank members of this House for their insightful contributions regarding the previous version of the bill that came before the House earlier in 2025. The Tasmanian government is committed to ensuring accountability of the Tasmanian Community Fund (TCF) and its processes. To this end, we are proposing targeted amendments that provide enhanced transparency and community confidence in the governance, decision-making, structures and processes of the Tasmanian Community Fund. The amendments address several issues and concerns identified in the Auditor-General's August 2024 report *Tasmanian Community Fund referendum support and assessment of grant funding to Australians for Indigenous Constitutional Recognition Ltd*. The amendment bill before us seeks to improve the rigour and transparency of the statutory framework that applies to the operation of the Tasmanian Community Fund through requiring the Tasmanian Community Fund board to conduct and document due diligence; adopt a better-practice grant management framework; provide regular guidance, training and clear direction to assist with remaining apolitical and impartial; and to adopt better-practice record management.

The amendment bill provides explicit direction that the Tasmanian Community Fund board must undertake actions apolitically and must act in a professional and impartial manner in performing its functions and exercising its powers more generally. As 'apolitical' is not defined under the *Tasmanian Community Fund Act 2005*, the ordinary dictionary meaning is deferred to. This defines apolitical as having no interest in political issues, and not involving obligations to a particular political party. I believe this amendment will provide greater public confidence in the Tasmanian Community Fund and an understanding that the Tasmanian Community Fund board's duties will remain apolitical and consistent.

This, I hope, will help in consolidating the important role the TCF board holds within the Tasmanian community. The amendment bill makes it explicit that the TCF board is to comply with the requirements of the *Archives Act 1983* and the *Audit Act 2008*, ensuring accurate and accountable record keeping is maintained as should be expected. The inclusion of this amendment highlights the importance of accurate record keeping into the future. Importantly, the amendments ensure that the TCF is complying with a contemporary, best-practice grants management framework. As required under the *Public Accounts Committee Act 1970*, the amended bill highlights that public funds provided to the TCF board for the distribution of grants are considered grant expenditure. This amendment allows for these grants to be scrutinised by the Public Accounts Committee as and where it is considered necessary and appropriate. This will provide rigour surrounding TCF board processes and peace of mind that public funds are appropriately expended.

The amendment bill seeks to enhance the grants management process of the TCF on an ongoing basis, including the need for the TCF board to conduct an independent external audit of its compliance with its grant management framework every four years. It will also enable the public to be consulted on the Tasmanian Community Fund strategic plan and ensures accountability by directing the TCF board to prepare, publish and annually report against the strategic plan. The principles of these amendments strengthen accountability and build an important framework for the expenditure of public funds by the TCF board, while ensuring they remain apolitical, independent and transparent.

The proposed amendments do not seek to limit the independence of the TCF board. Rather, they are intended to explicitly articulate the parliament's expectations in relation to the prudent and appropriate management of public funds the Tasmanian Community Fund

administers on behalf of the Tasmanian community. The amendments bring the board's accountability and governance obligations into line with those of other statutory boards with similar responsibilities for public funds. In essence, the Tasmanian Community Fund provides a service to the Tasmanian community, and the proposed bill will allow the Tasmanian community to have more oversight and input into the functions of the fund, its board and the way it distributes grants to the community.

This amendment bill will enable us to conclude matters in relation to the Auditor-General's report, and I commend the board for actioning the recommendations stipulated in the report. The Tasmanian government has consulted with the TCF board chair on the revisions in the Tasmanian Community Fund Amendment Bill 2025 and has been advised that the proposed amendments are supported by the TCF board. It is my belief that we must proceed with the bill to provide Tasmanians with surety that we have acted on the Auditor-General's recommendations and support the continued work of the Tasmanian Community Fund. It is my hope that this bill will become a driver of change through which Tasmanians can be provided surety surrounding the transparency, independence and equity in the TCF board and processes going forward. Honourable Deputy Speaker, I commend the bill to the House.

[4.09 p.m.]

Mrs GREENE (Bass) - Thank you, honourable Deputy Speaker. I rise to speak on the Tasmanian Community Fund Amendment Bill 2025. Labor supports strong governance, transparency and accountability around the Tasmanian Community Fund. It is, of course, public money. Tasmanians should have confidence that grants are assessed properly, decisions are documented, records are maintained and the fund operates independently and impartially. On those principles, I wish to advise that Labor will be supporting the bill. The bill responds to the Auditor-General's 2024 examination of the Tasmanian Community Fund, and in particular its grant to Australians for Indigenous Constitutional Recognition during the Voice referendum campaign. It's difficult to escape the feeling, however, that the government only became suddenly very interested in the governance of the Tasmanian Community Fund when it did something that the government did not particularly like. They quickly moved to bring on legislative change, and there have been multiple attempts to bring this legislation on for debate from the merry-go-round of ministers within the Community Services portfolio. I note it has changed since the last time it was introduced into this place.

Of course, that does not mean that the Auditor-General's findings should be ignored: quite the opposite. Where deficiencies have been identified, they should be fixed. There is an important distinction between strengthening governance and using governance reforms as a political reaction to a particular decision. That distinction matters. The Tasmanian Community Fund is meant to be independent, and its independence should not only be respected when governments agree with the decisions that it makes. Independence means accepting that from time to time the independent board may make decisions that ministers and the government may not have made themselves but that is actually the point.

This bill makes it explicit that the board must act professionally, impartially and apolitically. That is very reasonable. It requires a proper grant management framework based on contemporary best practice. That is very reasonable as well. It strengthens requirements around record-keeping, auditing and parliamentary scrutiny. Again, very reasonable. It requires external performance audits every four years and it requires public consultation on the fund's strategic plan, along with annual reporting against that plan. I believe that these are sensible

mechanisms to strengthen public confidence. I have faith in the TCF board, ably led by Kym Goodes.

While we legislate around the fund being apolitical, the government should remember that that obligation cuts both ways. The fund should not become political, but neither should the government politicise the fund every time it makes a decision that it doesn't like. It's very disappointing that some chose to weaponise the fund and the board. If we genuinely believe in arms-length decision-making, then we have to believe in it consistently, not only when the grants are politically convenient and not only when the recipients are uncontroversial. The Auditor-General made findings and there were lessons to be learned around decision-making, documentation and grant management. Those lessons have been acted on and the board didn't need legislation to do that.

For decades the fund has supported local clubs, community organisations, cultural groups, volunteers, neighbourhood facilities and projects that would otherwise struggle to get off the ground. Across Tasmania, people know the Tasmanian Community Fund because they've seen what it can do in their communities. That work really matters, and the independence of the fund matters too. Likewise, making it clear that the fund is subject to the *Archives Act*, the *Audit Act* and potential scrutiny by the Public Accounts Committee should strengthen accountability without undermining its operational independence.

If the government has learned from the Auditor-General's report, that is a good thing. If the Tasmanian Community Fund has learned from it, that is a good thing too but I hope that the government has learnt an additional lesson. Independent bodies will occasionally make decisions that governments do not like. The answer cannot be to reach into the legislative toolbox every time that happens. Our job is to make sure that rules are robust, the processes are transparent and public money is properly accounted for. Then we allow independent bodies to go ahead and do their job. This bill strengthens many of those safeguards, and Labor supports greater transparency and accountability. I will also continue to defend the independence of the Tasmanian Community Fund and hope that they're never subject again to attacks like they have been in recent years.

[4.14 p.m.]

Ms ROSOL (Bass) - Deputy Speaker, I rise to speak on the Tasmanian Community Fund Amendment Bill 2025. In 2023, the Tasmanian Community Fund endorsed a position to support the establishment of an Aboriginal Voice to Parliament through a 'Yes' vote at a referendum. So began the protracted journey to the bill we are debating here today. It is this back story to the bill that means the Greens will not be supporting it. This is not a new or surprising position. We didn't support the bill last time it came to parliament and we still don't because it is a politically-motivated and unnecessary bill. The Greens are big supporters of the Tasmanian Community Fund and good process. We, along with many Tasmanians, are grateful for the many wonderful projects the TCF has supported over many years. The Tasmanian Community Fund was established in 1999 with proceeds from the sale of the Trust Bank. It was set up to ensure benefit from the sale of the Trust Bank flowed to the people of Tasmania and that this benefit was maintained for the long term. We've all been witness to the projects and programs that have been enabled by the TCF over the years since. According to the TCF website, which I checked quickly earlier today, since the first funding round in the year 2000, the TCF board has assessed more than 9900 grant applications for funding and awarded more than \$152 million in grants to over 3310 projects across the state. That's an amazing legacy.

I was part of a successful application for funding in the early 2010s when an adult literacy program was funded through two Neighbourhood Houses in Launceston. Functional literacy rates in Tasmania are amongst the lowest in the country. The TCF grant meant we were able to assist adults to gain literacy skills in a place they knew and where they felt safe. Helping adults gain literacy skills is just one example of the many important ways Tasmanians have been supported by the TCF to grow and flourish. More recently, the TCF has supported organisations such as Karinya's young women's service to develop an intensive case-management model that sits alongside their accommodation support. We heard earlier this year how transformational this program is for the young people Karinya works with. Melaythenner Teeackana Warrana Aboriginal Corporation received a grant for their Tebrakunna Rangers program, building both the skills and knowledge of the rangers but also strengthening the Tasmanian Aboriginal community in the north-east of the state.

The TCF has also supported infrastructure that benefits the whole community. The fund has more recently focused on strengthening and equipping organisations to do meaningful work in their communities. The Greens applaud the TCF and their ongoing commitment to doing good and building community strength across Tasmania. The benefits from the sale of the Trust Bank really do continue today. That's why it is so disturbing to see the way the Liberals treated the TCF in the wake of the 2023 referendum. To refresh your memory, there was tripartisan support in Tasmania for the 'Yes' vote for an Aboriginal Voice to parliament. The Liberal government in Tasmania supported the Voice. So, too, did Labor and the Greens. In this context of three-way support, the TCF board made a decision to provide funding to an organisation that was involved in educating the community about the referendum, including a position on the referendum that all three political parties supported. From the board's perspective, the application from Reconciliation Tasmania was for the purposes of education, which fitted within their agreed focus at the time, and so they granted the funding. Another part of the TCF context was their history of providing support for grants that assist the Tasmanian Aboriginal community.

So, there were three political parties who all agreed and supported the referendum, and the TCF, who held an educational focus as part of their strategy had a long history of providing grants to Aboriginal communities. In that context, their grant was eminently reasonable. However, that's not the way a Liberal senator saw it because, at a federal level, the Liberals did not support the Voice to parliament. Senator Jonno Duniam took offence that the TCF had the audacity to support a position he did not support, regardless of the state context. Senator Duniam referred the grant to the Auditor-General. We don't know if anyone else had any issues with this grant, but Senator Duniam, in a highly political move, referred the grant to the Auditor-General because he didn't like it or agree with it.

Suddenly, the TCF had become a political football itself, used by the federal Liberals to exact revenge because even though they too initially supported the referendum, they found it suddenly politically expedient to oppose the Voice and stoke the racist flames in our country that have only continued to grow since. It is pretty disgusting on the part of the federal Liberals, and if they're feeling political pain now in the polls, they only have themselves to blame for choosing to go lower and lower and drag all of us down with them. The result has been that the TCF has come under threat of losing its independence and instead become subject to control by the government.

The Liberals have form here. One of the commitments in the inaugural budget of the Hodgman Liberal government in 2014 was to abolish the independent TCF board and establish

an unpaid independent panel so that funds could be reallocated to be used by the government for its programs. The commitment was in direct opposition to the independence of the TCF, which has been an important principle of its function since the beginning. The TCF was deliberately established to function separately from government, to be at arms length, so the government cannot be involved in, or influence funding decisions. The TCF has the power to make independent decisions that are for the benefit of the community, not the benefit of the government of the day. That's an important principle to maintain, and it's the reason why the Greens oppose this bill. The bill is politically motivated and designed to put the TCF in its place and make it more likely to make funding decisions that align with the Liberals' agenda.

Back to the referral by Senator Duniam to the Auditor-General: the Auditor-General completed his report and made a number of recommendations which the minister referred to earlier in his second reading speech. The recommendations were to do with improving decision-making processes, record-keeping, and ensuring impartial and apolitical action by TCF staff. I note that the Auditor-General made no recommendation to enforce this through legislation. These were recommendations to the TCF board to implement internally. I understand from speaking to the chair of the TCF board that the recommendations have now been implemented - something the minister confirmed earlier. This clearly shows this legislation is not necessary and is part of a political witch hunt by the right wing of the Liberal Party. It is an overreach and an attempt by them to influence TCF grants which are currently wisely and rightly kept separate from government.

I can't go further in this debate today without reflecting on the truly awful rhetoric that was spouted by Mr Ellis and Mr Abetz during the second reading debate in March last year. In black and white, plain and simple, those ministers outlined the case that this bill was designed to punish the TCF for indirectly supporting the 'Yes' campaign. Mr Ellis, proudly and with a smile on his face, spoke about his public championing of the 'No' vote against his party room. Mr Abetz said that Tasmania's 'huge No vote' was evidence that the Tasmanian people don't support the TCF's granting of this funding. Although they claimed that people on both sides of the campaign complained about the grant, the only person known to have complained is Liberal Senator Jonno Duniam. As I and others in this place have already mentioned, the TCF board implemented all the recommendations from the Auditor-General's report before this bill ever came to parliament. There is no need for this bill. There has never been a need for this bill. The problem the government asserts that this bill seeks to fix has already been fixed. This bill has one purpose: to punish the TCF for supporting the 'Yes' campaign.

Despite there being no need for these amendments, the government has pressed ahead with them because they just can't help themselves. They don't know who they are unless they are throwing their weight around and telling people to do things their way or else. That's why the Greens remain concerned by this legislation and cannot support it. I will speak, in particular, about what the minister describes as the 'explicit direction' to be apolitical. Note the strength of the language there - 'explicit direction'. It's a do what we say, or else, moment. I note that the government have chosen not to define what they mean by 'political purpose' or 'apolitical' in the legislation, and there is no definition in the supporting documents either. This is a problem we raised the first time this bill was debated. In his second reading speech today, the minister has referred to the ordinary dictionary meaning for 'apolitical', that being, having no interest in political issues and not involving obligations to a particular political party.

I still ask: what does that even mean in the context of this legislation, because everything is political, everything can be considered a political issue? Nothing is truly objective because

we all see things a little differently, we all value things in a different way. Even homelessness is political when a government refuses to fund sufficient shelters and housing. How about Aboriginal justice issues, LGBTQIA+ issues, environmental issues? These can all be considered political issues. There's barely a day goes by when I don't disagree with a Liberal government funding decision because their priorities and values are so fundamentally different to my own.

Even education funding is political, something clearly demonstrated by the Liberal federal government when they slashed funding from the tertiary education sector and beefed up the fees for humanities courses. This was clearly politically motivated because the Liberals dislike the arts, those courses that lead to a population who thinks, feels, understands, critiques and challenges the status quo. Now they're doing it at a state level, cutting TAFE creative arts courses with heartless abandon. The Liberals don't like the arts because it's hard to control people who understand what's going on, so they cut funding for education, a political funding decision that has had significant flow-on effects. That includes the disincentive of arts courses for students who don't want a student debt of more than \$50,000 that will take more than 25 years to pay off.

Nothing is apolitical, and if the Liberals don't mind cutting funding for arts and education, what other education funding decisions might they consider political? They'd be able to hold onto power for even longer if people can't understand what's happening because they can't read about the terrible job this government is doing. It doesn't take much imagination to think of a whole host of funding grants the government might take issue with because they disagree with them. Is the government suggesting the TCF should not support any organisation or group who applies for funding for a project that might be considered differently by different people? They'd never be able to fund anything in that case.

The current form of clause 5 in the legislation, amending section 7 of the principal act, is certainly better than the previous version of this legislation introduced in 2024. However, the Greens do not consider it necessary or appropriate to include this clause in the legislation. I will be moving to go into committee so that we can vote against the clause because including the words 'political purpose' and 'apolitical' in this bill opens the TCF up to interference, the government taking issue with any grant because they consider it political when it disagrees with their narrow world view. Those words make this bill dangerous and a serious threat to the independence of the Tasmanian Community Fund. In my conversations with the current chair of the TCF board, she expressed a need for a broader review of the *Tasmanian Community Fund Act 2005*. This is a sensible suggestion. A broader review of the whole act rather than this selective, politically motivated bit-piece amendment seems appropriate given it is now over 20 years since the original legislation was passed, and given that we've had an election in between and there's been plenty of time to look at this bill more fully.

Let me step it out: the TCF board decision to fund education during the 2023 referendum campaign was not any more or less political than any other funding decision. The federal Liberals took offence at the grant and turned it into a political issue. The Auditor-General recommended improvements to procedural diligence, and these recommendations have been actioned by the TCF board in a much timelier manner than this government ever actions recommendations, I might add. The Auditor-General did not recommend legislation in his report, so this legislation is the government's own brainchild that is an attempt at overreach. The whole *Tasmanian Community Fund Act* could do with a review, not just this politically motivated fiddling around the edges. Ultimately, this amendment bill is politically motivated.

In their attempt to erroneously call out the TCF board for being supposedly political, the government have themselves turned this into a shameful political circus that reveals their desperate need to control funding even in organisations that are supposed to be independent. The Greens do not support this bill and we are disgusted by the Liberal government's attempts to introduce interference into the function and decision-making processes of the Tasmanian Community Fund.

[4.29 p.m.]

Ms OGILVIE (Clark) - Deputy Speaker, it's my great pleasure to speak on this matter and to support Mr Jaensch in bringing this through. I note the great team that's here to support the bill: lovely to see you here. I'd like to personally clarify something. I think that was a very well considered and lengthy contribution. The Liberals do not dislike the arts. We love the arts. I love the arts. We've increased the arts funding by \$10 million, and I personally was responsible for negotiating \$4.5 million for the Tasmanian Symphony Orchestra to improve their recording studio and building.

Ms Rosol - Pity about educating artists.

Ms OGILVIE - I will also say, because I can hear you chipping in, just so that you're aware: I myself am a seventh-grade AMEB (Australian Music Examination Board) graduate in oboe. I've played in the Youth Orchestra. I have degrees in classical studies and the arts from the University of Melbourne - it was very hard to get into. I've spent 30 years as an IP (Intellectual Property) lawyer specialising in the arts, tech and IP. I lent my voice to the federal government's consideration of how to protect our creative sector and industries and to ensure that AI was not allowed to steal IP and copyright. I'm very proud of Australia and Tasmania in relation to that, and I just wonder whether some of your speech felt a bit AI-ish, and I just wonder whether you might consider that -

Ms Rosol - Completely written by humans, by myself, thank you very much.

Ms OGILVIE - Thank you for letting us know that; it's always good to know. I'm for AI, I use it and I like it. It's particularly good fun using those images. Back to the matter at hand: the Tasmanian Community Fund has played an important role in supporting projects and initiatives that strengthen communities right across our beautiful state of Tasmania. We're aware that it's a really valuable community asset and it helps to strengthen the social ties. We know that's really important when times are tough, in particular, these investments that it's able to make, we would consider them strategic investments, and we heard a little bit about the size and the quantum of the grants that have been able to be deployed, which is a great thing. Every dollar counts, Deputy Speaker, isn't that right? Every dollar counts. Enabling groups and organisations to deliver services to improve the lives of Tasmanians, that's something we all want and these sorts of organisations are crucial to that, particularly to help groups and smaller community groups that might otherwise struggle to get funding.

We're all about innovation, we're about collaboration and long-term positive change which we would like to see throughout the state. This is about people, this is about families and mums and dads and people getting together to work out what they need to do to improve their local communities and improve organisations that they work with. I think that is the great power and strength of the community fund. It's been around a while and it has a lot of knowledge about how to go about doing this good work, and how to engage with individuals but it is really important to ensure that governance is strong, that processes and procedures are measurable,

and that that sense of connection that I spoke of, which is so fundamental to being human and so fundamental to being Tasmanian, includes a sense of equity and fairness. We get that from really good processes and governance structures.

I'm really pleased to see this bill come forward. We know that the amendments proposed in the legislation are informed, as we've heard through the Auditor-General's 2024 review of the funds, processes and decision-making arrangements. We have a strong commitment to responding constructively to the findings and ensuring that the highest standards of governance apply and do apply. It's really good to hear support in the Chamber, at least from the other side.

Public confidence in the administration of the fund, how they go about their business, how we engage with the fund, how we clarify expectations in relation to its operations, and how we improve oversight of those arrangements is the topic at hand. The TCF board will formally undertake and properly record due diligence activities. That's good. It will implement a best-practice grants management framework. We know how important that is. We've seen that right through the arts and we've done all of that work in the arts land - I know that Roger Jaensch will be leading some of that too in his new portfolio - improve record-keeping processes and, importantly, ensure that members receive appropriate guidance and training to support sound decision-making.

The bill itself reinforces expectations. We'd like the board to ensure it performs its responsibilities independently, impartially and without political interference. I think we all know what political interference is. Tasmanians do, rightly, expect that grant funding decisions are made on merit and in the interests of the community, and there's a great deal of knowledge base out there in relation to those matters. By explicitly requiring the board to act in an apolitical manner, this legislation strengthens confidence that decisions will continue to be based on objective assessment and, importantly, on community benefit. The bill also expressly requires compliance with relevant legislative requirements concerning archives and auditing. The amendment helps to ensure that decisions and processes are documented appropriately and can withstand public scrutiny.

The fund will be required to maintain a contemporary grants-management framework. In relation to that, I'd just like to express my wholesome support for that as we've gone about work throughout the arts sector in particular. Grant-making is a specialist area, so it is a matter of continuous improvement. I'm very pleased to see the community fund doing that work. I have mentioned, of course, good governance and how much that matters, and it is meaningful to a sense of trust that is built. We want to enhance that. The community engagement plan: we want to see that fund strategic plan, make sure that engages in a proper dialogue with our community. We just hope that these measures will build a stronger connection between the fund and the community that it serves. Greater transparency is important for long-term direction, but greater transparency also builds trust and helps our community to engage at that level.

The amendments also clarify that public funds distributed through the fund's grant programs are subject to the scrutiny mechanisms available to the Public Accounts Committee. I believe this is a very prudent and sensible approach that allows the centre of democracy, which is this Chamber and the Chamber upstairs, to have that scrutiny and to make sure that we have another set of eyes across those matters. It's an additional layer of accountability, and supports that responsible stewardship of public resources that we have been discussing in the Chamber today. I believe it's important also to emphasise that these reforms are absolutely not intended to diminish the independence of the Tasmanian Community Fund. Rather, they are

intended to strengthen the framework within which that independence operates. It will protect that as well. The board will continue to exercise its functions independently, but will do so with clearer legislative guidance, which is a positive; stronger governance requirements, that's positive; and enhanced accountability arrangements that reflect contemporary expectations for the management of public funds.

We all, I think, acknowledge and thank the board's willingness to engage constructively in the development of these reforms, I think that's very healthy, and its commitment to implementing the recommendations arising from the Auditor-General's report. I would also like to convey that there's been close consultation between the government, the chair and the chair of the board regarding the amendments, and our understanding is that the reforms are supported. By passing this legislation, we will ensure the Tasmanian Community Fund remains well placed to support Tasmanian communities for many years to come. I support this amendment bill. I congratulate the minister and I look forward to seeing more of the good work of our much-loved Tasmanian Community Fund continue.

[4.39 p.m.]

Mr VERMEY (Clark) – Thank you, Deputy Speaker. I, too, stand to go along. At the onset, I want to acknowledge the extraordinary contribution the state community fund has made to our state. For two decades, the fund has supported projects that strengthen local organisations, improve community wellbeing, foster participation and build resilience in every corner of Tasmania. Thousands of Tasmanians have benefited from the grants that have helped deliver community infrastructure, support vulnerable people, promote inclusion, and enhance the quality of life of our state. The work of the fund is deeply valued, and nothing in this bill diminishes its contribution. Rather, this bill seeks to strengthen it.

The purpose of this bill is straightforward: it's about strengthening governance, improving transparency, and reinforcing public confidence in the administration of public funds. As mentioned before, it responds to matters identified by the Auditor-General in the August 2024 report concerning the Tasmanian Community Fund's referendum support and assessment of grant funding. The government has a responsibility to ensure that lessons identified through such reviews are appropriately addressed and that our statutory authorities operate within robust, contemporary government frameworks. Importantly, the amendments before us are neither radical nor punitive. They do not seek to undermine the independence of the Tasmanian Community Fund board. In fact, the opposite is true. They seek to preserve and protect that independence by placing beyond doubt the standards of accountability, impartiality, and good governance expected by a board entrusted with significant public resources.

As you may remember, we have covered this territory before. This bill returns to the House in circumstances where the parliament has already considered, debated, and ultimately endorsed the policy intent underpinning these amendments. The question before members today is not whether these reforms are necessary in principle; the question has already been considered and resolved by this House. The Tasmanian government is committed to legislate reform following the Auditor-General's August 2024 report *Tasmanian Community Fund referendum support and assessment of grant funding to Australians for Indigenous Constitutional Recognition Ltd*, which identified differences in aspects of the Tasmanian Community Fund's governance and decision-making processes.

The government has developed amendments to strengthen accountability, transparency and governance arrangements within the Tasmanian Community Fund. The original Tasmanian Community Fund Amendment Bill 2024 was introduced into parliament on 20 November 2024. Following its reintroduction, the bill was debated during the second reading stage on 13 March 2025. During that debate, members expressed concerns regarding several provisions, particularly the potential breadth of the reference to political activities in clause 5, section 7, and the inclusion of the phrase 'such as other matters as are prescribed' in clause 6 relating to the grant management framework and strategic plans. Members were concerned these provisions could have unintended consequences for the fund's independence.

In response, the government listened carefully to the views expressed by parliament, and engaged further with Tasmanian Community Fund board. Amendments were subsequently developed and addressed those concerns. Those amendments clarified the board's role in determining whether a grant is for a political purpose, reinforcing the requirements that the board act appropriately and remove provisions that could enable future expansion of the grant framework or strategic planning requirements through regulation rather than parliamentary scrutiny. With those changes incorporated, the bill returned to the House and was debated a second time. On 6 May 2025, the House of Assembly passed the bill, thereby indicating its support for the revised approach and principles contained within it. The bill therefore represents a position that has already been tested, amended and ultimately endorsed by parliament. Following the 2025 state election, the bill lapsed at prorogation on the 11 June 2025. Its lapse was not a consequence of any change in parliamentary support or policy direction; rather, it was simply a procedural consequence of the election and dissolution of parliament. The Tasmanian Community Fund Amendment Bill 2025 is therefore, in some sense, a conclusion of work already undertaken by this House.

The Office of Parliamentary Counsel has revised the legislation to reflect the amendments agreed to by the House of Assembly on 6 May 2025, and the bill before members today is the product of that previous parliamentary consideration agreement. Accordingly, members can have confidence that the legislation before us has already benefited from extensive scrutiny, debate, consultation and amendment. It reflects the concerns previously raised by parliament, maintains the independence of the Tasmanian Community Fund, and delivers the governance and accountability reforms that were originally sought in response to the Auditor-General's findings. Thank you.

[4.47 p.m.]

Mr JAENSCH (Braddon - Minister for Community and Multicultural Affairs) - Honourable Speaker, I thank members for their contributions. I thank Labor for their statement of support for the bill, as per its last passage through this Chamber. I note the Greens' continuing lack of support for the bill, consistent with their position last time. I do need to confirm a few things in response to the contributions that have been made. First for Mrs Greene, Labor member: I confirm that the bill and the second reading speech in front of us today has not been changed since its last -

Mrs Greene - I meant the time before that.

Mr JAENSCH - Yes, but since the last one and since the vote was held last time, this is unchanged, and the second reading, as I understand it, is also unchanged since then. So, it's the same as last time it was seen here. I do thank my predecessor minister, the member for Clark, Ms Ogilvie, for her carriage of this business and for its reintroduction into parliament post the

last election as well. There was some other commentary around the circumstances, which I'll refer briefly to a little later, but, Ms Rosol, I'm surprised that the Greens do not support increased transparency and stronger governance of the use of public funds. I think that's a pity. We do spend a lot of time talking about how important that is in this place and looking for evidence of interference or failures in good process, so we will remember that. These are quite a high standard we're seeking to apply here to the use of public funds. This is an important principle of transparent government and governance, and accountability as well, which we're seeking to uphold, and it's a shame that the Greens do not recognise that in the bill.

I do reject Ms Rosol's characterisation of the circumstances leading to the Auditor-General's investigation and report, and I do outright reject the inference that the amendments, in any way, make the TCF board and its processes somehow now subject to government influence or policy. I do challenge Ms Rosol to point to any evidence of that. There's nothing to that extent in this bill. I think it's part of a characterisation that the Greens prefer to hold on this one, but I believe it completely lacks any basis. I didn't hear those concerns raised in the contributions of other members. I haven't heard anything from the TCF board or other stakeholders who I've spoken to in relation to this bill and the proposed changes.

What it does do is make the board not more beholden to government, but far more transparent and accountable to the people of Tasmania, the Tasmanian community whose funds these are. I believe that's the great strength of the bill: not for government to have more control and scrutiny, but for the Tasmanian, too, and that's entirely appropriate. It's in the name of the fund and the act, and we need to ensure that the Tasmanian community sees its priorities and needs reflected in the strategies of the Tasmanian Community Fund, and that it recognises that the Tasmanian Community Fund is relevant to their needs at any point in time. That's why we have inserted a requirement for there to be a public process in the setting of strategic directions, the opportunity for public feedback on the priorities of the community fund as well, so that people do have a chance to influence that. That hasn't been a requirement in the past, but I think it's increasingly an expectation of any use of public funds.

It was one of the things that the Auditor-General did raise, amongst many: that in terms of investigating whether, or how, the board at that time had acted in accordance with its plans and good practice, one of the things raised was that those things weren't easy to identify. The record keeping, for example; the rigour around the strategy; the evidence of how this work and the priorities and the decisions made were linked back to some expression from the community of what they wanted. That doesn't in itself mean that the decisions were all wrong, but it means that it was very hard to account for them in terms of, here's what we're going to do, here's what we did, here's the result.

If the planning and the developing of criteria priorities, and the extent to which they serve the best interests of the community, hasn't been documented, then you can't hold the decision-making to account on those terms. That's what we read in the Auditor-General's findings and requirements. Whilst the Auditor-General didn't recommend - because I don't think this is what auditors-general necessarily do, to recommend that these things be legislated and how - he identified the deficiencies and gave the report to the responsible parties, in this case, myself at the time, as the minister responsible for this legislation, to point out where there were deficiencies. We have addressed them using the very high-level instruments that we have to influence the board, which isn't looking over its shoulder and influencing individual decisions, but by putting forward a set of reasonable expectations, some guardrails, and putting

them through the parliament to provide overall direction to the board in discharging its responsibilities. That's what we've done here.

This is the extent to which government can influence the decisions of the board: by me as a minister bringing a bill to this parliament for us to debate and approve, which then sets the broad parameters for the board to operate within. This is the only extent to which this bill and this act enable the government to influence the actions of the board. So, we're using it as is appropriate, and we believe it can set the board up for clarity about its roles and obligations into the future.

Ms Rosol brought up the fact that in the bill, and in the second reading speech I used the word 'explicit' regarding the requirement to be apolitical, and that 'explicit' was used in a way that it was an aggressive thing but it's not. This is legislation. If we're not implied, we're explicit. If we mean to make something certain, and to avoid doubt, we need to be explicit and specific in what we intend. In this case, in relation to the requirement to act apolitically - and in this regard, there's precedent for it in other legislation, which is what we asked the department and the Office of Parliamentary Counsel (OPC) to draw on in developing the amendments. What exists already in legislation to guide decision-making in the public sector and on the public's behalf when it comes to use of their funds? An example is the *State Service Act 2000*, Section 7 of which covering state service principles says very clearly, explicitly:

The State Service is apolitical, performing its functions in an impartial, ethical and professional manner.

It is explicit about apolitical. It's the first thing in that sentence that it says the state service must be. In this context, this explicit reference ensures that the public service is not politicised and must not act in a partisan way, which I would expect that the members of this House across the Chamber would expect. It's normal. It's an expectation that underpins the work of the parliament and the operation of the public service, and if it's accepted there, if we accept that the state service should be apolitical and that that is explicitly required in the legislation, why doesn't the same expectation apply here? This is the same thing.

It could be argued that previously it was implied that because we had a statutory board making decisions on the use of public funds that it should work as other statutory boards do, and the state service does in a politically impartial way. That is explicitly covered in the legislation. It is the same here. 'Implied' is clearly not enough for the Auditor-General to test whether the Tasmanian Community Fund had acted inappropriately with regard to the case that he was examining, so in terms of looking at precedent with the public service, and looking at the public's expectations as we read them, which is our job in this place, we've sought to make that explicit for the avoidance of doubt and also to keep the Tasmanian Community Fund Board safe. Good, clear definitions and boundaries assist an organisation in its processes. Where there's ambiguity, that's when there can be risk.

Mr Mitchell - How do you define what's political or apolitical?

Mr JAENSCH - We've covered that in the Second Reading Speech by reference to the common dictionary definition, but I thank you for the interjection. The bill does need to be explicit about this, and again I reject Ms Rosol's characterisation of the politics of the matter that brought the TCF's decision making before the Auditor-General. The matter in that case was not a matter of partisanship necessarily, although that was what Ms Rosol referred to in

terms of justifying the involvement on the basis that there was a perception that there was unanimity across the political parties regarding this matter. The issue is rather that the matter was one that was subject to a public vote: in this case, a referendum, the biggest public vote you get in our democracy. This was a matter that is generally given a very wide berth and respect because it's a matter which is to be decided by all the people. In this case, we had a situation where it was political, not necessarily on a partisan basis, but on a democracy basis, where individual Australians, every one of us got the opportunity to make our own vote.

In this case, the matter that was raised for examination by the Auditor-General was that public funds were being used not to educate about all aspects in the interests of public engagement in a civic process, but with the express purpose of supporting a particular outcome from a public vote, in which case it was interfering or seeking to influence, using public funds, on the public's behalf, the outcome of a decision that could only be made by the public and by every individual Australian. This is a matter which was rightly asked to be audited. There was an examination which showed up a range of governance deficits or, again, without necessarily saying that the board has been deficient in its decision-making, saying that the evidence and the machinery which you would use to determine that was hard to find or was bespoke or was unconventional in a matter where there were large amounts of public funding being used, and proposed a range of improvements to that which are embedded in this bill.

We make no apologies for being explicit about the expectations which, we believe, align with the public's expectations about how people make decisions on the use of their money through an independent group like the Tasmanian Community Fund, who they didn't vote for, who they don't get to question and challenge in this forum, but who, if this bill passes, will clearly be able to be examined by those people's representatives, us here in the parliament, through our Public Accounts Committee and other processes, because they will adhere to more of the conventions of public administration that exist, that are able to be examined and held accountable in those ways. That's what we're achieving with this bill.

I believe that, politics aside, the bill, as it was last time we saw it, and these matters are as relevant now as they were back then. We now have the added advantage of the lived experience of the TCF board effectively enacting voluntarily many of the requirements that are laid out in the bill and road-testing them, if you like. I understand that they're in an advanced stage with their new strategy, which they have consulted widely on and done through public process, and will soon be able to brief us all and explain to us what the strategy is - when I say 'us', I mean the Tasmanian community whose funds they hold - what their strategy is, what they heard, what priorities they're setting and how they're going to make the Tasmanian Community Fund available to people to draw down for those purposes.

I really want to thank the chair, Kym Goodes, and the TCF board and the staff who support them in their role, for the long and difficult work that they've done to reset and re-establish their own relationship with the Tasmanian community, understand its needs afresh and put them forward in a form that everyone will soon be able to see and hopefully recognise their needs and the capacity to respond to them in the Tasmanian Community Fund's strategy. With that, I'm just going to check with my advisers if there are any other matters arising that I need to respond to, look for a signal to any of those who had unanswered questions that they raised in their contributions. Again, I thank all of those who have supported this bill over a long journey through several outings in this place, and publicly through consultation and I commend the bill to the House again.

UNCORRECTED PROOF

The SPEAKER (Mrs Petrusma) - The question is that the second reading be agreed to.

The House divided.

AYES 26

Mr Abetz
Mrs Archer
Mr Barnett
Dr Broad
Ms Brown
Ms Burnet
Ms Butler
Mr Di Falco
Ms Dow
Mr Ellis
Mr Fairs
Mr Ferguson
Ms Finlay
Mr Garland
Mr George
Mrs Greene
Ms Haddad
Ms Howlett
Mr Jaensch
Mr Mitchell
Mr O'Byrne
Mr Pearce
Mr Shelton
Mr Vermey
Mr Willie
Ms Ogilvie (Teller)

NOES 5

Ms Badger
Mr Bayley
Ms Rosol
Dr Woodruff
Ms Johnston (Teller)

Bill read the second time.

[5.13 pm]

Mr JAENSCH (Braddon - Minister for Community and Multicultural Affairs) –Speaker,
I move -

That you do now leave the Chair and the House resolve itself into a committee to consider the bill.

Motion agreed to.

TASMANIAN COMMUNITY FUND AMENDMENT BILL 2025 (No. 55)

In Committee

Clauses 1 to 4 agreed to.

Clause 5 -

Section 7 amended.

Ms ROSOL – Thank you, Chair. I won't speak for very long because I think I outlined quite clearly in my second reading speech why I am seeking to focus on clause 5 here. That's because the Greens consider that it's unnecessary for any attempt to outline anything around the Tasmanian Community Fund not being able to do anything for a political purpose, when clearly every decision we make, everything we support or don't support is political. Where is the line drawn? It's not clear in this bill. It's not clear in the accompanying paperwork that goes with the bill, the accompanying documents. The Greens consider this is a significant risk in the bill to the independence of the Tasmanian Community Fund. We will be voting against this clause as I outlined earlier. Thank you.

Mr JAENSCH - This is a matter that has been discussed at length in the various debates that have been held on this bill. There are a couple of things that I would like to highlight, in addition to the matters that I raised in my summing up on the first part of the debate. When we were trying to come to definitions and how to determine, and in the Auditor-General's report there was reference to the questions of the political nature of the decision that was brought to his attention and the extent to which the board considered the risk associated with engagement of this issue and the decision it was going to make. Then, in terms of the processes the board was obliged to follow, what were their obligations at the time? What was found was that there was nothing to say that the board had to think about that stuff. This doesn't define and say, these are the things that the board must and must not do; what it does say is that the board has to give consideration, the board is forced, through this, to consider whether or not there is a political purpose. It's up to them in the context of the particular proposal at the time and their reading of the public's will as well, through their processes, to make that determination.

If, in the future, a decision of theirs was challenged, an auditor following up or a committee, or the Public Accounts Committee could say, you're meant to think about whether this thing has political nature to it. What did you do to satisfy yourself? It doesn't mean that there is the ability to reach in and say, you got that wrong, or you're not consistent with the government's views, or anybody else's at the time. It merely says, you have to think about these things; you're handling public money, this is your responsibility. You need to be able to explain yourself and this is one of the things you need to be able to give thought to. Rather than try to codify and direct, it's making it explicit that it's a responsibility of the board to give consideration to this in the interest of the public and transparency in the use of public funds.

We believe that these are very important matters. It's good enough for the *Public Service Act* to include these things explicitly. It's good enough for a group of people who aren't bound by the same sorts of contracts or scrutiny but who are nevertheless making decisions at arm's length from government about the use of public funds to be weighing these matters when they make their decision, not only apolitically, but independently, professionally, impartially and in the public interest, that they're required to do so. They need to be able to account for how they have met those requirements if they're ever tested by an auditor or an inquiry of some kind on the public's behalf. That's my response to the concern that Ms Rosol has raised. I don't think it equates in any way to a provision for the government of the day to reach in and influence the individual decisions made by the board.

UNCORRECTED PROOF

CHAIR - (Mr Mitchell in the Chair) - The question is that the clause as read stand part of the bill.

The Committee divided -

AYES 25

Mr Abetz
Mrs Archer
Mr Barnett
Dr Broad
Ms Brown
Ms Burnet
Ms Butler
Mr Di Falco
Ms Dow
Mr Ellis
Mr Fairs
Mr Ferguson
Ms Finlay
Mr George
Mrs Greene
Ms Haddad
Ms Howlett
Mr Jaensch
Mr O'Byrne
Mr Pearce
Mrs Petrusma
Mr Shelton
Mr Vermey
Mr Willie
Ms Ogilvie (Teller)

NOES 6

Ms Badger
Mr Garland
Ms Johnston
Ms Rosol
Dr Woodruff
Mr Bayley (Teller)

Clause 5, section 7 amended, agreed to.

Clauses 6 to 9 agreed to.

Title as read agreed to.

Bill reported without amendment.

Bill read the third time.

MESSAGE FROM THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL

The SPEAKER - I am in receipt of a message from the Legislative Council, which I shall ask the Clerk of the House to read.

HONOURABLE SPEAKER,

The Legislative Council having this day agreed to the following resolution and now transmits the same to the House of Assembly, and requests its concurrence therein: -

Resolved, That the terms of reference for the Joint Sessional Committee on Gender and Equality, as previously agreed to by resolutions of both Houses, be varied as follows:

1. In the introductory paragraph, inserting "Gender-based Violence" after "Sessional Gender"; and
2. by leaving out paragraph (1) and inserting instead:

"(1)(a) Any Bill referred to it by either House in order to examine gender, gender-based violence, and equality impacts, and any such Bill so referred shall be reported upon within 10 sitting days of its referral;

(b) Any matter related to gender, gender-based violence and equality referred to it by either House; and

(c) Any matter related to gender, gender-based violence and equality initiated by its own motion; and"

Legislative Council, 18 August 2026. C.M. FARRELL, *President.*

Mr ABETZ (Franklin - Leader of the House) - Honourable Speaker, I move -

That the message be considered forthwith.

Motion agreed to.

Mr ABETZ - I thank the House and I move -

That the resolution from the Legislative Council be agreed to.

Resolution agreed to.

MONETARY PENALTIES ENFORCEMENT AMENDMENT BILL 2026 (No. 16)

Second Reading

[5.28 p.m.]

Mr BARNETT (Lyons - Minister for Justice, Corrections and Rehabilitation) - Honourable Speaker, I move -

That the bill be now read the second time.

The *Monetary Penalties Enforcement Act* commenced operation in April 2008 and introduced a new way of collecting and enforcing the payment of fines, infringement notices, compensation and pecuniary penalty orders in Tasmania. It has successfully removed thousands of minor criminal matters from our court system, most of them uncontested minor traffic and related offences, which has freed up the courts, allowing them to focus on serious and contested matters. The act also created the role of Director, Monetary Penalties Enforcement Service (MPES), who is the sole authority for collection and enforcement of monetary penalties in Tasmania. This includes fines, compensation orders, pecuniary penalty orders, costs and levies imposed by courts, infringement notices issued by police and public sector bodies, and infringement notices issued by councils.

From the commencement of the act to 31 March 2026, MPES had collected more than \$363 million in monetary penalties. The amount referred to MPES for collection collected in 2024-25 was \$26.3 million, with a collection rate of 88 per cent. However, despite these successes, challenges remain with a significant proportion of offenders and debtors failing to engage with MPES and failing to make payments. For example, as of 1 March 2026, approximately 13,000, or 23 per cent, of all debtors owed \$19.5 million and had not made a payment for more than two years, despite reminders and enforcement action. The total debt outstanding as at 31 March 2026 was \$76.6 million, and approximately \$11.5 million was owed by debtors who are believed to be residing interstate or overseas. These are significant debts to the state and the Tasmanian community. It is important that we provide an appropriate legal framework to allow these debts to be collected. In doing so, we strengthen the rule of law and send the message that people will be held to account for their actions and will be made to pay for breaching the laws of our state.

This bill seeks to further improve the operation of the act. It will help to ensure the system operates efficiently and effectively, and continues to provide clear, accessible and enforceable collection pathways which incorporate natural justice checks and balances within the system, to provide fairness to all parties. The amendments include changes to orders for redirection of money owing to clarify that money can be redirected from enforcement debtors' bank accounts, which reflects the original intent of the act. The bill includes requirements for copies of all redirection of money owing orders to be served on the enforcement debtor, and for notification of circumstances and other information to be given to the director by certain parties in relation to redirection of money owing orders, to enhance the operation of these provisions.

A number of changes in the bill provide additional safeguards and review mechanisms for persons subject to redirection of money owing orders under the act. These changes recognise the difficult financial circumstances some individuals may face in repaying monetary debts or the implications that arise from being subject to a redirection order to recover an enforcement debtor's debt. These changes include broadening the financial safeguards in the act that apply to redirection of money owing orders to redirect earnings, to also apply to orders for redirection of money owing orders issued on a third person who is indebted to the enforcement debtor under the act. The need to ensure that persons owing debts to MPES were protected from unreasonable financial hardship was raised in submissions from the public, and my department has responded to ensure that appropriate safeguards exist in the bill.

Additionally, the bill also recognises the important roles of the Monetary Penalties Enforcement service staff and the director, and inserts provisions that strengthen protections which will allow them to continue to act in the performance of their duties safely. The bill

replaces the mandatory requirement for deductions of monetary penalties to be made from awards of compensation under the *Victims of Crime Assistance Act 1976* with a new discretion, leaving this determination to the Criminal Injuries Compensation Commissioner. It also expands the current provisions in the act relating to reciprocal enforcement arrangements with other jurisdictions.

I'll now briefly outline the reasons for each of the proposed changes. MPES generally uses a graduated collection and enforcement approach to the recovery of monetary penalties in Tasmania. Offenders are initially encouraged to pay through reminders and provided with opportunities to avoid additional enforcement fees and sanctions. However, if they fail or refuse to pay, an enforcement order can be issued. This notifies the offender that if they take no action to resolve their outstanding monetary penalties, then sanctions and further fees may be applied. These include: publication of name, suspension of driver licence, suspension of vehicle registration, redirection of money, charge on registered land, and seizure and sale of property.

The bill removes the sanction allowing the publishing of an enforcement debtor's name, address, licence number and the details of their monetary penalty, due to concerns around its implications for privacy, identity theft, stigmatisation of marginalised people and family violence victims. It is important to note that due to these concerns, this sanction has not been used since 2023. A redirection of money owing order, also known as a garnishment, allows the director of the Monetary Penalties Enforcement Service to require a person other than the offender to pay money towards the offender's debt. Redirection orders can either require wages or money owing to the offender, known as the enforcement debtor, by a third person to be redirected.

Currently, the redirection of money owing orders is limited to their application, with only three issued in the 2024-25 financial year. The bill makes a number of amendments to increase the ability to use redirection orders and improve their administration. The bill makes amendments in line with the original intent of the act to allow redirection of money from bank accounts. When the act was debated in this House on the 23 November 2005, the second reading speech stated:

The sanctions which the Director may impose under the bill include redirection of money from an offender's bank account. However, because the act currently refers to an order to redirect all or part of a debt owing to the enforcement debtor, there may be doubt as to whether 'debt' is the appropriate term for money held in banks or similar institutions.

To address this and restore the original intent of the act, the bill makes it clear that redirection of money-owing orders can be issued to an authorised deposit-taking institution, and clarifies that money in an account held by an enforcement debtor in an authorised deposit-taking institution is a debt owed to the enforcement debtor for the purposes of the act.

These amendments will apply retrospectively from the commencement of the principal act on 28 April 2008. This is a removal of doubt and validation provision intended to ensure that decisions to make redirection of money owing orders from enforcement debtors' bank accounts issued since the date of enforcement were validly made in accordance with the intent of the act. The bill also clarifies the obligations of the authorised deposit-taking institution in relation to receipt of a redirection order. Redirection of money-owing orders to redirect

earnings currently include a number of safeguards under the act to limit the potential to cause severe financial impacts on the enforcement debtor.

This bill inserts safeguards in relation to a decision to issue redirection of money owing orders on a person or Authorised Deposit-taking Institution (ADI) who is indebted to the enforcement debtor. The amendments require the director to consider any evidence before them on the enforcement debtor's means of satisfying the debt, the necessary living expenses of the enforcement debtor, and other liabilities of the enforcement debtor. The bill also inserts a requirement for MPES to issue a copy of a redirection of a money-owing order on the enforcement debtor as soon as practicable after issue. This recognises that while these orders are issued on third parties, they affect the financial situation of the enforcement debtor.

The redirection of money-owing orders made under the redirection of earnings provisions of the act place responsibilities on an employer and affect the financial situation of the enforcement debtor. To ensure these responsibilities reflect the status of employment of the enforcement debtor, the bill inserts a new requirement for an employer and enforcement debtor to notify the director of any significant changes to the employment status of the enforcement debtor within a specified period. The bill clarifies that the director may issue an order for redirection of earnings on the employer and, additionally, in circumstances where the enforcement debtor is a sole trader. It also strengthens protections for sole traders by making it clear that employers, including those who make payments under a contract for services, must not directly or indirectly disclose or communicate to any person any information about the enforcement debtor's financial affairs.

To further support the administering and enforcement of the act, including the issuing of redirection orders, the bill allows the director to require a person to provide information or documents about a specific matter within a reasonable period and in a stated reasonable way.

In addition to current difficulties in recovering debt from Tasmanian residents, where an offence under Tasmanian law is committed and the offender relocates or resides outside the state, many of the enforcement actions that would otherwise be available to the director cannot be applied or are of limited effect. Part 9 of the act provides for reciprocal enforcement of monetary penalties. These reciprocal arrangements currently allow for enforcement of certain penalties through a court request process. Reciprocal legislation currently exists in Queensland and New South Wales. Currently, recovery through this process is expensive, difficult, and often inefficient. The relevant acts limit the type of monetary penalties that can be enforced under this system, with a focus on court-imposed penalties. There are also complexities as to how the payments of these penalties are managed and recovered. Recovery of monetary penalties through a court request system is no longer the only option for state and territories with the establishment of enforcement bodies in all jurisdictions.

In 2013, New South Wales introduced the amendments to the *Fines Act 1996 (NSW)* to enable requests for interstate fine enforcement between enforcement agencies and recovery of a broader range of monetary penalties, including both court-imposed penalties and infringement notices. The amendments to the *Fines Act 1996 (NSW)* only apply where a state or territory has passed legislation to become a participating jurisdiction for the purposes of enforcement of interstate fines. Other states are yet to apply reciprocal arrangements to legislation. This is an opportunity for Tasmania to become part of the framework and allow more monetary penalties to be recovered. The bill introduces a reciprocal enforcement scheme along the lines of the scheme established in the New South Wales fines enforcement legislation.

The proposed amendments reflect the New South Wales scheme in requiring an enforcement order for interstate fines to be issued only where a person has a relevant connection with Tasmania, such as being a resident or having a Tasmanian motor vehicle licence. The fines can then be enforced using the same enforcement actions that apply to Tasmanian monetary penalties, excluding imprisonment.

Amounts paid to the director in respect of interstate fines would firstly be paid toward Tasmanian enforcement costs, secondly toward any outstanding Tasmanian monetary penalties and the balance toward the interstate fine payable by the referring agency. The director can also request an interstate fine enforcement agency to enforce a Tasmanian monetary penalty if enforcement action has not been, or is unlikely to be successful in satisfying the monetary penalty, and the offender has a relevant connection with that jurisdiction. The Commonwealth *Service and Execution of Process Act 1992* provides a mechanism for enforcing fines across state and territory borders, but it is limited to court-imposed fines. MPES has had limited success in recovering monetary penalties through this mechanism.

The bill prevents the new scheme being applied where the monetary penalty has been registered as a fine under the Commonwealth *Service and Execution of Process Act 1992*. In the absence of reciprocal enforcement through enforcement agencies or court request system in all jurisdictions, the Commonwealth *Service and Execution of Process Act 1992* maintains an option for enforcement of some monetary penalties in other jurisdictions. Exclusion of these fines from the new reciprocal scheme is consistent with the New South Wales framework, which acknowledges that a reciprocal enforcement scheme for interstate fines that are court-imposed already exists as an option under the act.

The bill also makes a minor amendment to section 115, to clarify that the reference to 'Commissioner' in this section is a reference to the Commissioner of Police. This is required as under Section 3 of the act, where the term commissioner is defined as meaning a commissioner within the meaning of the *Victims of Crime Assistance Act 1976*. The bill also establishes a mechanism for the electronic service of documents to provide efficiencies in the administration of the act. Electronic service of documents is an area that is being increasingly explored and used in a range of areas, particularly in a post COVID-19 environment, and provides for greater efficiency. The bill also makes amendments to the act that strengthens protections for MPES staff who are lawfully performing their duties and inserts a power for the Commissioner of Police to provide to the director information relevant to assessing the risk to the safety of enforcement officers in the performance of their duties.

Further to this, the amendments clarify that it is an offence to obstruct, threaten, use abusive language or instigate or incite another person to obstruct, threaten or use abusive language to either an enforcement debtor or the director in the execution of their duty, when lawfully performing their duty or in the exercise of a public duty or authority. The current provisions do not include the director. The amendments also clarify that the director of MPES is taken to have satisfied the requirement to publish an annual report on the operation of the Monetary Penalties Enforcement Service if it is included in the department's annual report for that year.

The bill increases the maximum amount which may be deemed uncollectible by the director for a single monetary penalty to \$50,000, or a higher amount if prescribed by regulations if certain existing criteria in section 109 are met, for example: if the director is satisfied that the enforcement debtor is deceased or the enforcement debtor is a corporation

within the meaning of the *Corporations Act 2001* and is in liquidation or has been deregistered under the *Corporations Act 2001*. The bill also permits the director to deem the costs incurred by enforcing an interstate fine as uncollectible.

In addition, the bill amends Section 117 of the Act. This section currently requires the Criminal Injuries Compensation Commissioner to deduct from any award of compensation made under the *Victims of Crime Assistance Act 1976*, any amount owed to the director. Currently, the deduction is mandatory. The Supreme Court case *Jordan v Criminal Injuries Compensation Commissioner Neasey TASFC 10* identified that the current provision is inconsistent with section 6B(1)(a) of the *Victims of Crime Assistance Act 1976*, which provides that the Commissioner may deduct any pecuniary penalty imposed on a person from an award of compensation to that person under the act. The bill amends section 117 to provide that the deduction is discretionary. This removes the inconsistency between the two acts and allows the commissioner to consider any relevant matters, including hardship, in determining whether to make a deduction from an award of compensation.

I want to thank all those who made submissions during the consultation process on this bill. I particularly note the advocacy around ensuring that persons impacted by redirection of money owing orders are not subjected to unreasonable financial hardship. In response to the public consultation feedback, the bill was amended to ensure that an enforcement debtor can apply for the cancellation or variation of a redirection of money owing order where that order was causing them unreasonable hardship, and that the director MPES to have regard to any relevant evidence of an enforcement debtor's circumstances when making a redirection of money owing order.

Following the introduction of the bill, I have considered further feedback from members and stakeholders. In response, I'll be moving a number of House amendments to strengthen the safeguards in the bill. These amendments relate to redirection of money owing orders, particularly where those orders relate to money held in an account with an authorised deposit taking institution, automated decision-making, electronic service and the director's power to require information and documents. I will speak to those amendments in detail when they are moved. In conclusion, this bill makes amendments to the *Monetary Penalties Enforcement Act 2005* to enhance the administration and enforcement of Tasmanian monetary penalties and to provide additional safeguards and review mechanisms within the system. I commend the bill to the House.

[5.49 p.m.]

Dr BROAD (Braddon) - Thank you, Speaker. I rise to give comment on the Monetary Penalties Enforcement Amendment Bill 2026. First of all, I would just like to thank Wayne Johnson, Bruce Paterson, and Evie Melrose for their briefings. I had a briefing a while ago on the bill and then I've had a recent briefing, specifically on the amendments. What is the purpose of the bill? The bill amends the *Monetary Penalties Enforcement Act 2005* with the aim of improving efficiency and effectiveness of collecting fines, infringement notices, and compensation. The reality is that it's designed to address the minority of debtors who persistently fail or refuse to pay. This strengthens enforcement tools while adding fairness safeguards. I think fairness safeguards will be where a lot of the debate in this place will be around. It also enables interstate enforcement of fines, modernises administration through electronic processes and improves safety protections for enforcement staff.

What is the context and the rationale? Since 2008, the Monetary Penalties Enforcement Service (MPES) has collected more than \$363 million. It's actually quite a large amount of money, a third of a billion dollars. At that same time, it's removed thousands of minor matters from the courts. Despite high collection rates, there are significant long-term unpaid debt that remains, and the minister highlighted some of those in his second reading. There is \$76.6 million outstanding as of March 2026. Approximately 23 per cent of debtors have made no payment over the last two years. I think that's around 13,000 people who haven't made a payment over two years, and about \$11.5 million is owed by people believed to be interstate or overseas. Obviously, one of the goals of enabling interstate enforcement of fines should potentially catch those people or actually get them to pay their fines.

There are some major reforms in this bill and probably the first one is the removal of public naming as a sanction. I suppose once upon a time the naming and shaming, the list of names of debtors being published in the paper, and from memory I think it was together with their addresses. It was less than ideal. This bill removes the power to publish enforcement debtors' names and personal details. As the minister highlighted, it hasn't been used since 2023 due to concerns about privacy, identity theft, but also stigmatisation and impacts on vulnerable people, for example victims of family violence.

The second major reform is really the expanded and clarified redirection or garnishment powers. Before I get to that, the one way to avoid having wages garnished or other punishments is by engaging with MPES. What I mean by engagement: enforcement is forestalled by paying or entering into a payment plan. During the briefing, it was highlighted, in both briefings actually, the significant efforts that the department goes to prevent people being caught up in the powers that this bill tries to clarify. For example, if somebody gets pinged by a speed camera, the first thing that happens is they get a notification. The notification now comes with a nice little video clip where you can see if it was you in the car. Unfortunately, I got pinged for the first time in about 20 years a couple of months ago, driving through Launceston, surprisingly enough. You can actually see that it was you. You can see the number plate of the car. There was absolutely no denying it. Of course I paid the fine but there are others who don't. You've got about four weeks to pay.

Mr Abetz - Thanks for the help with the budget.

Dr BROAD - Yes, and it's not a tax deduction either, unfortunately. So, the offender or the person who's done whatever gets about four weeks to pay and then at about 5 weeks they'll get a reminder. At six to seven weeks they may receive an SMS reminder, if they have contact details. After about 11 weeks, there's an enforcement order. Actually, when an enforcement order is applied, then I think there's an extra \$150 added to the debt. If I get anything wrong, you know, thereabouts, bit less, bit more. Well, anyway, maybe we can clarify that, but there's an addition to the debt and then at about 13 weeks there's a sanction. Some of those sanctions are things like suspending driver's licences. That's one of the ways that people could be pursued or efforts made to actually get them to pay their fines. I think it was last year - I'm not sure of the date, but I have in my notes that 13,000 driver's licences were suspended. That is a huge amount and a huge impact on the community. A number of people, you'd think, if they had entered an agreement, a payment plan, then they wouldn't lose their driver's licence. There are people who don't really care if they lose their driver's licences; they continue to drive. Some of those people get continually fined and the situation gets worse and worse, but last year there were only three wages that were garnished.

Mr Abetz - Garnisheed.

Dr BROAD - Garnisheed. There's the lawyer, he knows. Three had their wages garnisheed while 13,000 lost their licence. That's extraordinary. It would be much better to be around the other way; that is, 13,000 people entering into payment plans and then hardly any people losing their licences or getting their licence suspended. This also creates an administrative burden as opposed to payment plans. There's also the option of community service orders, too, if people don't have the ability to pay. There is expanded and clarified redirections to these garnishment powers. Basically, it allows information from bank accounts to confirm that money is held in bank accounts that can be redirected, clarifies that money in an ADI (authorised deposit-taking institution) account is treated as a debt owed to the debtor. This also applies retrospectively to 28 April 2008 to validate earlier orders. Regarding third parties and sole traders, it enables redirection from employers, contractors paying sole traders and other third parties owing money to a debtor. This bill also allows electronic communication. Rather than having to be served, I think the amendments change it so that people can opt in to electronic communication, whether that be via email or mobile phone.

It also applies stronger safeguards against financial hardship, and I'm sure there will be some debate around this particular point. It puts in place financial protections that currently apply to wage garnishment and extend them to all redirection orders. The director must consider living expenses, other liabilities and evidence of financial hardship. Debtors can apply to vary or cancel a redirection order if it causes unreasonable hardship. Debt holders must be notified when a redirection order is made. The police can provide some of this information about hardship, especially the safety-related information. There are new reporting obligations for employment changes: employers and debtors must notify MPES within 14 days of significant employment changes that affect redirection of earnings. It also protects accuracy and fairness of garnishment arrangements.

The interstate enforcement of fines, as the minister highlighted, will give the ability for Tasmania to be reciprocal with other states. I'm not sure if that's only with New South Wales and Victoria where we are reciprocal at the moment. I'm not sure if that means we can go to other states who potentially haven't put this legislation in place. It also makes discretionary deductions from victims of crime compensation, so it removes the mandatory requirement to deduct unpaid penalties from compensation awards. It makes deductions discretionary, resolving inconsistency with the *Victims of Crime Assistance Act*, which is a good thing. It allows the commissioner to consider hardship and individual circumstances. It also gives stronger powers to obtain information. The director may require information or documents relevant to enforcement. The police commissioner may share information relevant to officer safety, and it expands offences for obstructing or abusing enforcement officers to include the director. We talk about administrative modernisation; this enables electronic service of documents and online support systems for account management, automated decision-making with safeguards. I'm sure this will get raised by others in this place.

Time expired.

ADJOURNMENT

Answer to Question - Housing - New Social Houses

[6.00 p.m.]

Mr ABETZ (Franklin - Treasurer) Honourable Speaker, during Question Time, the Minister for Housing and Planning took on notice a question from the member for Clark, Ms Burnet, regarding the number of social homes delivered in the past two years on land rezoned by a housing land supply order. On behalf of the Minister for Housing and Planning, I would like to provide the following information to the House: to date, 23 social housing dwellings have been completed, with 17 of these completed in the last two years. In addition, 107 social and affordable homes are either under construction or have an approved development application; 82 are either in pre-planning or going through the development application process.

Bird Flu - Protection for Shore Birds

[6.01 p.m.]

Ms ROSOL (Bass) - Honourable Speaker, I rise to speak this evening about a special place, and that's Tomahawk in the north-east corner of the state. As you slow down to enter the hamlet, there's a sign saying 'Tomahawk is Tasmania's best-kept secret'. Having spent many days watching the waves, swimming, walking the beach, climbing the island and occasionally having a cold-water swim, I concur. Tomahawk is quietly, secretly a perfect place to spend time, and I hope I don't blow its cover too much here tonight. One of my delights at Tomahawk is the birds, so many birds. Superb fairywrens and grey fantails chitter away and flit in and out of the bushes, thornbills come to check themselves out in the car mirror or splash around in the guttering, black-faced cuckoo shrikes hide in the trees, butcher birds and wattlebirds regale us with their song, currawongs and ravens frequently appear and the black cockatoos - don't we all love yellow-tailed black cockatoos; watching their long, slow wing beat as they move languorously through the air, listening to their soft calls as they feed in the trees? Then there are the plovers. Not everyone loves plovers, I know, but over time I have grown to really appreciate them, and I've seen them having a great time splashing around in puddles at Tomahawk.

Look up over the bush or paddocks around Tomahawk and you might catch sight of a wedge-tailed eagle soaring on the air currents or a hawk scouring the ground for food from above. So many beautiful birds, and I haven't even made it to the beach yet. A walk along the beach reveals a host of sea birds and various shore birds: seagulls scouting for crabs and pippies, fairy terns diving into the waves for a feed, hooded plovers racing in and out of the shallow waves on their tiny little legs at low tide, pied oystercatchers with their cute little 'peep peeps' to each other as they fly along the beach, egrets, cormorants. Tomahawk hosts an abundance of bird life, and every time I visit it feeds my soul. Once I was witness to what I like to call a David Attenborough moment: we were walking near the island close to what we affectionately refer to as the lagoon because the sand creates a little pool at low tide. On this particular evening, a school of small fish was trapped in the lagoon, and a cotillion of fairy terns had gotten wind of it. They were flapping around excitedly, diving into the water again and again in a feeding frenzy, feasting on the small fish perfectly contained for them. As they fed, a pair of pelicans flew in and joined the party. It was a wonderful moment, a highlight among many walks I've taken on the beach, and it will stay with me forever.

Birds make all our lives happier. I note that birdwatching is on the rise, particularly amongst young people, and it's known to boost mental health. Birds make us healthier too. That's why it is so devastating to hear of the recent arrival of bird flu on Tasmanian shores. Many of the birds we know and love will be severely affected by the bird flu virus that has

made its way around the globe before reaching us here. We know there is little we can do to stop the spread of the virus through affected bird colonies. We can't vaccinate wild birds to protect them, and we can't stop them from moving, feeding or scavenging, and catching the virus. The sad fact is that many Tasmanian birds will die as a result of bird flu, and many of them will be sea and shore birds. More and more sick and dead birds will lie on our beaches and it's going to be very confronting.

Given we cannot stop the spread of bird flu, we must make sure to do everything else we possibly can to protect birds. That includes protecting habitat, particularly along our beaches and coastlines. We all love birds, but on too many occasions things happen on our beaches that threaten the survival of those birds. Hooded plovers and other nesting shore birds are threatened by dogs off the leash. Four-wheelers and trail bikes race up and down beaches, disturbing the peace but also threatening birds that make their home or nest along the shoreline. There are many things we can do to make the environment safer for birds and protect them and their homes: keep dogs on a lead, keep vehicles off the beach, walk below the tide line. I urge Tasmanians to do all they can to protect our birds. They need all the help we can give them right now, and I note that there was no AI in the writing of this speech.

Vietnam Veterans' Day

[6.05 p.m.]

Mr PEARCE (Braddon - Minister for Veterans' Affairs) - On behalf of the House, on behalf of this parliament and on behalf of the state, I rise today in tribute and in honour, and in respect of those who fought in one of our most known battles in Vietnam. In fact, today is Vietnam Day where we pay respect to those who served in that war, those who never came home, and those who came home having never forgotten the war in Vietnam.

The Battle of Long Tan was fought on this day in 1966 in a rubber plantation called Long Tan in Fuktoy Province, just outside of Nui Dat in South Vietnam. It was fought by Delta Company, 6th Battalion, the Royal Australian Regiment Infantry Corps. The role of the Infantry Corps is duty first. The motto of the corps is duty first, and the Infantry Battalion's role is to seek out and close with the enemy, to kill or capture him, to seize and hold ground and repel attack, day or night, regardless of season, weather or terrain. On this day in 1966, Delta Company of the 6th Battalion did exactly that.

A total of 108 Australian diggers, with a couple of attachments from the New Zealand forces that were fighting alongside, bumped an incredible force in excess of 2500 of the North Vietnamese Army (NVA) and Viet Cong. The battle that ensued took over four hours. At the end of that battle in torrential rain in that rubber plantation in South Vietnam, 18 Australian soldiers lay dead and 24 lay beside them, critically injured from their wounds. Much has been written of that battle. Many facts have been turned into legends but that battle, in my eyes, epitomises and is a great example of what those diggers who served in that particular war went through, what they were capable of and what they were sent there to do.

The unfortunate thing for me is, as a former digger, is the treatment that they received when they came back home, the treatment that they received and almost the politicisation that surrounded those veterans coming home. You see, they could take the bullets and the bombs. They could take the rubbish that goes with war and looking evil directly in the eye, but when they come home to a country that sent them there in the first place - and I think that's the greatest

betrayal that this country's ever conducted on troops that we've sent overseas, and I hope that that never ever happens again. I trust that that never happens again.

I also want to recognise that there are many lessons learned from the Vietnam War. As a young digger myself in the mid 1980s, all of my instructors were Vietnam veterans. This was their first war fought on rotary-wing platforms and UH-1H helicopters. It was our first real conflict for many years, probably since the Second World War. It was a conflict that hadn't been fought before. It changed the way we react to contact in in close country. It changed the way that fire support was brought in - both from rotary-wing aircraft, from fixed-wing aircraft, from indirect fire support weapons like our 155-millimetre howitzers, as well as sustained-fire machine guns. It revolutionised the way and the shape of war doctrine, and I learned a lot from those instructors that I had. I think we can all learn a lot from them. Today I want to look up to them. I want to say thank you for those lessons. I want to say that from my perspective, from all of us in this House, you have our utmost respect and today we honour you all. Lest we forget.

Kevin Hyland - Tribute

[6.10 p.m.]

Ms DOW (Braddon) - Thanks, honourable Speaker. Last week I attended the funeral of councillor Kevin Hyland. His funeral was very well attended, and this is testament to the high regard in which he was held by our community. He would have been impressed with the turn out, I reckon. A lot was said on the day and there were some beautiful speeches from his children, grandchildren and local government colleagues about his life, different jobs that he'd held and the beloved father, grandfather, partner, friend and colleague that he was. I want to make some remarks tonight in our parliament about the councillor Kevin Hyland I knew and respected immensely. I was saddened to hear of his death and disappointed I didn't get the opportunity to do that visit I had promised him to his beloved Lobster Ponds for one last yarn.

When I reflect on my time in local government, I can only name a few of my colleagues who command universal respect, not because of the titles they hold, but because of the depth of their character and their passion for their community. Councillor Kevin Hyland was one of those salt-of-the-earth characters, not driven by political ambition but driven by his love of his community. He possessed an unwavering commitment to the Waratah-Wynyard community, serving from 1999 to 2012 and returning with that same passion from 2014 until his recent death on 1 August. He was also mayor from 2005 to 2010. Kevin didn't just sit at the council table; he played an active role in shaping our region, even in his role with the Cradle Coast Authority.

I first met Kevin in 2005 when I was elected to the Burnie City Council, and he left an impression on me. Kevin was, in every sense of the phrase, a man of the people. His strength of character was forged through a lifetime of listening, understanding and rolling up his sleeves for the ratepayers. He had an authenticity and charisma that is hard to find in public life today. Whether he was at the Yolla Football Club where he served as a player, coach and president, or at the local Tulip Festival in Wynyard, Kevin was always all in. His vision went far beyond the council chambers. This was evident at the Lobster Ponds in Flowerdale where he was a passionate champion for the giant freshwater lobster and fought tirelessly to expand the sanctuary. His dream was to turn it into a safe haven for critically endangered birds, eagerly planning to house and protect the rare orange-bellied parrots, and I'm certain his family will

ensure that he gets this last wish. That was Kevin always having a go and looking to preserve the beauty of our region.

Kevin would tell you what he thought, argue strongly his point of view, and during my early years as a newly-elected state representative, he was always happy to share his advice when it came to state politics with his trademark honesty and insight but as much as he loved our community, nothing compared to the love that he had for his family. Kevin was so immensely proud of his kids and his grandkids, and he would often mention that when I ran into him. Kevin's final farewell was to the iconic lyrics of *The Gambler*. It was a fitting soundtrack to celebrate the life of a man of wit and wisdom. He didn't suffer fools; Kevin truly knew when to hold them, knew when to fold them, and knew when to walk away. He understood the balance of leadership. He knew when to fight tenaciously for a cause, when to compromise for the greater good, and when it was time to let the next chapter unfold. There's a great deal that every single one of us in this place could learn from councillor Kevin Hyland. Rest in peace Kevin. You might be out of aces, but those who knew you found an ace that they could keep. Vale, councillor Kevin Hyland.

Members - Hear, hear.

Public Transport - Work Experience Student

[6.14 p.m.]

Mr O'BYRNE (Franklin) - Thank you, honourable speaker. I rise on the adjournment tonight to reflect on a work experience student, Lillian Joseph, grade 10 at Clarence High School, who spent some time with me in the school holidays. Choosing to volunteer in a political office during school holidays is a courageous moment, and Lillian is a very articulate, intelligent young woman who it takes great attention of the issues around her, has a really good social conscience, and will go far. In talking to Lillian, and we went to a few events together and we spent some time chatting about the issues, I sought her advice on a few things. I asked her what kind of issues she would want to be spoken about in state parliament, and she's written a few notes for me to talk to you tonight about an issue that she feels very strongly about, and that is public transport.

She reflects that public transport is better after the free public transport has been implemented. Lillian says she likes to hang out with her friends and socialise, and her only mode of transport beside her parents is public transport. The first time she used a bus was in grade 6. Lillian and her sister would catch the school bus home after school, giving them more independence, and less stress on her parents. How she uses buses no that it's free. She goes home after school almost every day, Eastlands, library, friends' houses, the city. She takes it in the school holidays. She takes her younger brother and sister to the museum. They take the bus and the ferry and it's a nice and simple outing. Without the public transport, they would all have cabin fever.

Some of the things that she's noticed and reflected on since buses became free, which I think is really good feedback for us, all of us making decisions on these kinds of matters: she said that more reliable, consistent buses, less time waiting for a bus to come, less time waiting for the users, more incentive to take the bus, less cars on roads, less traffic, more people on buses, services being used, less people misbehaving, better overall experience for everyone. She said it makes her feel safer. There is the overall climate impact, less cars on roads, less

petrol being used, less air pollution, cleaner air, better for people's health. At the moment there are three hydrogen buses and four battery-electric buses, and in the future, transfer to more electric buses so it can be even more eco-friendly, both zero emissions.

She says it's accessible for everyone and it's a good way to get around if you don't have a car. Also, Lillian said there are cost savings for everyday Tasmanians, one less cost to worry about. Her hope is that in the long term the public transport will stay free. On that we differed. I said, 'What about 50 cents?' We had a long discussion about it, but anyway, her hope is in the long term the public transport will stay free and that all buses in the future will be hydrogen buses. To Lillian, thank you for sharing your school holidays in a politician's office. Thank you for your commitment to your local community and your interest and your passion to make Tasmania a better place. Your family should be very proud of how you conducted yourself while working in my office. Congratulations to all the leaders and educators at Clarence High School for encouraging Lillian to take on this kind of work experience. Thank you.

Justice Shane Marshall AM - Tribute

[6.17 p.m.]

Mr BARNETT (Lyons - Deputy Premier) - Thank you, Speaker. Tonight I would like to pay a tribute to the honourable Justice Shane Marshall, AM, who recently passed away. I very much want to acknowledge his very distinguished life of service to the law, to the judiciary and importantly to the people of Tasmania. On behalf of the Tasmanian government, I also extend my sincere condolences to Justice Marshall's wife Lynn and his daughters Kate and Amy. Justice Marshall certainly had an extraordinary judicial career spanning more than three decades. Before coming to Tasmania, he served for more than 20 years as a judge of the Federal Court of Australia and the Industrial Relations Court of Australia. His appointment in 1995 was itself significant. Justice Marshall was the first graduate of Monash University to be appointed to a Federal Superior Court, and at the time, I'm advised, he was the third-youngest person appointed to the Federal Court and the youngest person to the Industrial Relations Court.

His judicial services extended well beyond those courts. From 2004 until 2013, he served as a non-resident additional judge in the Australian Capital Territory. From 2017 to 2021 he was a judge of the Supreme Court of Nauru dealing with refugee appeals. He also served as the Deputy Chairperson of the Victorian Racing Tribunal from 2019 to 2024 and was a member of the Administrative Appeals Tribunal from October 2023 until August 2024. It's Justice Marshall's role in Tasmania, particularly as an acting judge in the Supreme Court of Tasmania since 2017, that I wish to speak to. My wife Kate and I enjoyed our company with Justice Shane Marshall and his wife Lynn on a range of various occasions: judicial events, public events, community events, government events. Likewise, I spent some time with Justice Marshall, and he absolutely had a very high intellect, acumen, he had a passion for his community, he was kind, he was generous and he really had a special interest in others. I'll come more to that shortly, particularly in the area of mental health and wellbeing.

It was in 2017 that he commenced as an acting judge for Tasmania and, over the following nine years, he served our state in both part-time and full-time judicial roles, continuing that service until late 2025. Tasmania was very fortunate to have the benefit of the judicial officer with Justice Marshall's depth of experience. I want to acknowledge the comments of the Chief Justice, Chris Shanahan, who, on behalf of all our Supreme Court judges, made a number of remarks and the tribute to Justice Marshall as well. He said:

He will be remembered for the deep concern for people in their lives that he brought to the legal process and judicial office and for his commitment to fairness, humanity and social justice.

Those qualities, of course, were recognised by his judicial colleagues long before his passing, at the ceremonial sitting of the Full Court of the Federal Court to farewell Justice Marshall in November 2015. The honourable James Allsop AO, then-chief justice of the Federal Court, offered a particularly fitting assessment of Justice Marshall's contribution. He said:

You leave this court with the warmth, respect and friendship of your colleagues. Perhaps most importantly, you leave recognised as a judge who deployed his considerable talent fairly, decently, humanely, and always with practical justice.

He received the Centenary Award in 2003. He had many other distinguished appointments, including a Member of the Order of Australia for services to industrial relations, the law, the judiciary and mental health. With respect to mental health, I just want to do a shout-out and thank Justice Marshall. He spoke publicly about depression and the impact of mental health issues that can have on members of the legal profession and the judiciary and, indeed, in the community. He was the inaugural director and ambassador for the Wellbeing and the Law Foundation. The Supreme Court noted his courage in identifying and speaking publicly about these issues, and that's been widely recognised and applauded. As a former minister for health, mental health and wellbeing, that means a lot. On behalf of the community, on behalf of this place, I want to pay a tribute to him and, again, pass on my condolences to Lynn and his family and dear friends.

Bird Flu - Habitat Protection

[6.23 p.m.]

Ms BADGER (Lyons) - Honourable Speaker, in the words of the band The Eels, 'I like birds' so I rise this evening to talk about some of the amazing birds in Lyons; although it has come to my attention that this is in the current Lyons electorate, and this is some amazing bird habitat that future members of future Franklin will have the responsibility to look after moving forward. These are birds that are at serious risk with bird flu coming to Tasmania, but also because of the enormous habitat destruction that they are already facing and the risk of bird flu on top of that is only compounding the threat to so many of these amazing birds. Tasmania is extraordinarily lucky with the number of endemic birds that we have that are only here, but as well as the migratory birds that come to our island; we've got birds that fly all the way from Alaska right here, to Tasmania. It's quite extraordinary. I just want to repeat something that Dr Eric Woehler told the Greens earlier in the week. He said:

The Bass Strait has the highest rate and diversity of seabirds in Australia. It's the seabird capital of Australia.

- just to give some context of exactly how special what we have here in Lutruwita/Tasmania really is.

As we saw in numerous presentations, as a part of how we're actually going to manage and deal with the impacts of bird flu in Tasmania, one of the key things is habitat protection. The Greens have long been advocating for - and we've asked questions in this place, and Ms O'Connor, member for Hobart, also asked questions in the other place today about the St Helens buggy race: the sand enduro race that's held at Peron Dunes near St Helens. It's often on the November long weekend. That's had increasing community opposition because of the threat to the seabird and shorebird populations there that are on a rapid decline. That race, specifically the Sand Enduro, overlaps with the breeding season for several threatened species of seabirds and shorebirds, including the eastern hooded plover and the Australian fairy tern.

It was disappointing to see that the event permit was renewed for five years before the Reserve Activity Assessment (RAA) had even been done. That is deeply, deeply disappointing and so regressive. This year, when that race is scheduled again and we're facing the threat of bird flu, it's quite simple: just change the date of the race. We have to get on with that now so that it's fair for those competitors and race organisers as well, but it's something that must be done.

The Orford Bird Sanctuary is amazing. It's a little cove tucked away; it's a beautiful walk. There are binoculars there for any member of the public to go and have a look at it. It is home to a variety of shorebirds, both permanent and migratory. They have the red-capped plover, the red-necked stint, Caspian tern, pied oystercatcher, the famous Australian pelican that we all love, and threatened species such as the hooded plover and fairy tern. There are over 20 species of shorebirds that have been sighted at the Orford Bird Sanctuary, a place that is so special. It is already an important bird area, but we need to see that area fast-tracked. It should be a conservation area. For years we've known that this work has been done behind the scenes, but it's not happening fast enough because of the threats that so many of these birds were already having, particularly human impacts from people walking over the dunes during breeding season. There are impacts from the likes of people letting their dogs off lead and, of course, feral cats as well.

This is something that we really need to be considering. If we're going to protect habitat, if we're going to protect core breeding species across this island, let's make sure that they actually have adequate protections in place. These are actions that we can be taking right now. There are really obvious ecological risks to the impacts of bird flu across our island. There are also the emotional risks that people will face across the island. A quote that I love is, 'I saw a bird and I was rich,' and that is so true and beautiful of how special they are.

We also have to look at the economic risks that we face. Birding tourism is a huge thing. I've spoken about it being an untapped potential in Tasmania, but that's a potential that we could readily miss completely if we do not have adequate habitat protection, at least as a starting point, to try and mitigate the impacts that we can from bird flu. Finally, I just want to say an enormous thank you to all the groups of volunteers right across Tasmania who are the ones doing all the monitoring of our bird species. They're the ones on the ground fighting for the protection of these areas and we wouldn't have what we do today without them.

Cost-of-Living Crisis

[6.28 p.m.]

Ms BURNET (Clark) - I rise tonight to acknowledge the heavy toll that recent months, or maybe years, have taken on the people of Tasmania. Years beyond COVID, many people are continuing to struggle with the latest problems, such as housing and work insecurity, the fuel crisis and climate change, that collectively play their part in increasing the burden on many Tasmanians. Just today I heard from a woman in the film industry concerned not only about troubling news of uncertainty in Screen Tasmania, but also by government inaction on other issues that impact her life. When speaking to local Hobart business owners, community organisations, or listening to the families living in Clark and beyond, one overwhelming theme emerges: people are exhausted, anxious, and doing it more than tough. We're navigating a period where pressures seem to stack up on top of one another without relief, creating a constant and heavy stream of bad news that leaves households feeling overwhelmed by events both global and local.

The cost-of-living crisis is not a distant concept. It is the daily reality of Tasmanians deciding between heating their homes or sometimes feeding their family, deciding whether to pay for essential after-school care so parents can stay in the workforce, or putting that money toward weekend sport registration and team uniforms, rationing vital daily medications so the power bill gets paid on time, sacrificing routine healthcare or dental visits just to keep the car on the road. Crucially, these crises are not isolated events; they are deeply interconnected. As climate change accelerates, bringing erratic weather and extreme environmental risks, Tasmanians are hit with cost-of-living pressures and skyrocketing insurance premiums that drive home ownership and rent further out of reach. Safe, affordable housing is becoming an impossible dream for many, pushing more families into housing stress and vulnerability.

At the same time, our essential public services are failing to provide the safety net people desperately need. Tasmanians face the distressing reality of waiting for ambulances that are banked up outside emergency departments, unable to access timely healthcare when they are most vulnerable. When a family cannot afford insurance, cannot secure a stable roof over their head, and cannot guarantee care if a loved one falls ill, the cumulative psychological and financial strain becomes unbearable. Tasmanians are remarkably resilient but there is a limit to resilience, and resilience is not a substitute for policy or proactive government action. We cannot expect our community to simply absorb wave after wave of pressure without structural relief and clear strategic direction.

We start each day in this place reflecting on our duty to the people and to the environment of Tasmania. I want to acknowledge the concern of families, students, people on housing waiting lists, the woman who contacted me today concerned about the viability of Tasmania's film industry, and public servants who are facing significant uncertainty or burnout from being asked to do more in their roles, or both. Let us, as representatives, pause to understand the mounting pressures many of our constituents face, understand how these compounding pressures interact, and work towards solutions to address the burden on everyday households, such as safeguarding our natural environment, strengthening our public health system and giving Tasmanians the confidence they need to retain their resilience

Business Plan for Hobart Northern Suburbs Light Rail

[6.32 p.m.]

Ms BUTLER (Lyons) - I rise tonight to talk about Tasmania and public transport. Tasmania is very much at a crossroads, and a recent report by the McKell Institute says that Tasmania has the lowest per capita public transport investment in the country, while the government's own rapid bus network business case acknowledges that greater Hobart needs a major transport solution. The question before us is simple: before we commit almost \$1 billion to one solution, shouldn't we properly investigate all options when it comes to the northern rail corridor? Now, it's not an argument against buses, it's an argument for evidence. The government, through the then-minister for infrastructure, Michael Ferguson, chose rapid buses as its preferred option for the northern rail corridor, but the detailed work is still not finished and key decisions are still to be made.

My question therefore is: why would we rule out light rail before we've even completed a full, independent business case? That was something that the McKell Institute report looked at quite extensively. Tasmania has something many cities who have already invested in light rail would love to have: we already have a rail corridor. Across Australia, one of the biggest costs of building rail is acquiring land and the compulsory acquisition of homes. Tasmania has a golden opportunity, because the northern rail corridor already exists and it is largely in public ownership already. Once it's lost, it's gone. This is not a radical idea; it's a practical idea. We look at Canberra, which is now expanding its light rail system, Sydney is also expanding its light rail and the Gold Coast is expanding its light rail. These cities keep investing because people use it. Businesses invest around it, and communities grow around it, and not one of them is saying that they regret their investment. People use rail. Rail attracts development. Rail provides certainty. Rail creates confidence that infrastructure will still be there in 20 or 30 or 50 years' time. Importantly, our community in Tasmania is asking the same question.

After only one week, more than 2000 Tasmanians have already signed a parliamentary petition. It's a hard copy and a parliamentary petition for Light Rail for Hobart's Future. They're not demanding that we build light rail tomorrow. They're simply asking for a proper business case, a proper cost-benefit analysis and protection of the corridor until that work is done. A business case is not a commitment to build; it is a commitment to get the facts and the evidence. Before we make an irreversible decision about one of Tasmania's most valuable transport assets, let's do the work, examine the evidence and make sure we choose the best solution for the next 50 years, not just the quickest solution for today. I'd also like to thank the Rail, Tram and Bus Union (RTBU) who are strong supporters of this petition. We thank Mark Dunsby and his team for their keen advocacy and support in recognising the northern rail corridor light rail as a potential game changer for the northern suburbs and surrounds. Thank you.

Native Forest Logs Shipped to Victoria

[6.36 p.m.]

Dr WOODRUFF (Franklin - Leader of the Greens) - Before the winter break, an explosive episode of the ABC's *Four Corners* uncovered what the Greens and environmentalists have long suspected: native forest logs from Tasmania's precious public forests were being shipped to Victoria. Since the notional ending of native forest logging in Victoria in 2024, the Greens and environmentalists have been concerned that these incredibly special native forests would be used as a replacement to stoke the furnace of the Victorian

sawmilling industry. In GBE scrutiny last year, resource minister Felix Ellis sat next to Forestry Tasmania when I asked, on multiple occasions:

Are whole logs, processed logs or forest products of any kind from Tasmania being sent to Victoria?

The repeated response was that all sales from Forestry Tasmania land are made to customers in Tasmania. Mr Ellis also had that same question asked of him by *Four Corners*. Journalist Jessica Longbottom asked:

Are there whole logs from public native forests in Tasmania going to Victoria?

The minister replied:

No. So, when it comes from Sustainable Timber-managed land, the delivery of those logs goes to mills here, based in Tasmania.

As it turned out, that answer was not correct. Later in the program, Tasmanian sawmiller James Neville Smith freely admitted his sawmill has been selling whole logs from Tasmanian public forests into Victoria. A few weeks ago, Tasmanians found out, through RTI documents, that in total almost 500 cubic metres of products from Tasmania's native forests have been sent to Victoria since 2024. It was, and is, a shocking revelation. After years of the government denying it's even happening, we finally have the truth that actually, thousands of cubic metres of our native forests, habitat for threatened species, have been cut down and sent interstate, which we're supposed to believe no one in the government or our state-owned logging company knew about.

For years forestry ministers have stood in this House and asserted that Tasmania's forest system is the most sustainable in the world, and the most regulated, and there's no way any sort of mismanagement could be happening in our native estate because the state's forest practices system is water-tight. If that were true, why didn't either the resources minister or the state logging company know about many thousands of logs from Tasmania's native forests being shipped to Victoria? Obviously, it seems, our auditing processes are absent or cooked. The question remain: what did or didn't the minister know? After all, he told me in GBE scrutiny last November that the move to end native forestry in Victoria was 'a dud' because 'you can't stop the demand for timber'. He also said on *Four Corners* that the shutting down of the forest industry in other states could be 'a great opportunity for the forestry industry in Tasmania'.

So, who would possibly believe that Mr Ellis was actually 'disappointed', as he said, when he apparently found out that 5000 cubic metres of Tasmania's forests were exported to Victoria? Earlier this year, he proudly led a group of loggers on a junket to Canberra to lobby to keep native forest sawmilling and clear-felling going in Tasmania. He'd have us believe that none of his industry mates mentioned, while they were together on that trip, that Tasmanian whole logs were being exported to Victoria. Minister Ellis has serious questions to answer Tasmanians about his knowledge on this matter. It's implausible the minister really didn't know that logs from the Tasmanian native forest estate were regularly being shipped to Victoria over a period of two years. It's an extremely concerning apparent oversight for the minister for Resources, particularly considering the scale of public interest in that matter.

I will be really clear: the Greens don't believe the minister, and we expect him to clarify for the House and Tasmanians what he knew and whether his answers to the media and in Estimates scrutiny were deliberately evasive. For decades Tasmanians have been fed a lie by both Liberal and Labor governments that native forest logging in this state is sustainable and well regulated. Honourable Speaker, on this government's watch, sawmillers in Tasmania have been taking hundreds of thousands of dollars of taxpayer money from the On Island Processing Program with one hand and sending whole logs off to Victoria with the other. It's an utterly corrupted process and there needs to be a formal investigation into what's happened, and it begs the question: what else has been happening in Tasmania's forest that the government doesn't allegedly know about and won't tell Tasmanians?

Sam Anglesey - Tribute

[6.41 p.m.]

Mr FAIRS (Bass) - Thank you, Honourable Deputy Speaker. I rise this evening to pay tribute to a remarkable Tasmanian, a broadcasting pioneer and a dear friend to many across our state, Sam Anglesey, whose passing in July 2024 marked the end of a truly remarkable chapter in Australian radio. He was 80 years young. To the listening public he was known simply as 'Big Sam'. It was a nickname that reflected not only his imposing height but also the size of his personality, his voice, his generosity and the enormous contribution he made to Australian media over more than four decades.

Sam's journey began in 6KG Kalgoorlie in the 1960s before taking him through regional and metropolitan stations across the country, including 7EXX Launceston, 7HO Hobart, Melbourne's legendary 3UZ and later Adelaide's 5AD, where I met Sam. At Melbourne's 3UZ, then one of Australia's most influential radio stations, Sam became a household name. His evening program *The Greater* attracted what has been described as the largest youth audience in Australian radio history, and helped shape the musical tastes of a generation. But Sam was never content merely to follow the format; he was an innovator. He pioneered long-form radio specials and conducted landmark interviews with some of the biggest names in world music, including Creedance Clearwater Revival, Roy Orbison, Tom Jones and Helen Reddy.

He understood that radio could do more than entertain: it could tell stories, connect people and create moments that stayed with listeners for a lifetime. Yet for all his national success, Tasmania remained close to Sam's heart. He returned to this state time and again, spending much of his career and later life here. He worked in our communities investing in local broadcasting and ultimately helped establish Break O'Day FM, ensuring that local voices would continue to hear and be heard on the airwaves. I was fortunate enough to know Sam personally; in fact he was an early mentor of mine and from the first time we spoke he was behind me all the way, even though we hardly knew each other at the time. His motto was 'Always believe in yourself, never give up, and have a go no matter what'. Big Sam loved ratings parties, boy did he. In fact, any party for that matter, and he played hard and he was very, very hard to say no to, believe me, when Sam was in party mode.

Those who knew him will understand when I say that his greatest qualities were not found in rating surveys or career achievements, impressive though they were. They were found in his warmth, his curiosity, his humour and his genuine interest in people. Whether you were a celebrity, a fellow broadcaster, a young journalist or wannabe broadcaster finding your feet, or someone who simply stopped for a chat, Sam made you feel valued. He listened. He

encouraged. He shared his wisdom wisely and freely and hierarchy, look out: Sam always told you where he stood, and he did it with a twinkle in his eye that never seemed to fade. Sam belonged to a generation of broadcasters who understood that radio was a deeply human craft. Behind that famous voice, and what a voice it was, was a man who built relationships, nurtured talent and never forgot where he came from. The affection with which he is remembered by colleagues, listeners, friends and family speaks volumes about the man he was. As we reflect on Sam's life, we remember not only a pioneer of Australian broadcasting, but also a loyal Tasmanian, a mentor, a storyteller and a friend.

To his family, including those who shared so much of his life and supported him throughout his extraordinary career, I extend my sincere condolences. May we remember Sam Anglesey not only for the voice that came through the radio speaker, but for the kindness, generosity and enthusiasm that came from the man behind the microphone. Thank you for the conversations, the memories, and the legacy you leave for Australian broadcasting. Vale, Sam. May you rest in peace.

Members - Hear, hear.

Gurdwara Sat Sangat Sahib Opening

Mahlie's Mission

[6.45 p.m.]

Mrs GREENE (Bass) - I rise to celebrate the opening of the Gurdwara Sat Sangat Sahib in Grindelwald, the first Gurdwara and Sikh community centre in northern Tasmania. This was a proud and significant milestone for our Sikh community and something our entire northern Tasmanian community should celebrate. The Sikh faith is grounded in equality, service, compassion and respect for all people. Sikhs believe in the dignity of every person, regardless of religion, background, gender or status, and place a strong emphasis on serving others through the principle of seva, or selfless service. We see those values through the tradition of langar, where everyone is welcomed and offered a meal regardless of their faith, background and circumstances.

I was joined at their opening by my fellow honourable members for Bass, Rob Fairs and Michael Ferguson, and former premier, Peter Gutwein, on that day. They were certainly very welcoming, and Mr Fairs is nodding there. I know he definitely enjoyed the pudding that day. They were very generous that day. Through that very welcoming service they provided that day, there was a very powerful message, and that is that everyone is equal, everybody belongs and nobody should be left behind. The new centre will provide a permanent home for worship, gathering and celebration, and it will also give younger generations the opportunity to learn, understand their heritage and remain connected to their culture.

I congratulate the Akaal Sikh Society of Launceston and everyone who contributed their time, labour, fundraising and generosity to make that vision a reality, particularly the Dillon family who very generously donated the land. I was honoured to share in the warmth and hospitality of their opening ceremony, but sadly this historic occasion was followed by some awful racist comments online and vandalism of the centre's new signage. That behaviour does not represent the northern Tasmanian community that I know, and it must be called out for what it is, because racism has no place in our community.

Members - Hear, hear.

Mrs GREENE - The opening of the Gurdwara should be remembered as a milestone for our community, not overshadowed by the actions of a small number of individuals seeking to spread fear and division. Our Sikh community belongs here, they are valued, they are respected, and they are here to stay.

I also wish to recognise a remarkable West Tamar mum, Danielle Murfet, and her little girl, Mahlie, who lives with congenital bilateral perisylvian syndrome, epilepsy and global development delay. She experiences multiple seizures every day, along with challenges of feeding, sleep, communication, and the loss of skills that she had previously gained but Mahlie is also strong, determined, and deeply loved. From the moment that Mahlie was born, Danielle knew that something wasn't quite right. She noticed the missed milestones, the falls, the shaking, the zoning out, and the regression. She trusted her instincts and kept pushing for answers even when her concerns were not properly heard. When Mahlie was finally diagnosed, the day after her second birthday, Danielle was handed the diagnosis on a piece of paper and told not to google it. There was no clear explanation, support pathway, or a plan for what came next.

Danielle could have been defeated by that experience, but instead, she turned her pain and her anxiety into purpose and created Mahlie's Mission. Mahlie's Mission supports families navigating rare, complex and life-altering diagnoses. It provides practical resources, community connection and advocacy while working to ensure that families are heard, believed and included in decisions about their children. Danielle's vision is simple but powerful: no family should leave a diagnosis appointment empty-handed, overwhelmed or alone. She is campaigning for every family to receive a clear plain language information practical guide with connections for support from the moment that a diagnosis is delivered. Danielle did not choose to become an expert in rare neurological conditions. She became one because she had to fight for her little girl. Now she is using everything that she has learnt to make the journey a little less frightening and a little less lonely for other families who come after hers. I acknowledge Danielle's courage, persistence and the fierce love that drives Mahlie's Mission.

Vietnam Veterans' Day - 60th Anniversary of Battle of Long Tan

[6.50 p.m.]

Mr BAYLEY (Clark) - Honourable Speaker, I rise tonight to add my voice to those recognising Vietnam Veterans' Day and pay the Greens' respects to all who served in Vietnam and their families. This year is particularly poignant, given it's 60 years since the Battle of Long Tan, the single deadliest of innumerable battles across Australia's 11-year involvement in that war. In a rubber plantation in South Vietnam, 105 Australians were ambushed by an estimated 1500 to 2500 Viet Cong and North Vietnamese troops. Across an intense four-hour battle, 18 Australians and an estimated 245 North Vietnamese or Viet Cong troops were killed, and a further 24 Australians were wounded. A total of 521 Australians were killed across the Vietnam War, with over 3000 wounded or otherwise injured during the conflict. Of the 2300 Tasmanians who served, 17 were killed. Of course, with Vietnam, the injury didn't just stop at the battlefield. At the conclusion of the war, returning veterans were met with a destructive lack of compassion and faced public indifference, social division and an immoral lack of official government support at the time when they needed it most. As Tony Clifford said in the *Mercury* newspaper today:

The worst part wasn't the enemy, it wasn't the mines to which we lost friends.
The worst part was coming home.

That's our enduring shame. Thankfully times have changed and today we pay our respects and fully acknowledge the service and sacrifice of military personnel who served in Vietnam. Together with other members in this place, I was sad to offer my apologies to the RSL and missed the 11 am service and wreath-laying ceremony at the iconic Hobart Cenotaph today. Last year I had the privilege to be joined by a good mate, the son of a Vietnam vet, to lay a wreath on behalf of the Tasmanian Greens and take a moment to join with others in remembering and celebrating service. I've seen firsthand through this friendship the deep and ongoing impacts of war, the intergenerational trauma and how the effects of conflict can radiate out from the veteran and reverberate through parents, partners and children. The impacts of war can be profound.

The Greens stand against war at every opportunity and urge restraint, diplomacy, humanity and peace as the preferred alternative every time. We will argue against war at every turn but equally, we stand with veterans and their families and pay our respects to those who served, those who paid the ultimate sacrifice and all of those impacted. We turn up to the services, we lay the wreaths and we support the RSL where and when we can. Many have family and friends who served. I've spoken about my mate and his father, and the impacts that they continue to endure. Similarly, my grandfather was a pilot in World War II. He was shot down over Papua New Guinea. His medals, woollen vest and silk map are some of the family's most treasured possessions. Similarly, friends and acquaintances have served in tours of duty in Rwanda, East Timor and Iraq, but today is a day for Vietnam vets.

While I've spoken of the homecoming and the reception they had when coming home, it's worth mentioning that it was also Australia's last war where conscription was employed to send people to serve. I acknowledge their commitment and also the ongoing impacts: the PTSD, the physical and mental impacts, the chemical damage. To finish, I will leave you with the legendary lyrics of Red Gum in their song, *I Was Only 19*, which talks to some of these impacts. I won't sing it, but I will read the lyrics because they are very poignant:

And the Anzac legends didn't mention mud and blood and tears
And the stories that my father told me never seemed quite real
I caught some pieces in my back that I didn't even feel
God help me
I was only nineteen

And can you tell me, doctor, why I still can't get to sleep?
And why the Channel 7 chopper chills me to my feet?
And what's this rash that comes and goes?
Can you tell me what it means?
God help me
I was only nineteen

On this Vietnam Veterans' Day, I pay my respects on behalf of the Greens and echo the words of others in here: lest we forget.

Members - Lest we forget.

Blood and Organ Donation

[6.55 p.m.]

Mr SHELTON (Lyons) - Honourable Speaker, I rise tonight to pay tribute to Australian Red Cross Lifeblood, acknowledging the great work they do Australia-wide, and the recent calls they made for more blood donations. I'm a lifelong blood donor and I'm due to donate this Friday, which reminded me that I needed to do something on an adjournment this evening. It is something I've always had no hesitation in doing and I know I've helped to play a significant role in the lives of hundreds of people since I started donating many decades ago - unfortunately. The Red Cross have been constantly developing their methods of collection and storage since the 1930s in Australia, when they were initially known as the Red Cross National Emergency Blood Transfusion Service.

In the first decade of operation, important breakthroughs meant that they could store blood using refrigeration, meaning that people no longer needed to donate on demand during operations. Refrigeration and advanced collection methods meant that blood could be supplied to the Australian Government's defence forces during World War II, which started in 1939. The 1940s led to discoveries and techniques used to process blood donations, allowing blood as serum and dried plasma to be sent to troops overseas. The first mobile blood unit was established and, by the end of the war, record numbers of donations were being made and blood transfusions were now standard in most operations. Development through the 1950s and beyond saw the need for funding to keep the service that had been so popular running. Lobbying allowed the Red Cross to gain government funding, which continues to this day, with both the Commonwealth and the state government adding to the fundraising of Red Cross.

Continuing research through the decades has led to discoveries of anti-haemophilic globulin, rhesus antibodies, screening for bloodborne diseases such as hepatitis B, and the establishment of a register for blood donors, tissue-matching, stem cells and transplant programs. The Red Cross is now more than just a place to donate blood. It has been an entity involved in historical medical breakthroughs, groundbreaking technologies and life-changing science every day over its 90 years. Now that Red Cross has heavily aligned with transplant organisations all over the world, more than ever, donors play an important role in the lives of many recipients.

A fortnight ago, it was DonateLife Week. Registering to become an organ donor is easier than giving blood, but it's equally important for those life-saving options it provides to those who are sick enough to need that help. Anyone over 16 years of age can register. It's as simple as logging on to the website and filling out a few details. Once you register, you'll be sent a donor's card for your wallet or purse. I'm proud to say that I'm a registered organ donor. With my blood donations numbering around the 170 mark, I encourage all in this Chamber and anybody listening to do these two simple acts and become donors. A living donation of blood can save many lives, as can the honour of being an organ donor once you have left this earthly world. If you are in the position where you can do these two things, I strongly urge you to have a conversation with your family, register your wishes and help others so they can gain a healthy and fulfilling life. I run by the motto, 'If you can, you should'. Thank you.

The House adjourned at 7.00 p.m.