

PARLIAMENT OF TASMANIA
DEBATES OF THE HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY

DAILY HANSARD

Thursday 3 September 2026

Preliminary Transcript

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Thursday, 3 September 2026

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

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Tungatinah Power Station Fire

[10.01 a.m.]

Mr ROCKLIFF (Braddon - Premier) - Honourable Speaker, I rise to update the House on the fire at Tungatinah Power Station in the central highlands overnight. The fire is now contained. However, significant damage has occurred to the facility. Fortunately, there were no injuries and no evacuations were required.

I thank the Tasmania Fire Service, Tasmania Police, State Emergency Service volunteers, Hydro Tasmania and TasNetworks - their personnel who responded swiftly and professionally in very difficult circumstances. At the height of the response, 25 crews and around 45 personnel were involved in managing this complex incident. Around 300 customers at Tarraleah, Bronte and surrounding areas remain without power. Restoration crews are ready to begin work as soon as the site is declared safe. I thank the affected residents for their patience.

Importantly, Tasmanians can be assured there is no risk to the state's overall electricity supply. While Tungatinah contributes around 5 per cent of Tasmania's power generation, Hydro Tasmania and TasNetworks have confirmed the power system remains secure, with sufficient generation and network capacity available to maintain reliable supply across the state. Hydro Tasmania storages are at the highest level seen in 10 years. This level of water in storage at this time of the year displays a strong energy security position for our state of Tasmania.

Investigations into the cause of the fire are now underway. It is too early to speculate on the circumstances or the extent of the damage. The government will continue to work closely with emergency services, Hydro Tasmania and TasNetworks as assessments progress and plans are developed for repair and restoration of this important infrastructure. Our immediate focus remains community safety, restoring power to affected households and supporting those agencies working on the ground.

Mr WILLIE (Clark - Leader of the Opposition) - Honourable Speaker, I move -

That the ministerial statement be noted.

I rise to speak on the Tungatinah fire, thankful for our emergency service workers overnight who responded, and also the Hydro Tasmania and TasNetworks staff. I am very thankful that nobody was hurt.

This news will come as a shock to many Tasmanians because Tasmanians are rightly proud of our Hydro. Hydro Tasmania is a state asset built through the vision, ambition and long-term planning of governments that understood the importance of building an economy for

generations to come, and we're the beneficiaries of that. It was built through hard work and sacrifice of generations of Tasmanians, including those who came here in the post-war era and endured difficult conditions in Hydro camps to build the dams and power stations that would underpin Tasmania's future. Those sacrifices were made because people understood this was about more than just generating electricity; it was about building the economic foundations for a better quality of life, decent wages, secure employment, and shared prosperity. They understood that cheap, reliable electricity could help overcome Tasmania's geographic disadvantage, giving us a competitive advantage, attracting investment and creating good, secure jobs. Hydro Tasmania was never simply about generating electricity, it was about what cheap, reliable energy made possible. It powered manufacturing, it attracted investment, it helped create industries and underpinned decades of economic growth. It helped build the Tasmania we know today.

Hydro Tasmania is an asset that belongs to the people of Tasmania. Every Tasmanian government has a responsibility to steward it carefully and protect its value for future generations. The advantage we have today was built through hard work and the sacrifice of generations who came before us. We have an obligation to make sure that legacy is not squandered. The fire at Tungatinah Power Station, which provides just under 5 per cent of Tasmania's electricity, is a devastating blow and a stark reminder of the importance of properly maintaining and investing in our energy infrastructure. We need to do everything we can to properly steward the state asset, maintain its productive capacity and make sure it continues to serve Tasmania's economic interests. We owe that to Tasmanians, and we'll be working hard on this side of the House to maintain that legacy.

[10.06 a.m.]

Dr WOODRUFF (Franklin - Leader of the Greens) - Honourable Speaker, I'm sure many Tasmanians will be very saddened to hear about the fire at Tungatinah. It is a critical part of the state's infrastructure but it's also a treasured place. It was built in 1956 and it's an extraordinary building. We all love it as we drive past it, and many Hydro families have the heritage of their experiences in the building and maintaining of that critical infrastructure.

I thank the first responders, the SES, the TFS, Hydro staff and others involved for their hard work. It sounds from what they say that it was a very difficult fire. It seems, from the testimony we have at the moment, that when people arrived, the building was in the early stages of collapse. We'll just have to wait and see what the next steps are. We will do everything we can with the government in any way that's appropriate to look at the rebuilding of that critical infrastructure. That 5 per cent, 142 megawatts, might sound small but it's actually a significant part of the state's renewable energy infrastructure. I accept what the Premier and others have said - that it doesn't at the moment appear to be threatening Tasmania's energy supply, so that's not the issue at hand today. Our hearts are with everyone involved and we await the investigation. We are thankful that there were no staff on site and no people have been personally affected, although I'm sure the first responders are still working hard. Thank you for everyone who's involved in protecting the infrastructure at the moment.

Statement noted.

UNCORRECTED PROOF

LEAVE OF ABSENCE

Member for Bass - Mrs Archer

Mr ROCKLIFF (Braddon - Premier) - Honourable Speaker, I advise the House that Mrs Archer will be absent from Question Time today. In her absence, I will take questions in relation to her portfolios.

QUESTIONS

Tungatinah Power Station Fire

Mr WILLIE question to PREMIER, Mr ROCKLIFF

[10.08 a.m.]

As we've been discussing, overnight a major fire tore through Hydro Tasmania's Tungatinah Power Station. Thankfully nobody was injured, but the extent of the damage to the power station, capable of generating more than 140 megawatts, is still unknown. Hydro Tasmania says there's no immediate risk to Tasmania's energy supply and the system remains secure. What does the government currently know about the extent of the damage? How much generating capacity has been taken offline? How long does Hydro expect Tungatinah to remain out of service? Will it be covered by insurance? And do you have an estimated cost?

ANSWER

Honourable Speaker, I thank the honourable member for his question and concur with honourable member's words in the ministerial statement about how important Hydro Tasmania is and how important the foresight of our forebears was when it comes to hydro-industrialisation and our energy security in Tasmania.

There are a number of questions within that question. My information is that 142.5 megawatts of electricity go through Tungatinah. There is a degree of uncertainty at this stage prior to containing the site in terms of safety for investigators to see the extent of the damage. The timeframe at this stage is unknown. Information that was presented to EMO, if I've got the terminology right, overnight could be at least a year, but certainly many months, as I understand speaking to the CEO of Hydro Tasmania this morning, before it can be brought back online, and so the expectation is for many months. We will update the House and the Tasmanian community as information comes to hand.

Further to another question regarding insurance. Yes, my understanding is - through conversations again with Hydro Tasmania's CEO this morning - that the power station is insured. With 30 power stations across the Tasmanian network, 10 within the Derwent region, is my understanding - and we can also update the House with respect to the energy supply and energy security - but we are seeing the highest level of storage we've had in 10 years when it comes to water in our Hydro dams, which is good. We have the Tamar Valley gas power stations as well, which we can bring online very quickly to add to our energy security. I'm advised from Hydro Tasmania that indeed our energy supply and security is very strong for the reasons that I have outlined pertaining to your questions.

Once again, I thank the emergency services for their response. There was a local member of the community that also called in the fire as well, a little time after the alarm system went off.

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

Supplementary Question

Mr WILLIE - Premier, this is significant infrastructure, as you've outlined. Do you have an estimated cost?

Mr ROCKLIFF - I thank the honourable member for his question, and my apologies, I ran out of time. Once again, I want to thank the emergency personnel. My understanding is that local fire crews arrived on the scene within 27 minutes and as you can appreciate, given the region and the volunteers and other responders were spread out, that was a very quick response indeed.

On the cost of the damage: that is still being assessed, and we'll have more information coming to hand as soon as possible. I know the minister for Energy will of course update the House and indeed the community when that comes to hand. There are investigations to be undertaken in terms of the cause but also the activity from Hydro Tasmania in getting power station up as soon as possible and practicable is their number one focus.

Tungatinah Power Station Fire - Impact on Electricity Generation

Mr WILLIE question to PREMIER, Mr ROCKLIFF

[10.13 a.m.]

Tungatinah Power Station has a generation capacity of 142 megawatts as you've outlined, and it's an important part of Tasmania's hydroelectric system. Hydro Tasmania has assured Tasmanians that despite last night's fire, the system continues to operate securely. Can you explain how the loss of Tungatinah is being managed across the Hydro system? How are things like the gas-fired power station, Basslink, Bell Bay and AI data centres impacted? Will this incident affect Tasmania's energy system balance?

The SPEAKER - Before the Premier comes up, just to remind the House that it is really about one question. If you ask a number of questions in a question, the minister or Premier responding can just focus on one of those areas. A reminder that if you ask too many questions, it does make it very hard in a three-minute response to outline all of them. Premier has the call.

ANSWER

I thank the honourable member for his question. All very good questions. Once again, I can assure Tasmanians that our energy security is strong and secure. Again, 142 megawatts. My understanding is that the gas-fired power station is being started as we speak and there are, as you'd appreciate, across 30 power stations, a complex network, but also Hydro Tasmania have contingency for these events. These events are very unusual, thankfully, but as per the

reason why Hydro Tasmania has taken out insurance, these are prepared for in terms of the Hydro network and supply. That's the main focus in terms of energy security.

I'm not advised that there are any concerns in terms of households or indeed major industrials when it comes to our energy network and security of supply.

Supplementary Question

Mr WILLIE - Premier, this power station is going to be offline for some time. The contingencies that Hydro have in place, are they able to be maintained for the long term?

Mr ROCKLIFF - I thank honourable member for your question and understand the sentiment behind the question. Hydro Tasmania are prepared for these unusual circumstances. I would point to the fact that Poatina Power Station was offline as well more recently, and I know minister Duigan would be across this in greater detail. That was significant at the time and Hydro Tasmania managed energy security and energy supply network very well during that circumstance.

Macquarie Point Stadium - Coordinator-General Article

Dr WOODRUFF question to PREMIER, Mr ROCKLIFF

[10.17 a.m.]

Last year, the Coordinator-General wrote a stadium puff piece in which he presented what he said was his economic analysis done off the side of his desk. Today, the ABC have revealed this opinion piece, which your government has called independent, had input from Devils CMO, Kathryn McCann, and from the former government media office head and current Master Builders Association CEO, Jenna Cairney, who planned the media strategy and drafted the media release for the Coordinator-General - so very independent.

Premier, do you think it's appropriate that a senior public servant who's funded by the taxpayer, bound by the State Service Code of Conduct to be apolitical, wrote and published an op-ed, drafted and edited with the Devils and the Master Builders Association? Do you think it's appropriate that the Coordinator-General never disclosed their involvement, including when questioned by the Public Accounts Committee (PAC)?

ANSWER

I thank the honourable member for your question and concur with many people that the Macquarie Point stadium is a huge opportunity for Tasmania in terms of jobs, in terms of investment and in terms of growth. Of course, we expect the Coordinator-General, who is responsible for investment and delivering real economic outcomes and jobs for Tasmania, to support the Macquarie Point stadium. While you might not agree with the analysis of the stadium, because you have a very clear position and have had a very clear position for some time with respect to the stadium infrastructure, I don't expect you to ever agree with anyone that works hard to secure future economic development for Tasmania.

Our government is focused on one thing: delivering investment and jobs for Tasmanians. The Office of the Coordinator-General is a key part of how we get that done. The office is set

up to bring and attract investment to Tasmania. That is a good thing. I would be staggered if the Coordinator-General's office did anything but providing economic opportunity for Tasmania.

Supplementary Question

Dr WOODRUFF - To the question, which the Premier didn't address, about a senior public servant, the State Service Code of Conduct and what he claims was an independent piece. Can you please answer whether you think it's appropriate that a person in those circumstances has written something which, by any standards, seemed to be political and presented as independent when it wasn't. Do you think it's appropriate that the Coordinator-General didn't disclose his involvement when asked to by PAC?

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

Mr ROCKLIFF - Firstly, I would be staggered if the Coordinator-General, in applying for the position of Coordinator-General, didn't want to attract investment to Tasmania. The enabling infrastructure of the stadia, of course, attracts investment. It attracts investment when it comes to hospitality venues, accommodation venues and other economic opportunities. You might not concur with the analysis or, indeed, the fact that the Coordinator-General has a position when it comes to the analysis of -

Dr Woodruff - It's a question of honesty. What do you think about what he said?

The SPEAKER - Honourable Leader of the Greens, you still have two more questions. I ask that the Premier be heard, please.

Mr ROCKLIFF - That is the answer to your question.

Macquarie Harbour - Oxygen Levels

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

[10.21 a.m.]

Monitored oxygen levels in Macquarie Harbour are now lower than when the state and the federal governments coordinated to excise the waterway from environmental provisions at the behest of the multinational salmon industry. Minister, your own and federal scientists have made clear that the salmon industry is the major driver of oxygen depletion in the waterway, and poses the prime threat to the continued existence of the Maugean skate. The respected Australian Marine Conservation Society now warns the endangered skate risks this summer of being cooked at the top by warming waters and choked by a lack of oxygen at the bottom of the harbour. Will you do the sensible thing and direct the industry to destock before summer brings mass salmon deaths while driving the skate ever closer to extinction?

ANSWER

Thanks very much, Speaker. I thank the honourable member for his question, his ongoing interest in this matter, and look forward to further engagement with the honourable member on

this matter. I can indicate to the House, as I've indicated to the honourable member, that I've organised a briefing with my secretary next week, I think it's Tuesday, for the honourable member on this matter.

We certainly, as a government, remain very committed to protecting the endangered Maugean skate, while supporting a sustainable salmon industry on the west coast of Tasmania. We do have a Conservation Action Plan. It continues to guide the coordinated action by government, scientists, industry, and the national recovery team. More than 90 per cent of priority actions are complete or on track. Recent Institute for Marine and Antarctic Studies (IMAS) monitoring shows encouraging signs for the wild population, with relative abundance broadly comparable to 2014 reference year, and continued evidence of juvenile recruitment. Recovery is not yet assured and ongoing monitoring does remain essential. Significant milestones have been achieved through Tasmania's captive intervention program, including the successful release of two adult Maugean skate back into the Macquarie Harbour following more than two years in captivity.

Monitoring by the EPA - of which I'm the responsible minister - indicates dissolved oxygen conditions, which was referred to by the honourable member in his question, remain substantially improved compared with historical lows, supported by adaptive management and the Macquarie Harbour oxygenation project. The government's approach remains science-led, adaptive and focused on both species' recovery and the long-term sustainability of the west coast community.

Having said that, I look forward to ongoing engagement with the honourable member and any member in this House on important issues relevant to this great state, including the sustainability, of course, the salmon industry, and ensuring the protected species, and the Maugean skate in this case in Macquarie Harbour, is protected. That's why we've invested heavily. We're progressing with the management plans and we have the scientists, the independent regulators, monitoring, and the government itself, and I look forward to that briefing next week with the honourable member with my secretary.

Supplementary Question

Mr GEORGE - Minister, your characterisation of the IMAS report about the health of the Maugean skate and your characterisation of oxygen levels leaves me seriously concerned about what I'm going to hear next Tuesday. It's way off beam. More than \$20 million of taxpayers' money has already been spent blowing bubbles into Macquarie Harbour. Do you seriously suggest that destocking is not a necessary precaution for the health of the harbour and the survival of the Maugean skate?

Mr BARNETT - I thank the honourable member for the question. I'm absolutely required, in my role - and I think it's very important - to rely on the experts. I appreciate, firstly, that you've indicated the very significant taxpayer investment in the protection of this species over a number of -

Mr George - Protection of the salmon industry.

The SPEAKER - Order.

Mr BARNETT - Over a number of years, and I've indicated that the EPA in the past, and I indicate again today, is an independent regulator, independent of government, independent of myself as the relevant minister for environment and climate change. They've provided advice. I'm acting on that advice. The secretary next week will have more to say and will hopefully be able to flesh out that advice and answer the honourable member's relevant questions, and be more than happy to have further questions in due course on this important matter.

Firearms Regulation

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

[10.27 a.m.]

Over the last 12 months, you and I have had significant conversations about firearm ownership regulations and community safety. Pending no more delays, we will have a couple of more over the next week. My first week in here, I spoke to you about practical changes that the *Firearms Act* desperately needs. Unfortunately, due to the federal government's failures, firearms caps have become the story. The cost of firearm caps in Tasmania is estimated to cost the taxpayer between \$40-90 million. How many firearms will that actually take out of the hands of criminals?

ANSWER

Speaker, I want to thank the member for Lyons for his excellent question. Can I also just acknowledge Australian National Flag Day, and I know you and I are both descendants of recent migrants to this country, and I think we've won the lottery in life. You know, as my grandpa Albert always used to say, we're lucky to be in the lucky country.

Now, in terms of the question that you asked, Mr Di Falco, you're certainly right. It is modelled that the Labor and Greens firearms caps policy would cost the taxpayer about \$40-90 million. In terms of the answer to how many illegal firearms would that get off our streets here in Tasmania, the answer is zero. The reason for that? The caps don't apply to the criminals and terrorists. Who do they apply to? They apply to farmers. They apply to sporting shooters and to hunters, people who have done the right thing for decades. They're the people who are the focus of Labor's caps and they are the people who get punished. They were the people who did nothing wrong.

You do not stop Islamist terrorist attacks by putting a cap on farmers. It is very, very clear. That's why our policy here in Tasmania, the policy of Labor governments in Victoria and South Australia, and Liberal Party governments in Queensland and the Northern Territory have not included caps. Indeed, the tragic events that we saw at Bondi are also a reference for us in this. How many firearms were present on that day in Bondi when the massacre occurred? It was three, among two people. I'm not sure how those opposite claim that they are seeking to address that challenge with a cap of 10 firearms on farmers. That doesn't address the challenge of what we saw, because the right number for terrorists who travel to international terrorist training camps, who have interests in explosives, who've been on ASIO watchlists for years, is zero. That wouldn't be addressed by Labor's and the Greens' caps. That's why we need to be laser-focused on ensuring that firearms don't fall into the wrong hand. That's why we need to

right the wrongs of 2015 when Labor and the Greens voted against tougher penalties for people who steal and traffic in stolen firearms.

Mr Abetz - Shame.

Mr ELLIS - In this place, the Greens voted against legislation to increase penalties for people who trespass on Tasmanian property with a firearm. You voted against that in recent weeks, and they have the gall to say that they're focused on community safety and we're not. That is absolute rubbish. Our focus is on ensuring that criminals and terrorists cannot get access to firearms. Your record in this place has enabled people to get access to firearms who should not have them, and that's why our focus is strongly on that. You're right to say \$40 to \$90 million and not a single illegal firearm of our street.

The SPEAKER - The minister's time has expired.

Tungatinah Power Station Fire - Prior Condition

Mr WILLIE question to PREMIER, Mr ROCKLIFF

[10.31 a.m.]

Tungatinah Power Station was commissioned in 1956. More than a decade ago, Hydro Tasmania described Tungatinah as a priority asset, saying its age meant it no longer delivered the required performance and carried potential duty of care risks. Hydro subsequently undertook a \$60-million modernisation program and later scheduled further refurbishment work. When was Tungatinah's most recent comprehensive condition and fire safety assessment? Were any maintenance, replacement or Fire Protection works identified?

ANSWER

I thank the honourable member for this question. I will have to provide an update to the House for you on the detail of Tungatinah Power Station. I'm not sure if the honourable member has visited Tarraleah more recently. I know other Members across the House have done, which represents a significant investment in our Hydro industrialisation network and further investment hopefully to come as well, given the significance of Tarraleah to our energy security.

On the matter pertaining to your question, I will seek some detail for you. I'm not sure if our minister has it at hand, but I will provide the information to the honourable member when we can. Thank you.

Recognition of Visitors

The SPEAKER - I'd like us all to welcome in the public gallery participants with Making It Happen. Making it Happen is a Hobart-based organisation empowering Tasmanians with disability to be the best version of themselves. Welcome to parliament. Lovely to have you here.

Members - Hear, hear.

Court Lists

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

[10.34 a.m.]

Court lists have completely blown out under your government. The Chief Justice said last year -

The court continues to face increasing workloads, backlogs and delay across all elements of its jurisdiction.

The Babb report noted this is leading to increased costs and considerable distress for those involved, particularly victim/survivors and accused persons held on remand. In response to the Babb report, you said your government is committed to ensuring Tasmanians can access a justice system that is efficient, effective and responsive. Yet the secretary of your own department has said to staff, in response to the drastic cuts this government has imposed, that it is simply not possible to do the same amount of the work with fewer staff. Attorney-General, how do your cuts and vacancy controls lead to a more efficient, effective and responsive justice system?

ANSWER

I thank the honourable member for her question and your interest in the justice system, as I think and I hope all members in this place have a similar interest. I appreciate your opening remarks with respect to the Babb review, and that's why the government took as a priority the importance of access to justice, ensuring that Tasmanians, wherever possible across this great state, can have access to justice in an affordable and timely way. That's why I commissioned Lloyd Babb, SC, who is now, by the way, just been appointed a judge in New South Wales.

Ms BURNET - Standing Order 45, relevance. The question is not about the Babb report, it's about the cuts and vacancy controls which won't lead to more efficient, effective and responsive justice system.

The SPEAKER - In your initial, you did talk about court lists blowing open and everything else. I remind members that if you put in Standing Order 44, if you exceed the prescribed limits of 44, there is latitude for the minister under Standing Order 45. It's the question you ask that determines the response.

Mr BARNETT - Thank you very much. The first half of the question was about the Babb review. That's why I've made reference to it and said it's a priority for our government in terms of access to justice in Tasmania. We have already received and responded to the Babb report and its 20 recommendations. We have said we'll accept 19, and the 20th recommendation we support will require further consideration. We are getting on with the job. I've had numerous meetings since the Babb report was delivered and am now acting on it, meeting with a range of justice stakeholders, including my department. It's being actively considered and implemented.

You also made reference to the Budget. We need to ensure that we invest heavily in our justice and corrections facilities. What we won't do is increase taxes, like the Labor opposition.

We will focus on health, housing, education and community safety. As a government we want to see improved productivity and eliminate duplication. We want to focus on those at the front line. That's what we're on about. We do need those efficiencies and we want to modernise government services in a streamlined approach. We will deliver on that and will remain focused to do so.

Supplementary Question

Ms BURNET - Thank you for that answer. But aren't your deep cuts and vacancy control measures, which get deeper and deeper over the next four years, just going to make court waiting lists longer, putting further strain on victims, witnesses, people on remand, court staff and the lawyers who are leaving the profession in droves?

Mr BARNETT - There was a connection there somewhat to the first part of the first question. It remains a priority of our government, in terms of access to justice, to ensure that we have an open and transparent approach. We are determined to see improvements. There's more work to do. That's why we've had the Babb report, we've accepted those recommendations and we're getting on with the job. There's lots of activity. I thank the justice stakeholders. I meet with them regularly and we will be meeting again in the next couple of months to map a plan in terms of how else they see we can make improvements in our justice system. We are very focused. I met with the secretary again yesterday in my department. This remains top of mind to ensure we get access to justice in Tasmania in an affordable way. We've had one of the best justice reforms in the last 10 years with the Tasmanian Civil and Administrative Tribunal (TASCAT) being established in 2021. That has produced fantastic results and we're delivering -

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

Low Head Pilot Station

Prof RAZAY question to MINISTER for PARKS AND HERITAGE, Mr DUIGAN

[10.38]

Low Head Pilot Station is an important state-owned heritage and tourism asset but, with no current leaseholder, key visitor facilities are closed. As northern Tasmania is facing significant economic challenges, it's important that attractions such as these are maintained, promoted and contribute to the local economy. I acknowledge the cafe and accommodation, along with issues associated with a significant heritage site, may present some challenges for prospective lessees. If the government can't secure a suitable operator under the current model, will the minister consider alternative arrangements? This could include direct Parks and Wildlife management of the visitor precinct or separating the hospitality and accommodation operations, offering them to local businesses individually.

ANSWER

Honourable Speaker, I thank the member for the question. I share his interest in seeing things progressing at Low Head. It is a place that I visit frequently, I like to see the cafe open and the lighthouse and accommodation provided there. As government and Parks is the owner of that facility, we are committed to making sure that it remains a vibrant and viable tourist

destination. I have received plenty of feedback to my office on this one around the future of the site. That is why we did our Parks and Wildlife work with the previous lessee to ensure a smooth exit out of the facility and the premises. There were a number of bookings that extended past the end of the lease period and we were able to execute those.

Parks and Wildlife has run a public EOI which opened in May and closed in late June, with a preferred operator to be identified imminently. It's my clear expectation that that is announced in the very short term. That new operator has the ability to get into the infrastructure at Low Head ahead of the summer period. We're working there and we'll have more to say in this space shortly. I agree with you, it is an important asset in that part of the state.

TasInsure - RACT Agreement Cost

Mr WILLIE question to PREMIER, Mr ROCKLIFF

[10.42 a.m.]

During the election you promised TasInsure would not cost Tasmanian taxpayers a cent. Since then you've spent \$150,000 on an insurance consultant and created a \$4.2 million TasInsure bureaucracy. Now your agreement with RACT proposes paying the company a monthly retainer for five years and reimbursing costs incurred during the interim partnership. Premier, what is the monthly retainer? How much could RACT be reimbursed? What will the total cost to Tasmanian taxpayers be over the next five years?

ANSWER

I thank the honourable member for his question. There's only one political party in this Chamber that wants cheaper and fairer insurance, and that is the Liberal Party.

Mr Willie - You said it would cost nothing.

Mr ROCKLIFF - Well, you said it would cost \$150 million. We have been very open and transparent around our budget, which has gone through this Chamber, when it comes to TasInsure. I'm sure everyone, if they are getting out and about their electorates and visiting businesses and community organisations, would understand the pressures -

Members interjecting.

The SPEAKER - Honourable members to my left.

Mr ROCKLIFF - on businesses and households when it comes to insurance costs, clearly. This is not a new issue for me, I have raised this issue nationally over the course of the last four or five years.

Ms Haddad - You gave them false hope with your promise.

The SPEAKER - Honourable member for Clark.

Mr ROCKLIFF - I did so as minister for Tourism, wanting a national approach to this issue. In the absence of a national approach, we want to work with Tasmanians, in this case the RACT, which in my understanding is the only mutual insurance provider within the nation -

Mr Willie - You just discovered them.

Mr ROCKLIFF - which is worthy, and they are a worthy organisation with a trusted brand -

Mr Willie - You were going to put them out of business.

The SPEAKER - Order. Honourable Leader of the Opposition, you've asked a question. I do ask that the Premier be heard because it makes it very hard for Hansard to record what the Premier is saying. You still have three more questions that you can be asking about this same subject.

Mr ROCKLIFF - We have signed a memorandum of understanding with the RACT to support the early delivery of TasInsure and accelerate practical work to improve insurance affordability and accessibility for Tasmanians.

Members interjecting.

Dr Broad interjecting.

Mr ROCKLIFF - You can laugh all you like, Dr Broad, and others within the Labor movement, but I can say this: Tasmanians want cheaper and fairer insurance, and we will deliver exactly that. The partnership brings together the state's policy levers, and the RACT's local insurance expertise, knowledge, and networks. RACT has been appointed as the interim TasInsure partner for an initial three-month period, with the government intending to progress a longer-term partnership for an initial five-year period, subject to appropriate due process and formal arrangements. Early work will focus on practical risk management support for small businesses and community organisations, property-level risk reduction planning, better coordination of mitigation investment and targeted work on hard-to-place insurance risks. The partnership follows the independent TasInsure Assessment prepared by John Trowbridge OAM and the government's TasInsure implementation pathway.

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

Supplementary Question

Mr WILLIE - Premier, you said that TasInsure would cost Tasmanians nothing. You spent millions of dollars on consultants and bureaucracy. I'd like you to answer the question: how much will you be paying RACT over the five years for your broken TasInsure promise?

Mr ROCKLIFF - Well, you're asking me a question about promises and TasInsure remains, so you're confused within your question, firstly, and I reject your assessment of 'millions of dollars'. That is not true.

Members interjecting.

The SPEAKER - Order.

Mr ROCKLIFF - You can argue for higher insurance premiums, if you like. You can do that. I'm not stopping you. We will argue for, and present policy for, cheaper and fairer insurance. We will.

Members interjecting.

The SPEAKER - I ask the House to settle, please. Thank you, honourable Premier.

Mr ROCKLIFF - The budget that you passed, our 2026-27 Budget, included \$2 million -

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

Construction Apprenticeship Payroll Tax Rebate

Mr O'BYRNE question to MINISTER for SKILLS and JOBS, Mr ELLIS

[10.47 a.m.]

You often speak passionately about the importance of traineeships, apprenticeships and creating real job opportunities for young Tasmanians. Yet at the same time, your government has removed the subsidy for medium and large construction companies employing apprentices. That decision comes when Tasmania already has a significant shortage of skilled construction workers and construction apprentice numbers are falling. We need thousands of more workers to build the houses and major infrastructure projects your government says are coming.

As the minister responsible for schools and training, do you support removing this incentive at precisely the time you are encouraging more young Tasmanians to move into these careers?

ANSWER

I thank the member for his question. You're right, and I know that we do share that passion as well about ensuring that young people can get great opportunities to have the life-changing and transformative experience of completing an apprenticeship. Certainly, Tasmania remains at the forefront. If you start an apprenticeship today in Tasmania, you are the most likely apprentice in the country to complete. We're more than 10 per cent above the national average in terms of completion, and we're actually 45 per cent above our completions numbers from five years ago - a 45 per cent increase. That's a real credit to the businesses who employ them but it's a huge credit to everybody who supports those apprentices on that journey.

In terms of the process that we're working through in budget, we want to make sure that we're bringing the budget back into surplus and that we're paying down debt, so we need to make choices around trade-offs. This was a time-limited tax rebate. We extended it for one year last financial year. We've made the decision that it would now expire, as it was due to temporary tax rebates. It had its place during a time of economic stimulus, but we're refocusing the priorities, and that's particularly on our High-Vis Army initiatives and TasTAFE.

We're seeing massive infrastructure investments across TasTAFE, including the north west Tasmanian Clean Energy Centre of Excellence that complements our Water and Energy Trades Centre of Excellence. That facility in Burnie is a \$27 million upgrade for learners in the north-west coast. There are major investments across our High-Vis Army partners with the HIA, the Master Builders, Master Plumbers, and NECA (National Electrical Contractors Association) so that we can back in industry to take the lead when it comes to their training and workforce needs. That's more than \$15 million that's invested, and we really appreciate them coming forward and proposing the opportunity for more young learners to gain experience and exposure to the stadium project as well - a project I know you've backed in strongly, Mr O'Byrne. It will just be so inspiring for every young child from around Tasmania, if they want it, to be able to get on site and see the kind of big build that we're delivering here in Tasmania.

I understand that we need to work through this. The strong advice from Treasury was that that particular measure wasn't driving greater uptake in apprenticeship employment and that the numbers were largely mirroring the broader hiring across the industry. These are times of making trade-offs and decisions. This was a time-limited tax rebate. We're refocusing our priorities on investing in the training services that young Tasmanians need.

Supplementary Question

Mr O'BYRNE - Thank you, minister, for that answer. Whilst I accept the advice from Treasury, there is also significant concern been relayed to your government from those people in the real economy, those people that actually employ the apprentices, train the apprentices and take on the risk and the obligation of supporting young Tasmanians into those apprenticeships. They're saying you're wrong. Is Treasury right or is the industry right?

Mr ELLIS - I understand where the question is coming from and appreciate the advocacy of industry. We understand, of course, that industry would prefer that the rebate continued. We know that is the nature of these kinds of tax rebates. Everyone wants to fight their corner in those sorts of proposals. We are in a time where we're looking to deliver a surplus, and that means pulling back on some of the stimulus that existed during COVID. We did extend this rebate for a final year in the last financial year, but now is the time to pull that back, return to more normal arrangements and continue our investment into initiatives like the High-Vis Army and major upgrades of TAFE facilities, so that we can continue to grow our construction sector.

We've also been working closely with the federal government and had some wins in their, I suppose, reconnection with the importance of apprentice training subsidies. When they first came to government they removed a lot, but they've been bringing them back, because I think it's a policy lever that the federal government have acknowledged is an important one for them to be stepping into and encouraging more apprentices.

Coordinator-General Opinion Piece on Macquarie Point Stadium

Dr WOODRUFF question to PREMIER, Mr ROCKLIFF

[10.52 a.m.]

The Coordinator-General was asked in the PAC (Public Accounts Committee) whether you were aware of his opinion piece before it was published. He said the economic analysis

was, quote: 'Presented to the minister and Premier beforehand, but not the op-ed'. Mr Perry later provided a letter to PAC stating that on 10 October, he directly emailed the Premier, Treasurer, and the Premier's chief of staff with a final opinion piece. The RTI shows your chief of staff and deputy secretary were sent a draft opinion piece on 8 October. Your deputy secretary asked the Coordinator-General to delay this release of the opinion piece to coincide with the government's response to the Tasmanian Planning Commission's (TPC) final stadium report. Premier, did you know about the Devils' and the NBA's involvement in writing this op-ed? What's the extent of your office's involvement in cooking it up? Are you at all concerned about the Coordinator-General misleading PAC?

ANSWER

I can find some more detail to the answer, but I was briefed by the Coordinator-General on this matter. He asked permission to put out the opinion piece, and I said yes. We'll go back to other matters of your question, but you're against the stadium, I'm for it. I expect a coordinator-general to do whatever is possible to drive investment into Tasmania. That is my expectation of all involved in areas of economic responsibility in and across government, to provide jobs and opportunity for Tasmanians.

Supplementary Question

Dr WOODRUFF - The Office of the Coordinator-General is a state servant. Does the Premier stand by his responses in questions last year in Estimates about this matter, where you said that this was independent assessment undertaken by the Office of Coordinator-General? Do you stand by that statement?

Mr ROCKLIFF - Firstly, I do stand by the Coordinator-General. The individual is a tremendous Tasmanian that's come back to Tasmania and done a tremendous job for the people of Tasmania in attracting investment, but also showcasing Tasmania to the world.

Dr Woodruff - But it wasn't independent.

The SPEAKER - Order. Honourable Leader of the Greens, you've asked a question.

Mr ROCKLIFF - Which is tremendous. So, yes, I do stand by the Coordinator-General.

TasInsure - Inflation Relief

Mr WILLIE question to PREMIER, Mr ROCKLIFF

[10.55 a.m.]

New ABS figures show Hobart has the highest inflation of any capital city in Australia. TasInsure was sold at the election as cost-of-living relief that would save Tasmanians \$250 on their insurance bills. You even said it would reduce grocery prices. You've repeatedly promised Tasmanians will receive that relief. My question is when. When will TasInsure reduce grocery prices and when will Tasmanians receive the \$250 off their insurance bills that you promised?

ANSWER

Honourable Speaker, I thank the honourable member for the question. There's a fair few parts to that question. Insurance is a very serious concern for Tasmanians and it requires a very serious response.

Mr Willie - You took advantage of them in an election with no solution.

The SPEAKER - Order. Honourable Leader of the Opposition, the Premier is only 15 seconds into his answer. None of us know what the Premier is about to say. I ask that he be heard in silence, please, because you still have more questions you can ask.

Mr ROCKLIFF - We've listened to Tasmanians. We listened to people right across Tasmania and small business, particularly households and others, about the rising cost of insurance.

Mr Willie - When? When are they getting their relief?

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

Mr ROCKLIFF - I was very concerned as to the seriousness of this matter and the importance of a TasInsure policy; that people were underinsuring or not insuring. That is a serious business. That's why we have the policy response to that, a very coordinated policy response with in-depth detail by John Trowbridge. His report is there for you to read and digest. There is also the memorandum of understanding with RACT, which is a trusted insurance provider and trusted brand for Tasmanians. I don't necessarily want to give you an economic lecture but -

Mr Mitchell - You're in no position to.

Mr ROCKLIFF - but in the absence of your knowledge in this area, I'm happy to.

Mr Willie - It's going really well for you in the north, isn't it?

Mr Ferguson - They don't even know who you are in the north.

Mr Willie - Says you from the backbench.

The SPEAKER - Order. Honourable Premier, I ask that you don't incite interjections either. It does make it easier for the House.

Mr ROCKLIFF - When you have an input into a business, it affects your gross margin and the cost of doing business. Therefore -

Ms HADDAD - Point of order, 45, relevance. We don't need the lecture. The question was straightforward. When will Tasmanians see \$250 come off their insurance bill, and when will Tasmanians see their grocery prices go down?

UNCORRECTED PROOF

The SPEAKER - Thank you, honourable member. I remind the House that a Standing Order 45 is not about - you could just draw relevance. Premier, I do ask you to return to the substance of the question.

Members interjecting.

Mr ROCKLIFF - Insurance is one of the costs that flows through supply chains and ultimately affects the prices paid for by Tasmanians. As it does with fuel; we've had an increase in fuel since 28 February this year with the Iran conflict. So, we have sought community feedback -

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

Supplementary Question

Mr WILLIE - When will grocery prices go down and when will Tasmanians receive \$250 off their insurance bills, as you promised them?

Mr ROCKLIFF - We're acting on our policy commitment as we speak. We would welcome bipartisan support -

Ms Haddad - We would welcome grocery prices going down.

Mr ROCKLIFF - We would welcome bipartisan support -

Mr Willie - When? When are they getting \$250 off?

Mr ROCKLIFF - We've had discussions with the most affected areas across our community: community organisations that want to put on events, small businesses, particularly those in the tourism and hospitality sector, which are affected by these matters. We are always mindful of where, as a Tasmanian government, we can intervene in ensuring that we are keeping the cost of living as low as possible for Tasmanians. This is one example. Another example is free bus travel, which has been embraced by Tasmanians right across Tasmania. Whether it's insurance, supporting Tasmanians with fuel prices, free public transport,

Mr ROCKLIFF - Whether it's insurance, supporting Tasmanians with fuel prices, free public transport, energy concessions -

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

Greyhound Racing - Race Fixing

Ms JOHNSTON question to MINISTER for RACING, Mr JAENSCH

[11.00 a.m.]

There's a Masters greyhound race for older dogs tonight at Elwick in which eight of the nine runners nominated are trained by disgraced trainer Anthony Bullock. Bullock loves squeezing every dollar he can out of his dogs. Putting aside the cruelty of greyhound racing and the inherent risk, which increases significantly with older dogs, having one trainer with so

many dogs in a race makes it ripe for race fixing. It gives Ben Yole 2.0 vibes. Tasracing can set racing rules barring one trainer from having too many dogs in a race, as it did for harness racing. Minister, what action will you take to reduce the risk of greyhound race fixing?

ANSWER

Honourable Speaker, I thank the member for her question. I'm unaware of the circumstances of the specific race she refers to, but I will take some advice on that. I won't enter into commentary on individual participants in racing. I think that's inappropriate. Broadly, though, I understand that there are no specific rules that prevent an individual trainer from nominating multiple dogs in a race, but that the integrity system for racing needs to be geared to ensure that those races are run fairly. In particular, there is a principle of races run and dogs winning on their merits. Any instruction or action that's intended to prevent a dog from winning or attaining its best possible placing is a breach of integrity. Those things are built into our integrity system.

Because there is no jockey or a driver that can interfere in the conduct of the race in greyhound racing, there is greater weighting on other protective measures to do with grading of the participants to ensure a competitive field. There are also obligations of stewards to monitor any tactical behaviours in the running of events, or evidence of interference or uncompetitive racing between runners, regardless of who owns them. There's also pre- and post-race auditing of the animals to ensure that there has not been any augmentation or interference with the animals' fitness to race or their performance. These are the types of rules that are in place to ensure integrity of the racing system so that wagering can be undertaken on a fair basis and that all the participants are fairly dealt with.

I'll ask for any particular comment that the Racing Integrity Commissioner can make around the race you referred to this evening and get back to you.

More generally, this is something that is dealt with specifically in the draft transition plan for the phasing out of greyhound racing in Tasmania, which is currently being finalised by the Tasmanian Racing Integrity Commissioner and which I will be releasing as soon as possible. Because that plan projects a tapering off of racing over years as dogs are retired from or aged out, or moved away from Tasmania and greyhound racing in Tasmania, the field of dogs will be smaller. Integrity matters like these will be more important to be able to be upheld properly.

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

TasInsure - Impact on Cost of Living

Mr WILLIE question to PREMIER, Mr ROCKLIFF

[11.04 a.m.]

You made your TasInsure promise without a business case, financial modelling or Treasury advice. You then backflipped on your TasInsure government business. When will grocery prices decrease and when will Tasmanians receive the \$250 off their insurance bills that you promised?

ANSWER

Honourable Speaker, I thank the honourable member for the question. We want it to happen as soon as possible. We want to get this done and we are getting it done because Tasmanians care about cost of living and they care about the fact that insurance premiums are rising -

Mr Willie - You sold them a pup.

Mr ROCKLIFF - You have every opportunity to insert yourself into this discussion and this debate by having an alternative policy or, indeed, you back us in because we're the only ones on the ground-

Mr Mitchell - Back in what?

Mr Willie - You are all over the place. All over the place.

Mr ROCKLIFF - With the policy commitment in place that we will deliver as soon as possible.

Kunanyi/Mount Wellington Cable Car - Management Body

Mr BAYLEY question to PREMIER, Mr ROCKLIFF

[11.05 a.m.]

A cable car up Kunanyi/Mount Wellington has been comprehensively rejected by the Independent Planning Tribunal, the Hobart City Council, the community and Aboriginal people. It's been determined it would have negative impacts on the natural and social values of the mountain and Aboriginal cultural heritage values. Despite this, you've promised to create a pathway to make it happen. We've always said your review of Kunanyi/Mount Wellington was to develop a pathway, and the action plan released yesterday confirms it. The main action of this plan is to transfer ownership and significant responsibility for the mountain to a new management body. What exactly is the difference between the management body we already have and the one you've proposed, other than its ownership of the land that you'll be able to stack the new body with cable car cronies?

Mr Abetz - You've already made up your mind.

Mr Bayley - The tribunal made it up, thanks very much. They assessed it.

The SPEAKER - Order. I ask the House to settle, please.

ANSWER

On 2 September, the Tasmanian Government released the outer mountains future action plan, marking the conclusion of the strategic review of Kunanyi/Mount Wellington, and the broader Wellington Park. It's informed by 9000 community responses and further consultation with key stakeholders. The action plan provides a practical pathway to prepare the park for the

future. The action plan seeks to protect the park's natural and cultural values while improving access, infrastructure, fire management as well, importantly, and the overall visitor experience.

A key recommendation is to establish a new landowning managing authority, bringing responsibility for strategic oversight, land ownership and on ground management under a single body. This will provide clearer accountability and allow infrastructure maintenance, fire management and investment to be planned and delivered in a more coordinated way. You agree with all that?

Members interjecting.

Mr Ellis - You nodded.

Mr Bayley - That's what the plan says.

Mr ROCKLIFF - Thank you very much. Fire management, which I'm sure we will all agree with, will be an immediate priority with the government advancing a coordinated park-wide approach to reducing bushfire risk and strengthening preparedness-

Mr Ellis - That's right.

Mr ROCKLIFF - That's right, minister for Emergency Services.

Dr Woodruff - All of this should be happening, and it can be happening now.

Mr Bayley - That's right, it is happening.

The SPEAKER - Order.

Mr ROCKLIFF - The action plan recognises that access is a complex issue and that a mix of solutions is likely to be required to meet future demand, of course. Any future proposal will need to be assessed on its merits through the appropriate statutory and planning processes.

Dr Woodruff - And you're going to stack the management authority.

Mr Bayley - You're going to rewrite the management plan.

The SPEAKER - Leader of the Greens, allow the Premier to finish, please.

Mr ROCKLIFF - And the Wellington Park Management Trust and existing management arrangements will remain in place during a transition and so, I'm assuming you support the planning processes and what I've outlined, indeed, today. This is a complex issue given the varied views and, of course, land tenure as well but also, Tasmanians want access to their mountain, Kunanyi.

Dr Woodruff - So, it's all about the cable car.

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

Mr ROCKLIFF - There are opportunities for low carbon footprint access as well, and we will work through those matters. The action plan sets out a pathway to delivering on the vision and addresses concerns relating to land management, infrastructure access, cultural issues - cultural experiences, rather, fire management and the overall visitor amenity, which is very, very important.

Supplementary Question

Mr BAYLEY - The Premier mentioned that the action plan is about protecting the natural and cultural values. The tribunal, in 2023, rejected the cable car up Kunanyi/Mount Wellington because of its negative impact on those natural and cultural values, yet in 2023 you said you wanted to create a pathway to approve it. Do you still see a cable car as part of the vision for Kunanyi/Mount Wellington?

Mr Abetz - What a good idea.

Mr Shelton - Better protect it from fire.

Mr ROCKLIFF - Well, the action plan sets out a pathway to delivering on the vision and addresses concerns relating to land management, as I've said in other matters. The actions each connect back to -

Dr Woodruff - Just be honest.

Mr Bayley - I'm asking about your vision, Premier. Is the cable car still your vision?

The SPEAKER - Deputy Leader of the Greens, this is your first warning. Leader of the Greens, this is your second warning. The Premier is on his feet answering your question, allow him to finish, please.

Mr ROCKLIFF - The actions each connect back to the community's aspirations as set out in the vision and draw on further consultation with the Wellington Park Management Trust, local councils, tourism stakeholders and fire management agencies. My view on sustainable access and transport at Kunanyi/Mount Wellington has not changed

TasInsure and RACT - Cost Reduction

Mr WILLIE question to TREASURER, Mr ABETZ

[11.11 a.m.]

Your government has now abandoned the state-owned insurer it promised at the election, spent millions setting up a new bureaucracy and has now announced a partnership with the RACT, the company that TasInsure was in fact supposed to compete against. Your government says the initial agreement will run for three months, followed by an intended five-year partnership focused on, I quote, 'resilience, risk reduction and consultation'. Tasmanians were promised \$250 a year off their insurance bills, and cheaper groceries. Treasurer, can you point to anything in the agreement you've signed with the RACT that reduces Tasmanian insurance bills by \$250 a year, or reduces their grocery prices?

ANSWER

Speaker, allow me to correct the shadow treasurer in relation to what he asserted at the beginning of the question, that we as a government had somehow abandoned TasInsure. I would have thought it was made absolutely clear by the Premier in his answer to the Leader of the Opposition, your successor in that position, that he had not abandoned the policy of TasInsure and it was and is progressing.

Furthermore, the partnership with the RACT - and allow me to declare an interest speaker. I do insure with the RACT and I'm a member of the RACT. As I understand it, it's recognised, it's a highly respected organisation within Tasmania, it has a membership level that I think every single political party in this place would envy. It has a huge degree of support in the Tasmanian community. It has a large footprint in the insurance area for our fellow Tasmanians.

Embarking on TasInsure, it makes very good sense that the Premier and the RACT signed up to an agreement or a memorandum of understanding for a period of three months to explore further how this highly recognised and respected organisation in Tasmania, namely the RACT, might be able to work with the state government -

Mr Willie - You're going to pay them to do work they're doing anyway.

The SPEAKER - Order.

Mr ABETZ - to deliver the only public policy proposal to lower insurance - the only proposal. It is so very easy of those opposite.

Mr Mitchell - How? How?

The SPEAKER - Members on my left. The member for Lyons, Mr Mitchell, this is your first warning. I ask that the Treasurer be heard over the next minute, please.

Mr ABETZ - It's so very easy for those who don't have a policy proposal -

Ms HADDAD - Point of order, honourable Speaker, Standing Order 45, relevance. The question does go to that memorandum of understanding (MOU) that the Treasurer's talking about, but it was where in the MOU is there coverage of that question - when Tasmanians can expect their insurance bills to reduce by \$250, or when Tasmanians can expect their grocery prices to reduce.

The SPEAKER - I draw the Treasurer to the main points of the question.

Mr ABETZ - Thank you, Speaker. When you have such a long preamble informed by such misinformation, it is only right and proper that that misinformation be corrected and the record set straight. In relation to the memorandum of understanding, that is more, if you like, a machinery memorandum of understanding. Does it include the matters that the shadow treasurer raised -

The SPEAKER - Honourable Treasurer, your time has expired.

TasInsure and RACT - Cost Reduction

Mr WINTER to TREASURER, Mr ABETZ

[11.15 a.m.]

I will just repeat what the actual question was: can the Treasurer point to anything in the MOU that might reduce Tasmanians' insurance prices by \$250 per year, or the grocery prices?

ANSWER

Speaker, the only party that has a policy designed to reduced the cost of insurance to our fellow Tasmanians is this side here, the government and the memorandum of understanding, Speaker, seeks to explore, between the RACT and the Tasmanian Government, the opportunities that might exist for us to cooperate and deliver on those matters that the shadow treasurer quite rightly referred to, because that is the purpose of our embarking down this track and can I tell you -

Mr Willie - When are grocery prices going down? When?

Mr Mitchell - What a joke.

The SPEAKER - Order, honourable members to my left, none of us know what the Treasurer's going to say in the next 15 seconds. I ask him to be heard, please.

Mr ABETZ - I think I do know what I'm about to say though, Speaker, but I'll allow them to keep guessing but I think they know what I'm about. I think they know what I'm about to say, and that is that -

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

Sand Flathead Fishery - Committee Recommendations

Mr GARLAND question to MINISTER for PRIMARY INDUSTRIES and WATER, Mr PEARCE

[11.16 a.m.]

The parliamentary inquiry into the sand flathead closure found that years of inadequate management, delayed responses to scientific advice and poor consultation contributed to the crisis that ultimately required the fishery to be closed. I supported that closure because the science showed the stock was severely depleted, but recreational fishers had never been put in that position in the first place. Will you accept the committee's findings and implement its recommendations in full and what accountability will there be for the management failures that allowed Tasmania's most important recreational fishery to reach this point.

ANSWER

Can I thank the independent member for Braddon for his question and his continued support and also your support on this inquiry. I'd thank all those involved in this inquiry that

reported back to this House in relation to this manner, and it's a very serious matter. It's a matter that I deliberated and my department deliberated on for a long, long time, very seriously. This is one of the most complex decisions that a minister is required to do. There's a lot hanging off this.

The only thing that we can apply to that, and having gone through that process yourself on that committee, you will have heard from those experts. You will have heard for those scientific experts, like Professor Sean Tracey, the head of our Institute for Marine Antarctic Studies, you would have heard from him how that particular species had been the subject of fishing pressure for quite some time, how previous ministers had instigated certain measures to incrementally help and assist that species from maintaining those biomass levels.

You would have also heard from him that this was an absolutely necessary decision. We now look to the future. In terms of the recommendations from that inquiry, then yes, of course we consider those, but they will be considered with the lens and through the lens of a scientific basis. In terms of looking forward, this is not a case of retrospectively shutting a fishery and then forgetting about it. We are now looking forward to IMAS leading the push for the relocation, translocation and brood stock program that will lift that biomass back up to its reproductive levels where it is.

We need to look forward now. We need to look forward into multi-species, other programs that we can roll out in conjunction with operators like TARFish and others that will allow an upgraded fishing experience because, at the end of the day, independent member for Braddon, Mr Garland, we want our next generation of kids and the next generation of fishers to have that same fishing experience.

So, yes, it's a serious matter. Yes, those points need to be made they don't fall on deaf ears. Yes, there's always room for improvement. It's a continual space for improvement, so I would thank you for raising it.

Time expired.

CONSTITUENCY QUESTIONS

Strata Titles

Mr BAYLEY question to MINISTER for PARKS and HERITAGE, Mr DUIGAN

[11.20 a.m.]

My question is from my constituent Di, who has a particular interest and expertise in strata title. Living in strata is a new style of living for most Tasmanians. It will play an increasing role as we develop our housing stock and increase medium density in our cities, amongst other things. Significant strides are being taken interstate to improve the rules governing living in strata, which Tasmania is well placed to learn from as we move forward in this area. The *Tasmanian Strata Titles Act* is long overdue for reform and an October 2023 review process seems to have come to a halt. When will the government refresh and activate the current review of the Act? When will the review be completed and how will a rebooted review engage with the community to improve clarity around the rights and obligations of owners, residents and other stakeholders?

Illicit Tobacco

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

My question from a constituent in Mount Stuart. He says he has identified three different businesses in greater Hobart that are selling illicit tobacco. He has reported his observations to the relevant authorities and yet nothing has been done to search or shut down those businesses. He asks if there is a different standard for small businesses selling illicit tobacco. How many searches or raids have been done of small businesses since you gave authorities greater powers to target illicit tobacco earlier this year?

Spirit of Tasmania bookings

Mrs GREENE question to MINISTER for INFRASTRUCTURE and TRANSPORT, Mr VINCENT

My constituent Jeff from Gravelly Beach regularly travels on the *Spirit of Tasmania* and has previously been able to book 11 months in advance. Jeff is trying to plan his next trip, but despite trying to book both online and over the phone, he has been told he can't book beyond June 2027. My question is: what is causing the delay of opening the bookings beyond June 2027 and when can passengers like Jeff expect more bookings to become available?

Farming as a Career

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

My question is from a farmer in my electorate of Lyons. They ask: farming is a rewarding career and a way of life for thousands of Tasmanians. As society changes, what is the Tasmanian government doing to connect young Tasmanians with rewarding careers in agriculture and support the future workforce needs of our primary industries?

Bird Flu Management

Mr GARLAND question to MINISTER for PRIMARY INDUSTRIES and WATER, Mr PEARCE

My question comes from a constituent in Ulverstone. Two days ago two dead birds, including a magpie, were reported near the constituents property in an area with significant coastal exposure. The constituent was advised that Biosecurity Tasmania may collect the birds for testing, but ultimately they were not collected and advice was instead provided on their safe disposal. The constituent was also told a response team was receiving hundreds of reports. Given that not every reported bird is being collected or tested, will the minister advise whether all community reports of sick and dead birds, including species, location and date are being

recorded and geographically mapped, to help identify the possible spread of H5 bird flu? Will the government make this surveillance information publicly available, including reports where birds are not subsequently collected or tested, so Tasmanians can better understand the geographic and species distribution of suspected cases across the state?

Huon Highway - Central Crash Barriers

Mr WINTER question to MINISTER for INFRASTRUCTURE and TRANSPORT, Mr VINCENT

My question is from my constituent, Nick Booth, who lives in Kingborough. Minister, I'm writing to you as a deeply concerned member of our community, and as a member of several community groups, to urgently request that the Department of State Growth investigate the feasibility of installing central crash barriers on the section of the Huon Highway between Kyalami Corner and the top of Vincennes Saddle. As you're tragically aware, this specific stretch of highway has a devastating history of severe and fatal crashes, including the recent heartbreaking loss of life in the head on collision at Lower Longley. Every single one of these incidents leaves a permanent scar in our community, and it's clear that the current safety measures are not sufficient to support the catastrophic crossover accidents. Minister, to repeat the question, will you urgently request the Department of State Growth investigate the feasibility of installing central crash barriers on this section?

Bridges for Derwent River

Ms JOHNSTON question to MINISTER for INFRASTRUCTURE and TRANSPORT, Mr VINCENT

My question from a constituent in New Town who is asking about the Queens Domain Master Plan 2013-2033, which identifies six proposed new bridges to improve pedestrian and cycle access to the domain, connecting residential areas, the city centre and the Derwent foreshore. Of those six, the plan names three as priorities subject to funding, including bridge 4, a Brooker Highway crossing linking New Town and North Hobart to Clearys Gates. That was 13 years ago. Minister, can you tell the House what work, if any, has been done on bridge 4 since the master plan was adopted? Has funding ever been allocated or budgeted for? If not, will you commit to reviewing the master plan's priority of bridges, starting with Clearys Gates, so Hobart residents finally get the safe pedestrian and cycle access that this promised them over a decade ago?

Apprenticeship Awareness in Schools

Mr VERMEY question to MINISTER for SKILLS and JOBS, Mr ELLIS

My constituent, Josh of Glenorchy, is concerned that Tasmanian students aren't aware of the employment opportunities that exist for skilled tradespeople in the building construction workforce and don't get good advice on what a great option an apprenticeship can be. He's asked what the government is doing to ensure that young Tasmanians are aware of the opportunities that are available for them in the construction sector?

PETITION

Electric Vehicle Charging Network

Ms ROSOL (Bass) - Honourable Speaker, I have the honour to be the bearer of a petition signed by approximately 966 Tasmanians. The petition requests that the House call on the government to fund and facilitate the expansion of Tasmania's electric vehicle charging network, and ensure the network is consistently reliable and accessible to the public. The petition conforms with the relevant Standing Orders and Rules of the House.

Petition received.

QUESTIONS ON NOTICE - ANSWERS

No. 40 of 2026 - Repair Orders

Ms BURNET question to **MINISTER** for **SMALL BUSINESS, TRADE and CONSUMER AFFAIRS**, **Mr BARNETT**

See Appendix 1 on page x.

No. 53 of 2026 - Ambulance Station, Smithton

Ms DOW question to **MINISTER** for **HEALTH, MENTAL HEALTH and WELLBEING**, **Mrs ARCHER**

See Appendix 2 on page x.

TABLED PAPER

Parliamentary Standing Committee of Public Accounts - Report

Mr WINTER (Franklin) - Honourable Speaker, I have the honour to present the report of the Parliamentary Standing Committee of Public Accounts: follow up of the report of the Auditor-General - Improving Outcomes for Tasmanian Senior Secondary Students, No. 54 of 2026. I move -

That the report be received.

Paper tabled.

UNCORRECTED PROOF

LOCAL GOVERNMENT ELECTORAL BILL 2026 (No. 32) LOCAL GOVERNMENT AMENDMENT (ELECTORAL REFORMS) BILL 2026 (No. 33)

First Reading

Bills presented by Mr Barnett and read the second time.

FOREST PRACTICES AMENDMENT BILL 2026 (No. 41)

First Reading

Bill presented by Mr Ellis and read the first time.

MATTER OF PUBLIC IMPORTANCE

Support for Apprentices