

PARLIAMENT OF TASMANIA
DEBATES OF THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL

DAILY HANSARD

Tuesday 8 September 2026

Preliminary Transcript

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UNCORRECTED PROOF

Tuesday 8 September 2026

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

LEAVE OF ABSENCE

Member for Nelson, Ms Webb

[11.02 a.m.]

Ms RATTRAY (McIntyre - Leader for the Government in the Legislative Council)(by leave) - Mr President, I move -

That the honourable member for Nelson, Ms Webb, be granted leave of absence from the service of the Council for this week's sitting.

Motion agreed to.

RECOGNITION OF VISITORS

Mr PRESIDENT - Being Tuesday morning, it's Special Interest time, and, before I call on our first contributor this morning, I'd like to welcome to the Chamber today guests of the honourable member for Elwick: Ant Edler, Ben Wilson, Jeff Bronstein, Neil Richardson and Rhonda McGuire, who's accompanying Neil. They are the subject of the honourable member for Elwick's contribution.

You may remember they did join us at one time before and sat patiently and patiently while many questions were answered. While their time wasn't wasted, because they would have learned a lot about Energy, Education, Parks, the Budget, Arts and Racing, they ran out of time to be properly acknowledged as present in the Chamber. So, we do thank you for coming back today.

Members - Hear, hear.

SPECIAL INTEREST MATTERS

City of Hobart - State of the City Report

[11.04 a.m.]

Ms O'CONNOR (Hobart) - Mr President, I rise to speak this morning about the Hobart City Council's State of the City 2026 report. While the report itself contains a lot of data and numbers, those numbers tell the story of a vibrant and diverse city, but a city that is not without its challenges.

What the State of the City report tells us is that Hobart's economy has passed \$10 billion for the first time, which is a milestone. The report says it was 'reached through productivity and higher-value work rather than population growth'. The city's economy has roughly doubled

in the last quarter of a century and the city now generates close to a quarter of the state's entire economy, as you'd expect for a capital city. Growth has been steady rather than spectacular, averaging about 1.2 per cent a year over the past five years, below the 3.5 per cent in growth seen across the larger capital city economies.

But that is not necessarily such a bad thing, to be not growing too fast. The population is getting slightly older. In 2025, overseas migration added 892 residents to our beautiful city and remained the main driver of growth, while a net 953 people moved to other parts of Hobart or Australia, and there were slightly more deaths than births.

Interestingly, the majority of the net loss of residents from Hobart was to the LGAs of Glenorchy and Clarence. It's possibly something to do with the fact that rents are increasingly unaffordable in Hobart and there are too few available homes. The number of people working in the City of Hobart has grown over the past five years from around 63,200 jobs in 2019-20 to about 67,200 in 2024-25. The city remains a major employment hub, home to roughly 47 per cent of Greater Hobart's jobs.

There's been a growing demand for smaller dwellings in the housing space, likely supported by increased international migration and lower demand for larger dwellings as former residents have moved out to neighbouring local government areas. For a city where the population growth has been minimal, this points to the continuing importance of delivering a good supply of mixed social and affordable housing, and it's a challenge that the government continues still to have.

Over the past five years, rents have risen at a fairly steady 4.0 to 4.5 per cent a year. They've continued to edge up while house prices have levelled off, which is good news for young people. The rental market remains savagely tight with vacancy at around 0.5 per cent. The value of building approvals in the City of Hobart has picked up in 2025-26, with a month still to be counted. Residential approvals of 109 million already exceed the whole of 2024-25, which was 91 million.

Hobart has the tightest CBD office market in the country. Vacancy was just 5.2 per cent in January this year, well below every other capital and less than half the capital city average of 13.5 per cent. Vacancy has risen by about 2.7 percentage points over three years, but from a very low base.

Spending in the city's businesses reached about \$1.7 billion in the year to June 2026, up 1.3 per cent. Visitors account for close to two-thirds of that spending, underlining how important tourism and events are to local traders. The fastest growing areas were night-time spending, which is up 5 per cent, and tourism and recreation, which is up 7 per cent, notwithstanding the fact that we've had some really well patronised and loved businesses close in recent times. It does point to a vibrant and growing evening and events economy.

We've had 2.8 million passengers come through Hobart Airport in 2024-25, up 6 per cent on the previous year. Visitor numbers to the city have eased slightly over the year with domestic visitation broadly holding up and international visitors down from a recent high.

Events remain a strong draw; Dark Mofo returned in 2025 with close to 120,000 attendees, almost half of them from interstate, and added about \$67 million in economic benefit.

Health and digital care investment is flowing into our beautiful city. The state is partway through a multi-year investment in a digital health and integrated care platform. We know there have been challenges there, but health and care remain among the city's largest employers, and the mix of demographic demand and research capability keeps digital care a credible growth area.

There is also some mention of the stadium in the State of the City report, but I was inclined to ignore that.

What we do know is that beautiful Nipaluna/Hobart will have its challenges in the future, particularly around climate adaptation and making sure that we have enough homes for our people. But it is a thriving city - one of the greatest cities in the world - and I want to thank the City of Hobart for the excellent work they did on the State of the City report and the snapshot it provides for us on where our city is at right now.

Glenorchy Community Award Winners 2026

[11.09 a.m.]

Ms THOMAS (Elwick) - Thank you, Mr President, I rise today to do one of my favourite things that I get to do in this place: that is to celebrate, acknowledge and pay tribute to the outstanding people of Glenorchy who have been recognised through the 2026 Glenorchy Community Awards, coordinated by the Glenorchy City Council.

The community and volunteer awards are an opportunity to recognise Glenorchy's high achievers, community advocates and volunteers. All nominees are helping to make the community a better place for everyone. I thank them for their contribution. I also thank anyone who nominated somebody for the 2026 Glenorchy Community and Volunteer Awards, because I know that takes time and effort, and without nominees there would be no awards. Without people nominating others, there'd be no awards and there wouldn't be this recognition. I encourage everyone to consider nominating the local heroes in your community anytime you have the chance.

Mr President, as you acknowledged, I'm very proud to have the following award winners here with us in the Chamber today. I appreciate you joining me in welcoming them to the Chamber, as we do share Glenorchy City across our electoral boundary, as the member for Derwent. I know you will join me in acknowledging and celebrating the award winners that we share across our electorates. The award winners for 2026 who are with us today are Young Citizen of the Year Neil Richardson, Citizen of the Year Anthony Edler, Senior Citizen of the Year Jeff Bronstein, and one of the joint winners of the local Hero Award, Ben Wilson. I will now tell you a little bit about these wonderful people and their contribution to the City of Glenorchy and our broader community.

Glenorchy's Young Citizen of the Year for 2026 is Neil Richardson. Neil has made a meaningful and emerging contribution to the Glenorchy community through his dedicated advocacy for young people. Drawing on his lived experience, Neil has helped shape the development of the Glenorchy Youth Hub, which has recently opened in the heart of Glenorchy to provide a safe and welcoming space for young people. By sharing his story, Neil strengthened the understanding of, and supported the case for, inclusive Youth Services. Neil's contribution helps secure funding for the initiative and design the programs and support that

are on offer. Neil's courage, empathy and willingness to support others are evident in both his advocacy and his everyday actions. His work reflects a strong commitment to community connection and support. It is incredibly encouraging to see young leaders like Neil stepping forward and making such a lasting impact on our community. I look forward to seeing what Neil continues to achieve as he grows up in Glenorchy. Congratulations to you, Neil.

I also acknowledge joining Neil is Rhonda McGuire, and I acknowledge the impact that Rhonda has had on Neil's life too and shaping the man who he is today. Kudos to you Rhonda. I know Rhonda personally; I remember when he was a little baby going into Strutt. Some of you remember Strutt in Moonah, which Rhonda owned as a very successful small-businessperson and dressmaker who made my wedding dress, the amazing piece that it was. Thank you, Rhonda, and congratulations for all you've achieved, not only as a small-businesswoman and an amazing support to Neil, but having recently completed, last week, a nursing degree. So, well done, Rhonda.

The joint Local Hero Award recipients are Ben Wilson and Grace Chia. Ben Wilson has demonstrated strong leadership in supporting young people and promoting inclusion within the Glenorchy community. As principal of Indie School Glenorchy, he supports young people disengaged from mainstream education. Through his leadership, students are supported to rebuild their confidence, complete education and reconnect with their community. Ben's approach combines high expectations with genuine care, helping young people achieve positive outcomes. Ben also contributes through volunteer work that supports accessible communication. His combined efforts reflect strong leadership and a commitment to equity, inclusion and participation. Ben, thank you for the positive difference you continue to make in the lives of so many young people and families in our city of Glenorchy.

Grace Chia has also made a powerful and lasting contribution to the Glenorchy community. Grace creates opportunities for migrants, young people and under-represented artists to develop their skills, confidence and connection through workshops, mentoring, and inclusive events that reduce isolation and build support networks. Grace's work has expanded opportunities for diverse voices and enriched the local cultural landscape, and her leadership is marked by authenticity and care. Congratulations to Glenorchy's 2026 local heroes, Ben and Grace.

Last but definitely not least, and no stranger to this place, the Senior Citizen of the Year is Jeff Bronstein. Jeff has played a key role in strengthening Glenorchy's cultural life through his leadership of the Tasmanian Transport Museum, helping to foster a vibrant, community-focused organisation that preserves and shares local history. Under his leadership, the museum has become a place of learning, engagement and community participation. He supports volunteers, programs and experiences that connect people of all ages. If you haven't been out to take a steam train ride on a Sunday, make sure you book it in - tickets do sell out. This recognition is a wonderful reflection of Jeff's outstanding contribution to our community and dedication to preserving and celebrating Glenorchy's rich history. Well done, Jeff.

Finally - sorry, you weren't last but not least - now, definitely last but also not least, it gives me great pleasure to welcome back someone else who's no stranger to this Chamber, Glenorchy Citizen of the Year for 2026, Mr Ant Edler. Ant has demonstrated outstanding leadership through his work with the Tasmanian Bike Collective, supporting young people in Glenorchy through inclusive, practical programs that build skills, confidence and connection. His work provides a safe, welcoming environment for disadvantaged and at-risk youth,

fostering a strong sense of belonging. Over many years, Ant has mentored hundreds of young people, restored and redistributed bikes and developed recreational spaces that promote wellbeing and participation. Ant's hands-on approach encourages resilience, teamwork, participation and positive engagement with the community. This award is richly deserved, Ant, and I thank you for the care, energy and leadership that you continue to give to our community, so congratulations to you. If anyone's looking for a new bike, head out to the bike shop in Derwent Park - just opposite my office, in fact.

There were many other deserving nominees and dedicated volunteers who were recognised at the Glenorchy Community Awards, and I extend my sincere congratulations and thanks to all who were acknowledged for their contribution to our community. In closing, I thank the staff of Glenorchy City Council and the awards working group for coordinating these awards and ensuring these outstanding community members receive the recognition they have earned. I also acknowledge council as the source for much of the information I've shared about this year's recipients. Thank you and congratulations once again to our 2026 Glenorchy Community Awards winners for taking the time to join us here again today.

Members - Hear, hear.

Recognition of Visitors

[11.17 a.m.]

Mr PRESIDENT - Honourable members, before I call the honourable member for Rosevears, I'd just like to welcome to the Chamber students from St Patrick's College in sunny downtown Launceston in the division of Launceston, I believe - you go out to Westbury Road, don't you?

Ms Armitage - Absolutely, yes.

Mr PRESIDENT - What we're doing presently, Tuesday is private members' day and we start Tuesday with special interest contributions from our members, where they talk about happenings in their community and then we'll go on to note some reports and through the week we'll deal with some legislation that's been sent up from the House of Assembly. So, Tuesdays are all about private members' business and we have a few reports to note, but we're halfway through our special interest matters and if you stay around, you'll hear all sorts of things about what's going on in Tasmania. I know that all the members will join me in making you feel welcome to the Tasmanian parliament and we hope you enjoy your time here.

Members - Hear, hear.

Champions of Tourism 2026

[11.18 a.m.]

Ms PALMER (Rosevears) - Mr President, can I add my welcome to students from St Patrick's College? I think we might share them. I think one side of the road might be you and one side of the road is Rosevears, but I would say that the students from St Patrick's College probably come from a number of electorates, including the electorate of Windermere and possibly even the electorate of McIntyre, but we're all delighted to have you here.

Ms Armitage - We do, but I have a special feeling for the people. My four children all went to St Patrick's College.

Ms PALMER - It's not about feelings, it's about the electoral commission, but that's not - no, we're all delighted. We love having students here in our Chamber.

Mr PRESIDENT - Isn't it wonderful everyone wants you?

Ms PALMER - Everyone wants you. Hope you feel really special today.

Mr President, I rise to acknowledge and celebrate the outstanding achievements recognised in the Champions of Tourism 2026 awards, which were proudly presented by Visit Northern Tasmania. Straight up, I would like to express my admiration for the CEO, Tracey Mallett, and give my sincere thanks to her in particular and her team for a wonderful event. I think when we're guests at an event, and the honourable member for Launceston was also in attendance at this event, we don't always see the angst that goes on in the background and the ups and downs in organisers' personal lives as well as the life of the event. So, to that team and to Tracey, congratulations and well done.

The Champions of Tourism awards shine a light on individuals and businesses who go above and beyond to deliver exceptional visitor experiences and who play a vital role in showcasing northern Tasmania to the world. They are also some of the big characters who give our industry personality. Tourism is one of our region's greatest strengths, and these awards recognise the passion, innovation and dedication that underpin the tourism industry's success.

The event was held at Small Wonder Wines, a spectacular new venue which is nestled away in Sidmouth. The honourable members may actually know this as being the previous home of Goat Hill vineyard - beautiful wines. When I say brand new, I actually mean brand new; this was the very first event that was being held. When Tracey and her team arrived to begin setup, the builders were still packing up. So, just another challenge that the team had to overcome - but they certainly did.

There were some amazing finalists and winners, and I was particularly delighted to recognise several recipients and finalists from the Rosevears electorate.

In the Local Leader award, which was sponsored by the Launceston Airport, congratulations went to David Cox. David is one of northern Tasmania's real characters and is certainly the life of any party. His passion for our region is certainly infectious and we congratulate him.

It was also brilliant to see finalists in the Service Wizard award, which was sponsored by Hospitality Tasmania, and it was Lauren and Matthias Utzinger of Utzinger Wines, which is in Legana. I've actually spoken about this amazing couple before in this place. Matthias was a Swiss winemaker. He was travelling, I think it might have even been in Iran, where he ran into a Tassie girl from Latrobe. They fell in love and they came back to Tasmania and set up this beautiful, beautiful vineyard. Their philosophy is that wine is grown, it's not made. My congratulations to them.

I'd also like to congratulate Paul and Bec Rumble of Lone Goose Farm. They're winners of the Agritourism Guru award, and that was sponsored by Agritourism Tasmania. Lone Goose

Farm is a small pasture-raised Muscovy duck farm in Birralee, about 35 minutes from Launceston -

Ms Rattray - The member for McIntyre's electorate, Mr President.

Ms PALMER - There you go. Established in 2019, they raised their ducks on open pasture using humane hands-on methods. To give them a bit of a plug, you can go on a small tour, have a look around and then of course you can stay for lunch. They've certainly been true ambassadors of gastronomy and agritourism across northern Tasmania.

Finally, I'd like to recognise just an amazing lady: her name is Rexie Grey and she's from Seahorse World. She's the winner of the Accessibility Advocate award, and that was sponsored by Moxxi Property. Rexie won the Accessibility Advocate award, and she just continues to challenge the status quo in making the tourism industry more accessible and a truly inclusive place. Introduced this year was sensory hour at Seahorse World. Now, that is a dedicated tour for people with sensory sensitivities, tailored to creating a really safe experience. Also investing this year in hearing loops to further elevate accessibility for guests with low or no hearing. She has also partnered with Guide Dogs Tasmania to host regular training opportunities at Seahorse World to advocate for other tourism spaces to open up their doors and create more spaces for people with low vision. So, Rexie, what a champion and so worthy of taking out the Accessibility Advocate award.

The recipients, the finalists and nominees recognised through the Champions of Tourism awards embody the innovation, the passion and community spirit that make northern Tasmania such a remarkable destination. I want to congratulate all of them, thank them for what they do for our state and remind them how very proud we are of them.

Members - Hear, hear.

National Meals on Wheels Day

[11.24 a.m.]

Ms RATTRAY (McIntyre - Leader for the Government in the Legislative Council) - Mr President, I endorse the honourable member for Elwick's words that this is a day for doing our favourite things. I subscribe to that very much.

It is my pleasure to acknowledge National Meals on Wheels Day. It was held on 26 August to recognise the incredible contribution made by Meals on Wheels volunteers across Tasmania, particularly in our east coast community.

On National Meals on Wheels Day I had the opportunity to visit St Helens, where I met with Sheree Archer, the coordinator of the east coast branch. I was also fortunate to accompany Sheree on a meal delivery run to Mr Neville Treloggen's home. My family and I have known Neville for many years. He is a keen country music radio presenter with a show on Star FM on Tuesday nights. So, it wasn't a surprise when, during our visit and while waiting for his daily meal to be delivered - which on this particular day was brought by Garry and Mary Richardson - Neville played a couple of his favourite recordings. He also treated us to his yodelling skills. What a treat.

It was a wonderful opportunity to see firsthand the important work that Meals on Wheels volunteers undertake every day. While the delivery of a nutritious meal is at the heart of the service, it is so much more than food. For many recipients, that regular visit provides an opportunity for a friendly conversation, a check-in and a connection with their community. These simple interactions can make an enormous difference to someone's day.

Following the delivery run, we joined together for afternoon tea at the Hub4Health building to celebrate National Meals on Wheels Day and recognise the contribution of volunteers and coordinators who make this valuable service possible. The room was full of volunteers coming together to celebrate this special day and we were joined by the students from St Helens High School, who came with a gift bag of homemade goodies from their catering class. How special was that?

The statistics demonstrate just how significant this service is across Tasmania. There are currently around 700 Meals on Wheels volunteers statewide, giving generously of their time to support people in their local communities. For the financial year ending 30 June, an extraordinary 304,028 main meals were delivered across Tasmania, with 2575 clients receiving the service over that 12-month period. On the east coast, the contribution is equally impressive. The east coast branch has 34 dedicated volunteers supporting 84 clients and delivering an impressive 7998 meals over the year. Behind every one of those numbers is a person - a volunteer who has given their time, a client who has received not only a nutritious meal but also a friendly face at the door, and a community that continues to look after their valued people.

I would sincerely like to thank Sheree and all the east coast Meals on Wheels volunteers for the work they do. Their commitment, kindness and generosity are an outstanding example of community spirit. I also acknowledge the many volunteers across Tasmania who get behind the wheel, prepare and deliver meals, organise rosters, coordinate services and, most importantly, make that personal connection with clients.

National Meals on Wheels Day is an opportunity to celebrate this wonderful service, but also to remind ourselves of the importance of volunteering and looking after one another. To all Meals on Wheels volunteers, thank you for the countless hours you contribute, for the kilometres you travel, and for the care and compassion you bring to every delivery. Your work truly makes a difference.

Members - Hear, hear.

FaRM and the Sow It Begins Initiative

[11.29 a.m.]

Mr DUIGAN (Windermere) - Mr President, it's a great privilege to get up today to speak about two community-led projects that are happening in my electorate of Windermere and making a real difference for local people. They are in the realms of the issue of food security, and they are sort of connected, but also not connected at the same time. They are the Food and Resilience Movement, otherwise known as FaRM - a nice little line up there - and the Sow it Begins initiative.

The FaRM project was launched in August 2023 and was created with a clear mission to address food insecurity and foster a sense of belonging by bringing people together to grow fresh and healthy produce. It is a great idea. In the ensuing three years, it has come to life with new gardens being added. It's not just about helping people access fresh food, but it also brings the community together at the same time. In many ways, that's what a good community development looks like: it's practical, it's local, and it grows from the ground up.

The FaRM project operates through partnerships involving the Northern Suburbs Community Centre, Starting Point Neighbourhood House Inc, and a range of other community organisations. Today, as I mentioned, there are thriving community gardens at the Ravenswood Men's and Community Shed (MACS) and the Northern Suburbs Community Centre in Mowbray and Newnham. These gardens are producing more than vegetables; obviously, they are providing information and education to people who are involved, friendship, community connection and opportunities for those developments of new skills.

Obviously, these projects are more than just about gardening and the goal is to create ongoing social, economic and environmental benefits. Also, out of this project we're seeing employment opportunities for casuals within the gardens, providing a stepping stone into other practical opportunities - and we've seen that happen with participants who start in the gardens and go on to get jobs elsewhere, which I'm sure members would agree is a valuable outcome.

The project also operates as a social enterprise with produce boxes available for the community to purchase at very low cost, helping make fresh, locally grown food more accessible while supporting the sustainability of the program itself.

I am fortunate to sit on the steering committee of the FaRM project. I should take this opportunity to also apologise for the number of meetings I miss. But it's one of the nice things that you do get to do when you are available for those things. In the words of one of my fellow committee members:

The most important contribution of this project is the lasting wellbeing of our community in an area that often experiences the effects of short-term funding. Our self-sufficient social enterprise aims to foster trust and relationships, ensuring a long-term change in addressing food insecurity and wellbeing.

That nicely sums it up.

Alongside the FaRM project is another new initiative called Sow it Begins. This project brings together City Mission, Starting Point Neighbourhood House, Community Housing Limited, Ravenswood MACS and the City of Launceston. Again, it's a pretty simple concept. Garden starter kits are being made available to residents of the northern suburbs for a pretty small investment. Each kit includes a raised garden bed, soil, seedlings, a number of tools, and instructions to help people get started in growing their own food at home. I mentioned a relatively small investment. That's a \$500 value in terms of the kit, and it's on sale for \$50.

What makes this particularly special is the garden beds themselves. They are built at the Ravenswood Men's and Community Shed, so even before a single seed gets planted in the ground, local people have already contributed their time and have a bit of skin in the game, as it were, to make the project happen and building that community connectedness. Of course, we hear plenty about cost-of-living challenges and we know many families in that area particularly

are feeling those pressures. I wouldn't for a minute suggest that a garden will solve all of those issues, but certainly providing the opportunity to grow a bit of food and connect with people is a practical step in the right direction.

Neither of these projects would exist without the volunteers, coordinators, community workers and the local organisations who invest their time in helping other people. In particular, I would acknowledge the Northern Suburbs Community Centre, Starting Point Neighbourhood House, Project North, and a couple of people - Jay Dunn and Pete Richards - who have been the driving force, particularly behind the FaRM project. I congratulate all those people. As springtime rolls around and everything is bursting out of the ground, it's proof that sometimes the best ideas are often the simplest, and commend -

Ms Rattray - Including weeds.

Mr DUIGAN - Including weeds, there's plenty of capeweed at my place.

MOTION

Tasmania's Forest Carbon 2025 Update Report

[11.35 a.m.]

Ms O'CONNOR (Hobart) - Mr President, I move -

That the Legislative Council:

- (1) Notes the release of the report 'Tasmania's Forest Carbon - 2025 Update', a co-sponsored project by the Tasmanian Climate Collective, the Tree Projects and the Wilderness Society, and authored by internationally respected scientist, Dr Jen Sanger.
- (2) Accepts the scientific fact that unlogged forests are the reason Tasmania can claim to be one of the first jurisdictions in the world to become net zero, evidenced by the state's greenhouse accounts from 2012 onwards.
- (3) Notes the report finds Tasmania's forests currently draw down an estimated 22 million tonnes of carbon each year, which would more than triple by 2050 if native forest logging ceases and forests are managed for climate, biodiversity, recreation and tourism.
- (4) Recognises the report finds that ongoing native forest logging and burning is also the state's single biggest emitter, with industrial scale forestry burns accounting for the emission of an estimated 1.6 million tonnes of carbon dioxide (CO₂e) each year.
- (5) Notes with concern federal and state government moves to facilitate the further burning of native forest for biomass, including at Goliath Cement in Railton.

- (6) Agrees that the single most effective step Tasmania can take to reduce emissions is to end native forest logging and burning - the necessary and ethical response to accelerating global heating, which will impact on our communities, environment and economy with increasing intensity in the decades ahead.

Well, it's been one hell of a summer in the Northern Hemisphere, as many members will know. We've had rolling severe heatwaves and heat dome effects across Europe and North America. Widespread fires in places that they've never been seen before at the intensity that they're happening are threatening cities like Bordeaux and Edinburgh, the boreal forests of Canada also aflame. Millions and millions of tonnes of carbon dioxide are being emitted into the atmosphere. Two weeks ago we had the devastating consequences of accelerating climate disruption in the country of Nepal. Again, I say it because it's true: climate change will hit the poorest people in the world the hardest, and it is a crime that's been committed by the world's richer countries, who are failing to rein in their emissions.

I read recently a really interesting scientific observation that there is more carbon trapped in our atmosphere than all the weight of all of the buildings on Earth. When I read that, the effect of climate change and how it works became more real in my mind. It's not a matter of opinion; it's a matter of physics. That carbon that's sitting up there in our atmosphere is operating like a lid on the planet and trapping heat. Some of the carbon in the atmosphere now was emitted during the Industrial Revolution. The carbon forming that heat-trapping lid on our atmosphere now will take centuries to break down. In the year that I was born, in 1967, the concentration of atmospheric carbon was 322 parts per million. In 1991, when my first child was born, it was 355 parts per million. Today it sits at 428 parts per million and rising. This gunk in our atmosphere will take hundreds of years to break down.

Despite everything we know about global heating, its causes, the evidence of its current and future devastating effects, despite the increasingly desperate warnings and pleas from climate scientists and young people, communities all over the world, marginalised at-risk communities like Nepal and Kiribati - despite all of this, emissions keep rising, glaciers keep melting, forests keep burning, and people, animals, life on earth keeps suffering.

What we have to do here is a matter of fact and urgency. As a society, a global human society, we have to stop spewing carbon into our atmosphere. We have to stop logging and burning our carbon stores, and here in Tasmania that means ending native forest logging. We have to bank securely and restore terrestrial carbon stores. We have to protect our forests. We've heard much, in these decades of climate denial, about carbon capture and storage being the fossil fuel industry's answer to its endless pollution agenda. We know that's a con. We already have the perfect biological carbon capture and storage and oxygen production machine: a biological machine - that is a tree - a miracle of creation.

I wanted to just draw members' attention to the Tasmanian Forest Carbon 2025 Update by respected forest scientist Dr Jen Sanger, most recently of The Tree Projects. She worked on this report with the Tasmanian Climate Collective and the Wilderness Society of Tasmania, and her report finds - and it's all referenced, she's not making any of this up - that native forest logging is the highest-emitting sector in Tasmania, producing two-and-a-half times the emissions of the state's entire transport sector. This is primarily because the majority of the forest is turned into woodchips and waste, with very little of it stored in carbon as long-term products like furniture.

Research conducted for Dr Sanger's 2022 report found that greenhouse gas emissions from native forest logging were on average 4.65 million tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent a year from 2016 to 2020, which easily makes native forest logging the highest-emitting sector in Tasmania. That is two-and-a-half times higher than the transport sector, including all of Tasmania's trucks, cars, domestic aviation and shipping. It's also equivalent to the annual emissions from 1.1 million cars or equivalent to 422,000 return flights from London to Tasmania.

When native forests are logged in Tasmania, the vast majority of the forests end up as woodchips and waste. After logging, around 60 per cent of the forests' biomass remains on the site, which is often burned in high-intensity fires.

A few years back, when I was living in the other place, a person who's known very well to both you and me, the former Greens member for Lyons, Tim Morris, and I went up the Plenty River to have a look at a coupe that had recently been logged and was waiting to be burned. Within that coupe in the Plenty Valley, quite close to the Plenty River, there were piles of rainforest species; there were piles of celerytop logs. They were sitting there, left by the contractors, waiting to burn. Tim Morris is a resourceful human being, and he certainly got his permissions from Forestry Tasmania, and he was able to salvage some of that celerytop timber that was to be burned. But this is happening on a regular basis in our forests, and when you have specialty timber workers, craftspeople, not able to secure supplies of these rainforest species, we want to challenge Forestry Tasmania and its operations because the fact of the matter is that often non-eucalypt species are left there on the forest floor to burn. If Tim hadn't been paying attention, those piles of very large, old celerytop trees would also have been burned in the autumn following our visit.

Only a small proportion of the forest that's logged ends up as usable timber, and as little as 1 per cent, on the evidence, ends up as sawn timber, which is used for building houses and furniture. A further 5 per cent goes into what's referred to as engineered wood products, such as laminated veneer and plywood. The rest of it, that is 90 per cent of what is actually harvested, goes into short-lived products such as paper, cardboard, comic books and toilet paper. That's what our beautiful, carbon-rich habitat-forming forests are being turned into.

Dr Sanger goes on to say that annual emissions between 2022 and 2024, according to our greenhouse accounts, averaged around 4.43 million tonnes of carbon dioxide. As we know, Tasmania can claim a net-zero status in our greenhouse accounts because of the sequestering power of our forests that are not being logged. The graph is very clear that from about the year 2013, our greenhouse accounts started to turn around because, as a result of the Tasmanian Forest Agreement, the loggers were taken out of 576,000 hectares of Tasmania's carbon-rich forests and they haven't returned since. But as the independent review of the *Climate Change Act* has warned us, it is dangerous to rely on our forests for net-zero status; our forests themselves are at risk as a result of climatic heating. We know that logging is not carbon neutral, but we also know that that old trope that you hear, that carbon dioxide is plant food, when it's applied to the science of global warming, becomes very disingenuous and somewhat dishonest.

There's a story here from the *Guardian* newspaper from three weeks ago that makes it clear that adding huge quantities of carbon dioxide into the atmosphere is set to cause the Earth's forest to wither and die rather than flourish, countering erroneous claims that fossil fuel pollution will green the planet. An analysis of fossilised leaf cells from a period known as the

Paleocene-Eocene Thermal Maximum, which occurred about many tens of thousands of years ago, helped reconstruct how the world's forests responded when planet-heating gases were previously being released at a rapid rate. The authors of the new paper found this prehistoric change caused a retreat in the forests and the Earth browned rather than greened, a finding they state has chilling implications for the future. It's very, very clear we have to rein in our emissions.

There's a statutory instrument that has come into effect. It's called the Improved Native Forest Management methodology. It's an instrument that was developed in New South Wales, and it provides for offsets from forests that have been set aside. Those offsets, or Australian Carbon Credit Units, can be purchased from relevant state authorities by big polluters. If they have these offsets from the forests, it enables them to keep polluting. The problem with offsets is that they provide no incentive for big polluters to rein in their emissions. There is an ongoing debate at the moment about that methodology and whether or not it should be disallowed, because the concern here is that we're trading forest protection on the one hand, for the destruction of nature through accelerating runaway climate change, on the other.

We are being told by governments, including the Albanese government, that the only mechanism for protecting forests is through their monetisation. Well, down here, the Tassie Greens regard carbon offsets as a con. We don't support them. We don't support trading away forest protection for climate destruction. The maths and the morality just don't add up.

A statement has been put out today by the Wilderness Society nationally. It has expressed its strong opposition to the native forest management method and says Australia must reject a model where nature protection in one place is used to justify fossil fuel expansion somewhere else. The Wilderness Society's spokesperson, Dr Kirsty Howey, has said:

There is a line we will not cross: protected areas and Australia's forests must not become a licence to keep logging or expand fossil fuel extraction. The Wilderness Society does not support protected areas across Australia becoming conditional on the generation of offsets. The Wilderness Society opposes the INMF method because it risks turning the protection of forests into a mechanism that can facilitate their continued destruction, while carbon markets are used to legitimise both.

The statement also goes on to say:

It also risks creating a perverse system where governments use carbon markets to fund or justify forest protection, while those same markets create incentives for continued logging and facilitate further coal and gas expansion.

Dr Howey says:

Nature protection and emissions reduction are both essential. Neither can be used as a substitute for the other. We should make nature more valuable to governments, not more tradeable to polluters.

The Wilderness Society, and I might say here, like the Tasmanian Greens, supports greater investment in restoration, protected areas and First Nations-led conservation, but we

can't let conservation funding become dependent on creating permission for further environmental destruction.

I'm not sure if any honourable members read former Australian Greens leader Christine Milne's opinion piece in the *Mercury* newspaper, which was delivered in typically devastating and succinct Milne style, but it contains a number of searing truths.

Christine Milne says if this regulation is allowed to stand, it will establish a dangerous national precedent. She notes that the community is being blackmailed: agree to sell the forest carbon in the proposed Great Koala National Park to big polluters, or there will be no national park, the logging will continue, the forests will fall and the koalas will die. Well, the New South Wales Labor government has for 10 years promised a Great Koala National Park and now we've got New South Wales Premier Chris Minns, potentially with his hand out to the federal government for some offsets money in order to protect an area of forest that New South Wales Labor, 10 years ago, promised would be protected. It is a scam. Offsets are a scam.

Christine Milne says the methodology requires us to suspend disbelief about what constitutes an additional emissions reduction. It is not an additional reduction if the Great Koala National Park was already going to be declared. Suspending disbelief is also required, Christine Milne says, for our core climate legislation, the safeguard mechanism, which came into effect nationally, which I'm very sorry to say, and I think we made a big mistake in doing it that the Australian Greens supported because the safeguard mechanism, of course, is the mechanism by which big polluters are able to keep polluting.

Christine Milne goes on to say:

Under [the safeguard mechanism] we don't force polluters to reduce their emissions by decarbonising but permit them to use 100 per cent 'offsets'.

The consequence is predictable. If buying an offset is cheaper than investing in new machinery, changing industrial processes or genuinely reducing emissions, there is an economic incentive to do precisely that.

Meanwhile, Australia's fossil-fuel industry continues to expand and national domestic and exported Scope 3 emissions continue to rise.

Australia encourages, subsidises and permits increased fossil fuel exports. No amount of photos of ministers hugging koalas in front of trees, or solar panels, or wind farms, changes that fact.

The science is clear: we have run out of time. Australia must rapidly stop burning and exporting coal and gas while at the same time protecting forest ecosystems as habitat for endangered species and as vital carbon stores.

She goes on to say:

The climate impacts are already unmistakeable and catastrophic - from devastating heat waves and fires in Europe, to rising seas threatening Pacific communities and catastrophic glacier collapse in Nepal.

Yet instead of treating nature protection as a public responsibility, the Albanese and Minns Labor governments appear determined to monetise it, to promote Green Wall St at the very time neoliberalism is discredited and dying.

And I certainly hope it is dying. Neoliberalism, necrocapitalism, whatever you want to call it, it's a big part of why we are where we are. And she goes on to say:

They have decided to abandon the public funding of National Parks and protected areas, and instead make forest protection a commodity to be sold to satisfy the insatiable 'offset' demands of some of the biggest polluters in the country ...

Christine Milne is rightly worried about what this might mean for Tasmania. The cash-strapped Tasmanian government could also be putting out its hand to Canberra if the Improved Native Forest Management methodology is not disallowed. It could allow government to generate carbon credits from some native forests, while reclassifying much of the remaining native forest estate as plantation and opening those forests to conversion. She notes - and surely a primary responsibility of governments is to protect nature - that governments have a duty of care to future generations to be part of the solutions and to help rein in carbon emissions. We're not there, yet.

I wanted to bring those matters to the Council's attention. I hope that honourable members will have a look at Dr Sanger's report. I note, in closing, that the Tasmanian greenhouse accounts, which came out early last week, show an increase in emissions from forests. It appears that that increase in emissions has come about as a result of bushfires. It does reinforce the need to have robust forest protection, good Palawa-led land management practices, well-resourced Parks and Tasmania Fire Service, SES and Forestry Tasmania fire services. We have a moral responsibility here. We're a very small island, but we have a very significant natural forest estate that's an extraordinary carbon store. That carbon is banked for the future, for our children's future, and any member in this place who has young adult children or young adult grandchildren will know that young people are very worried about the future.

We have a responsibility here to show leadership, the Tasmanian government does, to protect our forests, to end native forest logging and burning, and to make sure we're looking after those forests for their own intrinsic biodiversity, social, recreational and spiritual value, as well as for their carbon, and we shouldn't be asked to trade those two things off. We can have the kind of leadership where we are protecting forests for their own sake, for their intrinsic values and those other values, and we are working with big emitters through carrot and stick mechanisms to make sure that they are bringing down their emissions. It is no longer acceptable to allow big polluters to keep pouring CO₂ and other toxic gases into the atmosphere. We can see the effect of that practice over decades now on our climate, on marginalised people around the world, and on the health and wellbeing, particularly of young people.

We have a choice here and, at this point, the Tasmanian government is not showing much sign of exercising its ethical choice, but it certainly has one. I can say on the part of the Tasmanian Greens, we will do anything. We would work cooperatively with pretty much anyone, to make sure that our beautiful forests are properly and appropriately protected for the miracles that they are and all that they bring to us as Tasmanians, and all that they can bring to Tasmanians and people who come to the island in the future. I note the 2025 forest carbon

update report and thank Dr Jen Sanger again for her extraordinary commitment and dedication to our beautiful forests.

[11.59 a.m.]

Ms GLADE-WRIGHT (Huon) - Mr President, I too note the excellent report by Dr Jen Sanger called Tasmania's Forest Carbon: 2025 Update, which argues that native forest logging remains Tasmania's largest source of emissions and that our forests are one of our greatest climate assets. Tasmania will continue to need a timber industry, of course we will, but I think the conversations do need to be had - honest conversations about what kind of an industry that looks like in the future.

I don't think we can dismiss a much broader message from the report, and in light of the recent events in Nepal, the world is warming. The impacts are becoming more frequent, more costly and more damaging. Governments everywhere are looking for practical, cost-effective ways to reduce emissions. Tasmania has something many jurisdictions would envy: our vast native forests are already doing an enormous amount of heavy lifting for the climate.

Ms O'Connor - Hear, hear.

Ms GLADE-WRIGHT - A planned transition towards plantations and higher-value timber products, I believe, would mean less conflict and more security for the timber workers.

I'm supporting this motion because I believe the report contributes important evidence to an issue of enormous public significance, and because I believe protecting natural assets that serve both current and future generations is simply good public policy.

[12.01 p.m.]

Mr GAFFNEY (Mersey) - Mr President, I rise to speak in support of the honourable member for Hobart's motion regarding Tasmania's Forest Carbon: 2025 Update report.

In addressing the motion, I would like to speak to the continuous balancing act which is forestry's policy. Tasmania's forests, wilderness and natural capital are a fundamental aspect of our state. They're a key asset to Tasmania and a linchpin for Tasmanian culture and society. To this end, it is important that a conversation around logging, sustainability and the path forward in Tasmania centres on their benefits.

It is easy to forget the beauty which we are privileged to live within, here in Tasmania. From simply driving through the state, visiting key destinations or even just living within magnificent landscapes, Tasmanians and our visitors are extremely fortunate. Tasmanian nature benefits not only from our visual amenity or our visitor economy, but also our relaxed culture and positive societal values. It is a safe statement to say that many Tasmanians feel a unique connection to their land. It contributes to our sense of identity in place, as it has to that of those who have come before us and those who will come after us.

The tranquillity, peace and meaning which Tasmania's nature provides is a rarity in this world. Indeed, at times it seems it's a rarity in Australia. Of course, the population hubs of the world have their cultures, they drive innovation and represent countless generations of civilisational development. Nonetheless, they all lack something which Tasmania is rich in: a deep connection with nature.

There are few capital cities, for example, in which there is a world-renowned mountain a mere 20 minutes from the city. Or look to the north-west, where we have the Tarkine, globally renowned as a site of beauty and natural values. We are privileged in the offerings of our land, from the smallest beach to the tallest mountain peak, and this is something that cannot be overstated.

No matter one's position on policy or sustainable management of our forests, there is a very pertinent fact that all Tasmanians can agree on. As the motion notes, it is a fact that Tasmania has marketed itself as one of the first jurisdiction in the world to become net zero in emissions. This benefits us, through our visitor economy, national and international reputation and, of course, through our environmental footprint. Of course, one would be aware that the reason we have net negative emissions is due to the massive carbon sink which Tasmania's forests and wilderness provide, as the motion notes: 22 million tonnes of sequestration annually. This is the reason we can afford to have emissions goals and renewable energy goals.

Our access to natural resources and historic willingness to capitalise upon their benefit demonstrates their benefit. The substantial benefits which sustainability projects such as hydro and wind power have to Tasmania makes them politically and socially popular concepts. Investment in these areas is a good idea. It has been found that investment in sustainable forestry has a range of direct and indirect benefits to both farmers and the economy.

Natural capital accounting is an emerging area of Australian research which aims to quantify the flows of benefits which arise from our natural assets. While this quantification work is ongoing, it demonstrates in a recognised manner that Tasmania's natural assets have a measurable positive impact on our economy.

In practical terms, this means that every hectare of native forest logged represents not just an environmental cost, but also a permanent loss in the measurable economic value of Tasmania's natural assets. On the other hand, investment in the retention of these assets allows Tasmanians to sustainably capitalise on their benefits for positive economic returns in the long term.

The reason I bring these concepts to your contemplation, Mr President, is that they should be at the forefront of any discussion in the forestry industry. It is, of course, similarly important to our future that our environmental sustainability be 'course corrected', as it were. It is commonly accepted that global warming and global emissions will impact our future, and Tasmania should do its bit to support sustainability efforts.

Nonetheless, it is also commonly known that this can all be a tall ask of a government. We are painfully aware that sustainable policies that come with economic suffering or extremely long-term benefits face enormous political resistance. These are political realities that may not be that ethical in the long-term scheme of things or even the best course of action.

In this sense, it is important to take the lens that there are direct positive benefits flowing from the retention and existence of Tasmanian forests and wilderness. The 1.6 million tonnes of carbon emissions that come from our logging annually, is a number representing not just environmental harm, but also a loss of value - an opportunity cost to our economy.

It is increasingly important to convey the benefits that come from supporting, protecting and retaining our forests, our natural heritage and biomass. Once recognised, Tasmanians can

then sustainably capitalise upon these benefits. We already do this in some areas, be that through our investment in hydro or our connection of tourism and the Tasmanian wilderness.

The approach to logging does not have to be an industrial shutdown, nor does it need to be of great harm to sections of our economy. Addressing the Tasmanian native logging situation is a matter that needs a balancing act of transitional policy and positive steps towards economically beneficial sustainable sectors. To this end, I support the motion in drawing attention to the benefits of Tasmania's forests, wilderness and natural capital, as well as the threats toward it. Thank you, Mr President, and I thank the honourable member.

[12.07 p.m.]

Ms RATTRAY (McIntyre - Leader for the Government in the Legislative Council) - Mr President, I acknowledge the honourable member's motion that we are speaking about today.

The Tasmanian government is committed to the long-term sustainable management of its forests for the benefit of all Tasmanians. The Tasmanian government acknowledges the report, Tasmania's Forest Carbon: 2025 Update, but notes that the assumptions and calculation methodology used by the researchers appear to be inconsistent with those used by the Australian Government in estimating Tasmania's greenhouse gas emissions. Tasmania's greenhouse gas emissions are reported each year by the Australian Government as part of Australia's National Greenhouse Accounts. The accounts are compiled in accordance with international guidelines and are a longstanding, verifiable source of emissions data used by all Australian states and territories to report greenhouse gas emissions. The emissions sources and removals included in Australia's National Greenhouse Accounts are based on human activities and disturbances. Unlogged forests that are protected in the state's national parks and the Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area do not contribute to, or impact, Tasmania's emissions profile. The emissions reporting methodology used by the Australian Government assumes that the carbon sequestered in mature, undisturbed unlogged forests, including those in Tasmania, is in balance with emissions from decomposing vegetation. This means undisturbed forests have no impact on emissions measured and reported in the National Greenhouse Accounts data for Tasmania or for any other Australian jurisdiction.

According to the most recent data released by the Australian Government for 2024, Tasmania first achieved net zero emissions in 2014 and, importantly, has maintained this level each year through to 2024, the latest reporting year. The Tasmanian government disagrees with the claim that Tasmania's unlogged forests are the reason the state can claim to have achieved net zero emissions from 2012 onwards.

Ms O'Connor - So, what is it then? What is it?

Ms RATTRAY - Tasmania has legislated emissions reduction targets to achieve net zero greenhouse gas emissions, or lower, from 30 June 2030. Achieving this target in the future is not guaranteed, despite our current emissions profile. Tasmania has achieved net zero emissions since 2013, and the government's 2030 target is about maintaining that position into the future, ensuring Tasmania's net emissions remain at zero or below, through Tasmania's Climate Change Action Plan 2023-2025, and sector-based emissions reduction and resilience plans.

The Tasmanian government is delivering practical action and working with businesses, industry, communities and households to reduce emissions in our key sectors. Six sector-based emissions reduction and resilience plans were released in 2024. The plans provide a pathway for our key sectors to reduce emissions, transition to a low-carbon economy and build resilience to the impacts of climate change. Funding of \$3.6 million has been committed to implement the plans, in addition to existing investment in delivering Tasmania's Climate Change Action Plan 2023-2025.

Key projects to reduce Tasmania's greenhouse gas emissions include reducing emissions from livestock by supporting a large-scale commercialisation trial of *Asparagopsis* seaweed feed supplements - I think we saw that seaweed on King Island quite some time ago; supporting landowners to sequester carbon on their properties by planting more trees through the Stems for CO₂ program and supporting Private Forest Tasmania and the Tasmanian Forestry Hub's Farm Forestry Carbon Tool; supporting the update of electric vehicles and public and active transport by providing financial incentives and trialling zero emissions public transport; delivering the Community Climate Change Action Grants Program to support community-level actions to improve information and knowledge about climate change, and reduce emissions and build resilience; supporting businesses to take action on climate change, with a focus on local collaboration through the Climate Change Business Innovation Grant Program.

The report appears to attribute the reduction of 22 megatonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent in Tasmania in the 2010s, stated in one academic paper, to a drawdown from Tasmania's forests. The report also makes an unsubstantiated claim that by ceasing native forest harvesting, Tasmania's public forest could absorb up to 75 megatonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent.

The government disagrees with this interpretation of the source reference, and the unsubstantiated claim of the potential drawdown by ceasing native forest harvesting on public lands. The report also appears to conflate native forest harvesting on public and private lands. Further, the report states that native forest harvesting on public lands halved as a result of new Tasmanian government policies, and this was responsible for the reduction in Tasmania's emissions.

According to Australia's National Greenhouse Accounts, emissions from native forest harvesting on private land show a substantial reduction around 2010 in Tasmania, which coincides with the collapse of Gunns Ltd. Reported emissions from native forest harvesting in multiple use public forest showed a slight reduction in the years prior to 2010 and subsequently returned to the longer-term average of around -5 megatonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent. This indicates that management of native forest harvesting in Tasmania's multiple-use public forest has maintained a consistent level of emissions and subsequent removals from regrowth over many years, and that the benefits from ceasing native forestry, suggested by the report, are overstated.

The Tasmanian government agrees with the views of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) that:

Sustainable forest management can prevent deforestation, maintain and enhance carbon sinks and can contribute towards [greenhouse gas] emissions-reduction goals. Sustainable forest management generates

socio-economic benefits, and provides fibre, timber and biomass to meet society's growing needs.

That's from the IPCC Special Report on Climate Change and Land, August 2019.

The government also notes that Australia's National Greenhouse Accounts methodology reports the emissions from native forest harvesting and post-harvesting burns in conjunction with the carbon sequestered by regrowing and regenerating forest due to their interdependence. The Tasmanian government notes that the report appears only to include emissions from native forest harvesting and post-harvesting burns and not the carbon sequestration benefits from regrowth and regeneration.

The National Greenhouse Accounts methodology accounts the emissions from native forest activities differently depending on what occurs on the same land parcel after that activity. To only present the emissions source without the subsequent emissions removals through regrowth and regeneration is a misrepresentation of the actual emissions attributable to that land use change.

According to Australia's National Greenhouse Accounts, emissions from native forest harvesting, post-harvesting burns and regrowth on Tasmania's private and public lands were each a carbon sink in 2024. In 2024, emissions from the harvesting of native forests on private lands, including emission sources and removals, were -6.82 megatonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent. Harvesting of multiple-use public forests were a further -5.93 megatonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent.

The Tasmanian government supports the alternative fuels project that Cement Australia is implementing at the Railton cement works that will replace coal burned in its kiln with tyre-derived fuel and forestry residue feedstocks.

Ms O'Connor - Yeah, native forest timber.

Ms RATTRAY - The government notes that Cement Australia's alternative fuels project will reduce Tasmania's greenhouse gas emissions by over 100,000 tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent each year.

Importantly, the government supports the practical reduction of emissions across all sectors of the economy.

The Tasmanian government agrees with the views of the IPCC regarding sustainable forest management and does not support the motion's assertion that the cessation of native forest harvesting is the best strategy to reduce emissions.

The motion relies on interpretations of forest carbon accounting that are inconsistent with the Australian Government's National Greenhouse Accounts and do not adequately reflect the role of forest regrowth and regeneration in offsetting emissions.

Information from the Tasmanian Greenhouse Gas Emissions Report 2026 states that native forestry is not the highest-emitting sector; first is energy at 41.1 per cent or 3.65 megatonnes, and second is agriculture, and it's 32.7 per cent, which is 2.6 megatonnes. Native forest logging is a carbon sink -

Ms O'Connor - It is not a carbon sink.

Ms RATTRAY - and it is a net negative of 12.66 megatonnes, and that's from the Tasmanian Greenhouse Gas Emissions Report 2026.

Ms O'Connor - It doesn't say logging is a carbon sink.

Ms RATTRAY - The government maintains that Tasmania's net zero emissions status is measured using established national and international reporting methods and is supported by emissions reduction efforts across multiple sectors of the economy.

Consistent with the views of the IPCC, the government supports sustainable forest management as a balanced approach that can both contribute to emissions reduction goals and deliver important environmental, social and economic benefits. The government remains focused on practical, evidence-based actions to reduce emissions across all sectors, rather than supporting the cessation of native forest harvesting as proposed by the motion.

[12.20 p.m.]

Ms O'CONNOR (Hobart) - I can assure the honourable Leader for the Government that I will be circulating that response to forest scientists, and I will come back to the Council at some point with a more scientific response. But there are a couple of things that need to be said here. If the Leader for the Government is claiming that Forestry Tasmania is being open and transparent and making publicly available the actual data of its emissions caused by logging and burning, that is certainly something new. Because I can remember, as minister for Climate Change back in 2011-2012, when we were preparing a forest carbon study so that there could be a better understanding of how much carbon is sequestered across our forest estate - public, private and plantation - that report was hindered in some ways by the fact that Forestry Tasmania at the time, even though we were in government, wouldn't provide its actual emissions data, Mr President, and it simply defies logic.

It is poppycock to say that if you log and burn a forest that is hundreds of years old and therefore has a massive store of carbon in it, then that's offset by some new seedlings that you plant. I ask people to think about the physics again. You have huge trees of very large girth. Those trees are primarily carbon. You have saplings planted to replace the trees that were removed and then burned. Those saplings will take a century or more to store anywhere near the amount of carbon that was in the forest that was burned.

It is logic and it is physics. Burn a big old forest full of carbon, burn it deep so that you're burning the carbon in the forest floor and what is lost will take more than a century to replace. That's just common sense, and we hear this garbage from governments about how regrowth and regeneration offset what is lost. Bullshit, they do not. Logic tells you they do not, and they cannot. So if Forestry Tasmania is making available the data that calculates accurately how much CO₂ is released into the atmosphere in its high-intensity burns, I think the Council should see it.

We're not getting accurate data out of the state's logging GBE, and that is why I take a large proportion of what the honourable Leader said in response with a grain of salt. I would encourage other honourable members in here too as well. I'm very thankful to the members for Huon, Mersey and also McIntyre on behalf of the government for responding to my notice of motion in the Leader's reply.

I don't know if I've misheard something, there was some notion that Tasmania's net zero status is not as a result of unlogged forests. Now, I don't know if I've misheard or misrepresented that, but the graph tells us it is. The graph shows us. The greenhouse accounts show us that from 2013 our accounts dramatically improved because the loggers moved out of 576,000 hectares of forest as a result of the Tasmanian Forest Agreement. Indeed, the minister for Climate Change, in the greenhouse accounts that were tabled in this place last week, says in his introduction - I'll paraphrase him: Tasmania can thank for its net zero status its hydro energy and its forests. Even the minister says it. Again, it's just logic, it's physics. The carbon is stored in those big old trees. When they're logged and when they're burned, the carbon either goes into low-value products, most of it, or the carbon that was in those trees is crisped and sent into the atmosphere, as we see here every beautiful day that we have here in autumn.

The final thing I wanted to say is that - I've got two more things to say - in the forest carbon update report, there is a page here that talks about this Tasmanian government's plans for burning native forests for fuel, and the Leader for the Government made some reference to it in her reply. We've got Cement Australia at Railton burning wood biomass for kiln processing. Again, logic and physics: if you're burning trees containing carbon to produce energy, you are not delivering a safe climate, you are delivering more carbon into the atmosphere. We have a couple of e-fuels proposals, two plants proposing to use wood biomass to turn hydrogen into e-fuel. So, we're burning trees, apparently, to produce hydrogen. It is just madness and they would do this with potentially a \$2 billion subsidy from the federal government. Liberty Bell Bay is talking about burning biomass as an alternative to coke in the smelting process. The trial will begin with 1500 tonnes of wood biomass a year, it could expand if successful - with a subsidy of \$700,000 from the federal government. Greenham Abattoir wants to power a woodchip-fired boiler in Smithton, burning more than 10,000 tonnes of biomass a year - 10,000 tonnes of trees containing carbon. At least Greenham have stated that they will source their waste wood from softwood plantations. If that happens, it's displacing the potential use of those plantations for other forest products and that proposal is currently in development.

My final word is on this oft-cited attachment to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change's observations about the role of land use, land-use change and forestry in global emissions and mitigating emissions. The only time I ever hear a Liberal government minister cite the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change is when they want to use that body to prop up their own fallacious arguments about how forests are managed here in Tasmania. The keyword in the IPCC observation is 'sustainable'. Forestry Tasmania can't even get forest stewardship certification. I think they've given up after at least two, maybe three cracks at it. What has happened here is that the FSC board has had a look at FT's operations - the fate of the swift parrot, which is down to around 750 birds, the fate of the masked owl - and told Forestry Tasmania that they don't deserve and won't be granted FSC. How can you have this government claim logging and burning here is sustainable, when you can't even get the standard of FSC for your products?

If we had a government that was really listening to the IPCC, they would be doing everything in their power to bring down emissions and to protect the carbon that is in our terrestrial landscape. But instead, they're pivoting now that native forest logging and the industry globally is in strife - a decline that has been going on for 15 years - they're pivoting over here to biomass as a lifeline to the native forest logging industry. The Greens see straight through it and I hope that, if the Leader for the Government is going to come in here and have a chat about the IPCC science - noting, as I will, that the IPCC got it wrong on how rapidly our

climate is heating - that aside and putting their cautious and, as it turns out, ineffectual language aside, the IPCC makes it really clear we have to rapidly bring down our emissions and protect our carbon stores. I am absolutely certain there would be IPCC scientists who were revolted by the notion of the Tasmanian government citing an observation of theirs on sustainable forest management as an excuse for the way they mismanage, waste, log and burn, torch and send into the atmosphere our beautiful, internationally significant, biodiverse forests. Shame on this government, Mr President, shame on them.

Motion agreed to.

MOTION

Office of the Custodial Inspector - Custody: Reception to Release Inspection Report 2025 - Consideration and Noting

Ms ARMITAGE (Launceston) - Mr President, I move -

That the Office of the Custodial Inspector's Custody: Reception to Release Inspection Report 2025 be considered and noted.

Mr President, I thank members for their patience for bringing on this motion. It's been on the Notice Paper for some time, which I hope has given everyone a good opportunity to take a look at this important report.

Immediately on reading the note from the Custodial Inspector at that time, Richard Connock, on Custody: Reception to Release Inspection Report 2025, you will find significant praise for the Tasmania Prison Service and their staff, particularly in relation to the issue of people being released from custody after close of business. What the inspector notes is that when people are unexpectedly released later in the day, they are unable to access personal items or money, have difficulty accessing public transport, and assuming they had friends, family or someone else who could pick them up and take them where they needed to go, having a safe place to sleep for the evening. The inspector notes the regular and positive examples of the Tasmania Prison Service's staff's empathetic understanding of these situations, noting that they often go above and beyond to work past their usual hours, wait with recently released people in the dark, or help to find crisis accommodation and liaise with charities.

As the inspector further notes, relying on goodwill is not a long-term solution to the issue of problematic release timing and circumstances. I think we can all agree that it should not fall to the Tasmania Prison Service staff to shoulder that burden. The inspector further notes that if this problem is not resolved, it could have potentially dangerous consequences. Multiple options were canvassed, according to the inspector, some of which were viable and reasonable, and some of which were not. The inspector noted that the most meaningful solution is people voluntarily restricting their liberty by staying in prison another night. For most people that would be repugnant, but for those with no other option, it would likely be welcomed. The inspector further notes that this is an option for people in custody in other jurisdictions in Australia and it should be considered here. All that would be needed to facilitate this is a simple legislative amendment.

The inspector further raises the issue of inconsistent and unclear induction information for people coming into custody, but notes the introduction of video inductions, which are an excellent improvement for those with no or limited literacy.

The inspector also considered standards relating to people on remand and notes that the new Southern Remand Centre has been a welcome development for men on remand, but there is still no separate remand facility for women.

The inspector further considered classification, determining whether someone is placed in minimum-, medium- or maximum-security facilities. The inspector noted that the main issue arising was that the transparency of the process could be improved, primarily by providing for those in custody to be actively involved in the process.

The inspector observed positive improvements in relation to the internal complaints process, but emphasised problems with external complaints, particularly in relation to contacting the Integrity Commission, which was described as neither easy nor confidential. To this end, a recommendation to enable people in custody to easily and confidentially call the Integrity Commission to discuss reporting serious misconduct or to seek assistance with submitting a written complaint has also been made by the inspector.

A total of eight recommendations are made in this report. A review of the implementation of the previous 21 recommendations showed promising progress, according to the inspector. It was deemed that 13 of those recommendations were completed, with the remaining eight still in progress. In the 2025 report, the following recommendations were made:

- (1) Improve accessibility and consistency of induction materials.
- (2) Diversify and publicise within the prisons the manner in which people in custody can provide a representation to the Classification Review Panel.
- (3) The Tasmanian Parliament amends the Corrections legislation to enable people in custody to request to stay beyond their release date if there is sufficient reason to justify it, such as a lack of transport.
- (4) Internal complaints process information should be made clearer and be consistent across induction manuals for the various prisons.
- (5) Tasmania Prison Service engages with the Integrity Commission with the view to add its phone number to the Common Auto Dial List on the prison telephone system, Unity.
- (6) Tasmania Prison Service introduces processes so the details of professional calls are only provided to the relevant person in custody.
- (7) The Tasmanian Parliament legislate to require that correspondence between people in custody and complaint and oversight bodies such as the Integrity Commission, the Anti-Discrimination Commissioner and the Independent Regulator is only opened by the intended recipient.

- (8) Tasmania Prison Service consults with the Tasmania Law Library and takes action to ensure that the legal textbooks available to people in custody outside the Southern Remand Centre are in accordance with the Director's Standing Order 4.16 Access to Legal Resources. Steps should include ensuring the texts are appropriate to meet the legal needs of people in custody, the existence of the textbooks is well-known, and they are easily accessible to borrow.

The report notes that for those inducted into custody, there is a literacy gap and that the induction process should not rely on people being able to understand written information. This could be due to any number of reasons and it's clear that when people are unable to, or have difficulty with, reading written English, being able to understand their rights and obligations whilst in custody is paramount. Pleasingly, the Tasmania Prison Service's created an induction video for the Southern Remand Centre that received positive feedback from people in custody.

The report suggested that peer support for people in custody should be formalised and expanded. Peer support is the practice of pairing a person who is new to the prison system with a more experienced person in custody, to show them around and lend support as they adjust to prison life. The more experienced peers are chosen based on their demeanour and ability to connect with newer and more vulnerable persons in custody. However, the report noted that this appears to be a reasonable system but, that without formalised peer support, misinformation about procedures and policy may inadvertently be taught to people and gaps in knowledge will persist. Positively for the Mary Hutchinson Women's Prison, peer support was noted to be widely used, and the report noted the Tasmania Prison Service plan to work with the Red Cross to train peer support workers, and Men's Resources Tasmania have been facilitating some peer groups in male facilities.

The practice of holding people on remand separate from those who have been sentenced is noted as a United Nations standard minimum rule for the treatment of prisoners. The report notes that, at the time of writing, the total number of remanded people made up around 39 per cent of the total prison population; however, there's no separate facility for women who are being held on remand and, to this end, it recommends that investment in infrastructure to ensure unsentenced women are separated from those who have been sentenced is necessary and should be incorporated into the department's corrections strategy.

Glaringly, the report stated that people on remand have insufficient access to employment, education and programs, and that they're not required to work or undertake rehabilitative programs related to their alleged offending. It's clear that having access to resources, education, programs and employment, even if not necessarily related to alleged offending, can have a therapeutic and rehabilitative effect for people held on remand. It has the potential to emphasise what a productive member of our community looks and acts like.

At the Southern Remand Centre in particular, it was noted that there were not enough employment positions in the facility for all those who wanted to work and there was limited access to education. Moreover, programs addressing offending behaviours were also not available to people on remand at the Southern Remand Centre.

The report also noted that historically, shared cell risk assessment was inadequate but had improved. While there can be good reasons for placing two people in one cell, the report states that the only test was asking each person whether they agreed to share a cell with a

particular person, and if they both said yes, that arrangement would be made. Understandably, the inspector did not consider this to be a rigorous enough process and could leave significant room for power imbalance and risks. A recommendation to change Director's standing orders regarding shared cell risk assessments was being completed after a time.

The report noted that just over half of people being released from the south are returning to the north or north-west. This is significant when paired with the issue raised initially that a person being released may not have any way to get transport away from the facility or have anywhere to go. To this end, the report states that travel arrangements after release need to be improved. For those who do not have a friend or family member to pick them up or funds to obtain public transport, they can apply for assistance from the Tasmania Prison Service. However, this relies on them having sufficient literacy skills to do so. It also does not address problems for people who are released and have nowhere to go or to stay in the immediate future.

Combined with the issues also surrounding late releases, those occurring between 4 p.m. and 6 p.m., the prospect of sleeping rough and needing to access immediate emergency accommodation becomes apparent. It places stress on people being released and the staff involved, and long-term solutions are required.

According to the Corrections Regulations 2018, for people in custody who are sentenced, regulation 23 provides that they are to be released between 6 a.m. and 5 p.m. For people in custody who are unsentenced, regulation 24 provides that they are to be released immediately after the order for their detention expires. To this end, the report notes the regulations have no provision for people in custody to request to stay beyond their release date. Therefore, while the Tasmania Prison Service recognises the unsuitability of late releases that result in negative outcomes, they are also bound by the regulations.

It's therefore necessary for us to look at solutions, both legislative and regulatory, and I emphasise recommendation 3 of this report that the Tasmanian parliament amend the corrections legislation to enable people in custody to request to stay beyond their release date if there's sufficient reason to justify it, such as a lack of transport. The report contains a number of case studies, which I won't repeat at this time, but I encourage members to take a look to see how this affects people in real life and consider why legislative change might be required.

Moving on to complaints and grievances, the report found that information about the prison complaints process is often unclear, inconsistent and outdated across the Tasmania Prison Service induction manuals. While prisoners are generally advised to raise concerns with staff first, only some manuals explain how to formally lodge a complaint, and many fail to clearly distinguish between operational and confidential complaints. The report recommends standardising and simplifying complaints information across all prisons.

Between 2021 and 2024, the Tasmania Prison Service recorded 1358 complaints, averaging about 450 a year. Around half were operational complaints such as property, prison conditions, health services or accommodation issues, and half were confidential complaints such as allegations against staff, excessive force or serious misconduct. Most complaints were resolved within two weeks, suggesting that the Tasmania Prison Service is generally responsive, although some prisoners expressed a belief that making complaints achieves little.

The report raised significant concerns about confidentiality. Prisoners' professional calls with oversight bodies have sometimes been publicly announced, potentially deterring complaints. It also found that correspondence with some oversight agencies, including the Integrity Commission and Anti-Discrimination Commissioner, lacks the same legal protections as mail to the Ombudsman, and relies on complainants possessing literacy abilities which they might not have. On a positive note, prisoners can now directly contact Tasmania Police by the prison phone system without involving prison staff. The report also praised official visitors as an effective informal complaints mechanism, noting their independence, accessibility and ability to raise issues directly with prison management.

The report also noted that there were no official Aboriginal visitors at that time - a significant issue considering the over-representation of Aboriginal people in custody. To date, no expressions of interest have been received from a member of the Aboriginal community in response to recruitment notices. That's not to say continued advertising wouldn't be valuable, but it remains an ongoing difficulty.

Finally, it was noted that access to legal resources was possible but problematic. Access to legal resources in prison is important, and people in prison have the right to self-representation and access to up-to-date texts which are available and accessible. The inspector found this was not always necessarily the case, with texts stacked on bookcases and not very prominently located. To this end, some sort of basic record-keeping system was suggested to keep track of text locations and fair usage.

I believe this is an invaluable report which makes a number of commonsense recommendations. I believe it's important to consider them and to look at what can be done at a legislative regulative level to address them.

Finally, I would like to congratulate Richard Connock, the previous custodial inspector at the time of this report, on his retirement and an outstanding career of public service. Richard made a remarkable contribution through his dedication, integrity and commitment to serving the community. Through his years as commissioner, with several hats, he demonstrated professionalism, fairness and a genuine concern for people, always striving to ensure that concerns were heard and dealt with respectfully. I note this report.

[12.47 p.m.]

Ms RATTRAY (McIntyre - Leader for the Government in the Legislative Council) - Thank you, Mr President, and I certainly acknowledge the honourable member for Launceston in bringing this report for noting for today's sitting. I also endorse the honourable member's words in regard to the former commissioner, Richard Connock. We had many discussions across committee tables, and he certainly took his role very seriously and carried it out with extreme independence and immeasurable work ethic, I would suggest, with the amount of hats that he wore over that time.

The Tasmanian government strongly supports the values and the important work of the Custodial Inspector, fully respecting its independence and maintaining confidence in its ability to carry out its oversight role with integrity and professionalism - I think that sums up Richard Connock to a tee.

The Custodial Inspector provides important oversight of the Corrective Services system in this state. The government remains firmly committed to addressing the issues raised within

the Custodial Inspector reports, and work is constantly occurring to address the issues raised. To date, there have been 582 recommendations - that's a considerable amount of recommendations. Of these, 34 recommendations were not supported and 49 have been referred to another agency for action, which leaves 499 recommendations for the TPS to action. As of 14 April 2026, of those 499 recommendations, 374, or approximately 75 per cent, have been completed.

The Custody: Reception to Release Inspection report was tabled in October 2025 and highlights several areas that demonstrate the significant work done by TPS staff to support prisoners. I quote the former custodial inspector, Richard Connock, who noted that:

Throughout our inspection of our custody standards in December 2022, looking at reception through to release, we saw regular and positive examples of Tasmania Prison Service staff's empathetic understanding of this situation.

The government acknowledges its positive assessment while recognising that there is always more work to do to improve processes across the prison system from reception through to release. The custodial inspector's report makes eight recommendations, six to the Tasmania Prison Service and two directly to the parliament. The honourable member for Launceston read out those eight recommendations, so I won't repeat those but had them for that if you hadn't done that. Thank you, honourable member, for doing that.

Ms Armitage - Are you going to implement them?

Ms RATTRAY - Recommendation 3 is that the Tasmanian parliament amends the corrections legislation to enable people in custody to request to stay beyond their release date if there is sufficient reason to justify it and cites such as a lack of transport. The government is considering advice and has requested the Department of Justice to develop recommendations for legislative change that could address this issue. While the principle and intent are understood, legislative change allowing people to stay in prison after completion of their sentence requires careful consideration to avoid unintended consequences.

Ms Armitage - All other states do it.

Ms RATTRAY - There will be a process, and that's fantastic information. That opportunity to look at other states, Mr President, is noted. The government recommendation 7 is that the Tasmanian parliament legislate to require that correspondence between people in custody and complaint and oversight bodies such as the Integrity Commission, the Anti-Discrimination Commissioner and the Independent Regulator is only opened by the intended recipient. The government is also supportive in principle of this recommendation and is developing a number of recommendations relating to legislative change to prisoners' mail provisions, noting these recommendations could be incorporated as part of those changes.

A fairly brief response, given that a number of those recommendations were made directly to the Tasmania Prison Service, but certainly the ones directly to the parliament. Again, the government really appreciates the opportunity that has been afforded through the honourable member for Launceston bringing forward this motion for noting.

Report considered and noted.

MOTION

Closure of Hobart Hospitality Businesses

[12.54 p.m.]

Mr EDMUNDS (Pembroke) - Mr President, I move -

That the Council:

- (1) Notes that seven well-known Hobart hospitality venues - Cargo Bar, Jack Greene, Post Street Social, Observatory Bar, Republic Bar, Franklin Wharf Restaurant and Bar and Franklin Wharf Function Centre - closed after the Pub Banc Group entered voluntary administration;
- (2) Further notes that more than 80 Tasmanian workers were stood down as a result;
- (3) Recognises the enormous social, cultural and economic benefits that come from Tasmania's hospitality sector and acknowledges the significant pressure facing the sector, including rising operational costs and weaker discretionary spending;
- (4) Expresses its support for the workers, contractors, suppliers and small businesses affected by the collapse; and notes the impact this will have on younger Tasmanians in particular;
- (5) Further notes that these closures come at a time when Tasmanian businesses and workers across the state are already facing significant economic uncertainty and job losses, including from a significant hospitality supplier in Boag's Brewery;
- (6) Notes that the hospitality industry has welcomed a growing focus on practical measures to support Tasmania's hospitality industry, saying governments at every level have a role to play in helping businesses through one of the toughest trading environments in recent memory.
- (7) Calls on the Rockliff Government to urgently outline what actual action it is taking to support affected workers, help viable venues reopen and address the pressures facing Tasmania's hospitality sector; and
- (8) Acknowledges that Tasmanian businesses and workers are paying the price for a weak economy, rising costs and need a government with a plan to grow the economy and protect jobs.

I rise to move the motion in my name in support of Tasmania's hospitality sector. Mr President, hospitality - our pubs, restaurants, cafes, clubs - live venues are an important part of Tasmania's economy, our tourism industry and our communities. They are part of Tasmania's identity. They're where Tasmanians gather to celebrate, to mourn, to laugh, to cheer on their team, to share a meal, to propose, to check in on mates, to see a band, to hold a meeting,

a job interview, have a wedding reception, a wake, toast their successes and commiserate their failures. These venues employ thousands of Tasmanians. They provide important employment, particularly for younger people, and they support a much broader network of musicians, performers, contractors, security staff, suppliers and other small business. We have a world-class food and beverage industry. Tasmania has developed an international reputation for wine, whiskey, gin and cider, and we have a growing craft beer sector. We have talented hospitality operators and workers, and we have a strong arts and live music community.

The recent collapse of the Pub Banc Group provided a challenge to those of us who care deeply about Tasmania's hospitality sector. What can we do to make sure that industry is best supported in difficult times? As has been widely reported, seven well known Hobart venues - Cargo Bar, Jack Greene, Post Street Social, Observatory Bar, Republic Bar, Franklin Wharf Restaurant and Bar, and Franklin Wharf Function Centre - closed following the group's entry into voluntary administration, and more than 80 Tasmanian workers were stood down. But as we know, the consequences extend beyond those directly employed. Suppliers and contractors lost customers, security and cleaning staff lost shifts, and musicians lost opportunities to perform, just to name a few.

The Republic Bar in North Hobart was one of the seven venues that closed. It's also probably the most iconic. It has hosted thousands of bands and is a truly unique venue in the state and probably in the country. Straight after the closures, local musician Mark Brudenell and I spoke to Pulse news about what the closure means for Hobart's live music community. Brudenell's band, Australian Made, who I could highly recommend, having attended a few of their gigs, had been playing at the Republic since about 2008, whilst one of the band's guitarists had been performing there since 1996. Brudenell said the Republic was 'the only venue I can think of that's totally set up for music'. The Republic wasn't just a venue that occasionally hosted a band, it was a dedicated live music space. You could turn the music up as loud as you can and have it so loud it will rattle the bones of your ancestors.

As an aside, while we're talking about loud music, I would also point to the very disappointing situation in Kingston Beach where local proprietors invested significantly in an awesome outdoor family-friendly space, only to be drowned out by complaints that the music was too loud. These complainants are emboldened by the red tape, and we should be doing all we can to ensure they do not win because jobs and social and economic activity is at risk.

Back to the Republic. Brudenell told Pulse it attracted a diverse audience ranging from people aged 18 through to people in their seventies, and that he'd never seen a fight there. He also made the point that Hobart needs places where people can have a drink, relax and listen to live music. This is precisely the kind of diverse nighttime economy we should be encouraging.

The closure also demonstrated how quickly the impact can flow through the industry. For musicians, these are lost performances. For hospitality workers, security and cleaning staff, it's lost shifts. For suppliers, it's lost orders. And for all of them, it's lost income during immense cost-of-living challenges. We should not discount the cost of lost social and cultural opportunities. At the time, there were some TikToks from young people, which this boomer couldn't find again this morning, highlighting these venues were for young people and they had nowhere to go, or fewer places to go, which are designed for them, playing their music, filled with their friends.

Brudenell described the Republic as a unique property that needed someone with an understanding of music, food and the people who use the venue. I described it as an icon of the entire state and pointed out the workers and performers from these venues wanted action over finger-pointing. To agree with myself, this motion should be about solutions - long, medium and short-term - not simply how we respond to seven closures. It's what we do to support the workers affected, help viable venues reopen, reduce unnecessary costs and create the conditions for Tasmania's hospitality industry to grow. That is where government has an important role.

There is no single reason why hospitality businesses are under pressure. Households are under pressure, which affects discretionary spending. When people have less money available after paying for essentials, eating out, going to the pub or attending entertainment can become less frequent. At the same time, businesses are facing rising operating costs. As the Energy Committee heard directly from Hospitality Tasmania at our hearings, energy costs are putting pressure on Tasmanian business. Insurance costs are another significant expense. Regulatory and administrative requirements add cost and complexity and can throttle opportunities for businesses to diversify their offerings.

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

QUESTIONS

Tungatinah Power Station - Alternator and Turbine Refurbishments

Ms LOVELL question to MINISTER for ENERGY and RENEWABLES, Mr DUIGAN

Minister, Hydro Tasmania's 2016 Asset Management Plan said it represented the minimum work required to maintain the performance and risk position of its ageing generation fleet. The plan specifically scheduled an alternator refurbishment for Tungatinah unit 2 in 2020 and a turbine refurbishment for unit 3 in 2022. Were both of those projects completed in full and on schedule?

ANSWER

Thank you, Mr President. I will seek some advice.

I will potentially take on notice the aspect of the specifics of the generator unit. I will take the opportunity to say that Hydro Tasmania is actively upgrading and maintaining hydro generation assets under a rolling management program with a strong focus on asset reliability and safety. Hydro Tasmania's Strategic Asset Management Plan provides for more than \$1.6 billion in asset investment over 10 years. Hydro Tasmania's total capital expenditure on assets and infrastructure was over \$173 million in financial year 2026. Since 2011, Hydro has undertaken a significant program of turbine modernisation and refurbishment at Tungatinah with major upgrades completed across four generating units between 2011 and 2016. Major maintenance has been undertaken on every generating unit at Tungatinah within the past three years.

Firmus - Conditions of Energy Supply Agreements

Ms O'CONNOR question to **MINISTER** for **ENERGY** and **RENEWABLES**,
Mr DUIGAN

[2.33 p.m.]

My question is also to the minister for Energy, who is a pretty popular guy in Question Time here. Minister, while national super funds run a mile from Firmus over concerns about the company's leadership, it has made a request of Hydro Tasmania for 450 megawatts of energy - an amount equivalent to about a third of Tasmania's current energy use. It's a huge chunk of our power, as I'm sure you will agree. They've put out a so-called energy policy. Have you seen it? It makes bold claims, including that Firmus is 'a vertically integrated manufacturing and engineering base'.

A vertically integrated manufacturer is a company that controls the entire process of making a product, from producing source materials, like energy and water, to assembly, packaging and distribution. Minister, Firmus is expecting to fund its supply agreements requiring new-build firming capacity equivalent to at least 2.5 megawatt hours of storage for every 1 megawatt of Firmus-contracted load. They say they will use their agreement to require counterparties to support development of at least 2 megawatts of new-build renewable generation capacity for every 1 megawatt of Firmus-contracted capacity. Minister, this is very big, if true. What does this mean, to your understanding, this promise made by Firmus? Have you been briefed by Hydro Tasmania and had any understanding of the implications of approving that much power consumption? Do you believe this company, run as it is, by a convicted white-collar criminal?

ANSWER

I thank the member for the question. I think the characterisation of people in this place -

Ms O'Connor - It's just a fact; he's a convicted white-collar criminal.

Mr DUIGAN - Well, it seems to be something that the Greens get very hung up on and I won't. I certainly won't be making any assertions about anybody. In terms of, have I been briefed by Hydro? Yes, I have.

Ms O'Connor - What did they tell you? No, were you not listening to the end of the question? Point of order?

Mr PRESIDENT - Explain the order.

Ms O'CONNOR - The question was, have you been briefed by Hydro, what did they tell you, what does this promise by Firmus mean, and do you believe them?

Ms Forrest - Is that the point of order?

Mr PRESIDENT - That's a supplementary question?

Mr DUIGAN - A supplementary question.

Mr PRESIDENT - We'll treat it as a supplementary question to clarify.

Mr DUIGAN - Right.

Ms O'CONNOR - I restated the first question you chose to ignore.

Mr PRESIDENT - Just to clarify.

Mr DUIGAN - Yes, I have been briefed by Hydro. Hydro are the experts in water management and providing hydro-electricity for our state. This would be a matter for the Hydro board to take into consideration. As I say, we have released today our draft statement of expectations for AI and data infrastructure -

Ms O'Connor - All 16 pages of it.

Mr DUIGAN - and it's important to recognise that that stream of work is happening concurrently with the Commonwealth, a national piece of work. Data centres are not peculiar to Tasmania; there is a desire from data centre operators to build in probably every state and territory in the country. Tasmania is well placed though, because we are a cooler climate and we have a green grid. So, those conversations are continuing. At the end of the day though, it will be a commercial decision for Hydro Tasmania. I have written to all of our energy businesses, we have put out clear sets of expectations, there will be national legislation and laws enacted, I understand, in the not-too-distant future about these things and we will move forward. But, can I say at the outset that, as a government, we welcome investment into Tasmania. It is important that we have new industries seeking to build in Tasmania and to create jobs and opportunities in Tasmania. Firmus is one of those people seeking to do business here in Tasmania.

Ms O'Connor - You'll do business with anyone.

Firmus - Conditions of Energy Supply Agreements

Ms O'CONNOR question to MINISTER for ENERGY and RENEWABLES, Mr DUIGAN

[2.38 p.m.]

Well, I'm going to have another go at the question, seeing as the minister chose not to answer it again.

Ms Palmer - He did answer the question.

Ms O'CONNOR - No, he didn't.

Ms Palmer - No, he did answer the question.

Mr Duigan - Yes, I did.

Mr PRESIDENT - Order.

Ms O'CONNOR - Thank you, minister for Education, Children and Young People, I'm not actually talking to you. My question to you, minister, was: now that we've confirmed Hydro briefed you, what did they tell you about the proposal and the likely energy implications of that proposal? Do you, as minister, believe Firmus when they say to you that they plan to require an extra 2 megawatts of new build renewable generation capacity for every 1 megawatt that they use? Do you believe Firmus when they say that, and what did Hydro tell you about the Firmus proposal?

ANSWER

In terms of what Hydro told me about the Firmus project Southgate, is that it is a request for, as you outlined in your question, close to 450 megawatts of power for a particular period of time. Hydro, as I said, is going through what the implications of an ask like that would look like for it. As I say, Hydro are the other people who are armed with the understanding of whether that is feasible or not and whether they can take a commercial position on that.

In regard to Firmus' Australian energy policy, I would point anybody who has an interest in the question of data centres to have a look at that. It is quite detailed, quite, I think as you would characterise it, generous and quite ambitious. The reason it would say that they would support 2 megawatts of built variable renewable energy for every megawatt that they use is that variable renewable energy is variable. Thereby, if you install 500 megawatts of wind with a nameplate of 500 megawatts, it only generates that about 45 per cent of the time in Tasmania. So, essentially, you need to install 1000 megawatts of wind to leverage -

Ms O'Connor - They're going to use gas as well, aren't they?

Mr DUIGAN - Thank you. So, that is the reason that that is there. Again, Firmus have their policy out there for all to see. Hydro is doing its due diligence on Firmus as a company and on the ask of it as an energy provider.

Hydro Tasmania - Request for Documents

Ms LOVELL question to MINISTER for ENERGY and RENEWABLES, Mr DUIGAN

[2.41 p.m.]

I appreciate your answer to my previous question; I'm happy for you to take that on notice to come back with some more detail. I will preface this by saying I will be happy for you to do the same on this one as well, if you need to. But my question, minister, is: will you release the unredacted version of Hydro's 2016 Asset Management Plan, the complete maintenance and refurbishment history for all five Tungatinah units, all decisions changing the scheduled 2020 and 2022 works, and any advice provided to ministers about increased safety, reliability or duty-of-care risks?

ANSWER

Thank you, Mr President. Thank you, and I will take that one on notice. I would point to the fact that some of that information may not indeed be mine to release, but we will ask the question.

Risdon Prison Kitchen Renovation - Impact on Services

Ms ARMITAGE question to LEADER for the GOVERNMENT in the LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL, Ms RATTRAY

[2.42 p.m.]

By way of background, the Public Works Committee approved the construction of a new replacement kitchen, including a bakery, at the Risdon Prison Complex. This was at an estimated cost of \$18.77 million for the project in total and commissioning was to occur in December 2025. Can the honourable Leader please advise:

- (1) What was the total cost of this project, did it meet the projected cost of \$18.77 million or were there any cost blowouts?
- (2) Can the Leader please confirm the name of the company who was awarded the contract to undertake this project.
- (3) Can the Leader advise, did this project go out to tender, and if not, why not?
- (4) Can the Leader confirm that the kitchen and bakery flooring used an incorrect mix of aggregate that could not handle daily wear and tear, resulting in the facility needing to be shut down and the floor repaired? If not, what is the reason the floor needed to be replaced?
- (5) Can the Leader confirm that the repairs will be covered under the defects liability period and provide a period of time for this rectification works to be undertaken.
- (6) Can the Leader confirm that meals for the prison inmates are being shipped in from Victoria or elsewhere and provide the weekly cost of meals and shipping to the prison?
- (7) Can the Leader advise when this commenced and the cost to date?
- (8) Can the Leader advise why the meals are not being sourced from Tasmania and the name and location of the company they're being sourced from?
- (9) Can the Leader advise who is paying for the meals to be provided from the mainland, including, obviously, shipping?
- (10) If it's being funded by the prison service or the Tasmanian government, why isn't the contractor responsible for payment of these meals?
- (11) Has the wellbeing of any prisoners been impacted, such as reduced or no kitchen work?
- (12) If the answer to (11) is yes, what is being done to reduce these impacts?

ANSWER

Thank you, Mr President, and I acknowledge the honourable member's questions.

- (1) The \$18.77 million figure presented to the Parliamentary Standing Committee for Public Works was a pre-construction cost estimate, rather than the final approved project budget.

Total project expenditure to date is approximately \$23.49 million. This includes the construction contract as well as site investigations, design and consultant fees, specialist kitchen and security advice, quantity surveying, building surveying and departmental project management costs.

The project remains in the defects liability period and has not yet been financially closed, so a final project cost is not currently available.

The increase above the preconstruction estimate is primarily attributable to construction market escalation, particularly following the COVID-19 pandemic, and broader cost pressures experienced across the building industry during the project's procurement and delivery. The project's scope also included necessary service and security infrastructure upgrades.

- (2) Hansen Yuncken was engaged as the head contractor for the delivery of the construction of the new Risdon Prison kitchen project. Xsquared Architects were appointed as the lead architectural consultants, including superintendent services for the construction, commissioning and defects liability project period of the project.
- (3) No, the project did not proceed to an open tender. An exemption from open tender was approved in accordance with the Treasurer's Instructions to enable Hansen Yuncken to undertake the works.

Hansen Yuncken was already engaged to deliver the broader Southern Remand Centre and Risdon Prison Complex upgrade program, and had completed significant investigation, briefing and design work for the kitchen before it was removed from the original scope due to budget constraints. Engaging the existing contractor avoided duplication of costs, reduced interface and site coordination risks, and supported continuity and value for money.

- (4) No, the issue was not caused by an incorrect aggregate mix, but by the subcontractor's application of the specified epoxy flooring system. Independent testing confirmed that the installed flooring did not achieve the specified P5 slip-resistance rating.

The facility has been temporarily closed to allow rectification works to be undertaken. The flooring does not require full replacement. A component of the epoxy system requires reapplication to achieve the specified slip-resistance rating.

- (5) The Attorney-General is advised that the contractor has accepted fault for the flooring not achieving the required slip rating and is required to rectify the issue at

their expense. The proposed schedule of works from the contractor for rectification of the epoxy flooring lists mid-September as the timeframe for the floor to be fixed.

- (6) Alternative catering arrangements have been implemented to ensure uninterrupted meal services for prisoners and detainees. A combination of mostly Tasmanian and one interstate supplier is currently being used. Following market testing, Victoria-based supplier Dynamic has been engaged to provide packaged evening meals only, while a number of Tasmanian businesses, including Custom Catering, Moonah; Launceston Catering Company; and PFD Food Services, are supplying other meals and services.

Following the closure of the kitchen to enable rectification works, the department established three new catering contracts to the value of \$1,035,072. Once the rectification is complete and the kitchen operational, the department will establish the final total of additional costs incurred as a result of the fault and seek reimbursement in line with the contract.

- (7) Kitchen operations ceased in the new kitchen and the facility was fully vacated on 10 July 2026. Following the closure of the kitchen to enable rectification works, the department established three new catering contracts to the value of the \$1,035,072. Once the rectification is complete and the kitchen operational, the department will establish the final total of additional cost incurred as a result of the fault and seek reimbursement in line with the contract.
- (8) The Tasmania Prison Service undertook extensive market testing of local suppliers. While a number of Tasmanian businesses have been engaged, no local provider was able to reliably meet the full requirement for the number of individually packaged evening meals per day, while also meeting operational, dietary, food safety and logistical requirements. As a result, Dynamic, a Victoria-based supplier, was engaged to provide packaged evening meals. This decision was made only after local market testing demonstrated that no Tasmanian supplier could meet the full requirements.
- (9) The Tasmania Prison Service is currently funding the alternative catering arrangements to ensure continuity of prisoners' meal services. However, the minister's department expects to recoup all costs that have been incurred as a result of the kitchen needing to be closed to rectify defects associated with the building works.
- (10) Under the contract, the department expects to recoup all costs that have been incurred as a result of the kitchen needing to be closed again to rectify defects associated with the building works.
- (11) The temporary closure of the new kitchen facility has resulted in a reduction in prisoner employment opportunities, with fewer labour resources required under the alternative catering arrangements. However, prisoner employment continues within the existing kitchen facility including the heating of pre-packaged meals, preparation of dietary meals and breakfast packaging activities.

In deciding to temporarily close the new kitchen, the health, safety and wellbeing of prisoners, staff and visitors remained a primary consideration until rectification works could be undertaken. Prisoners unable to continue their normal employment at this time have not been disadvantaged in terms of weekly payments they receive.

- (12) The Tasmania Prison Service has implemented alternative catering arrangements to ensure prisoner meal services continue to be provided in accordance with the dietary, nutritional and food safety requirements.

While prisoner employment opportunities have reduced during the temporary closure, some work activities continue within the existing kitchen facility. The department continues to monitor the operational and welfare impacts of the closure and will seek to maximise prisoner participation in meaningful work activities where practicable while rectification works are progressed.

Tungatinah Power Station Fire - Rebuild Implications for Other Hydro Works

Ms LOVELL question to MINISTER for ENERGY and RENEWABLES, Mr DUIGAN

[2.53 p.m.]

Minister, will rebuilding Tungatinah force Hydro Tasmania to delay or reduce refurbishment and maintenance at any other ageing power station? And if so, which projects are now at risk?

ANSWER

Given the Tungatinah fire happened last Wednesday night, we are still very early into the circumstances of that fire and the ramifications of it. As I understand, Hydro hasn't yet taken control of the site, so it is still with the TFS. Once Hydro is able to get in on site once that site has been made safe and make an assessment of the machinery at Tungatinah then we will have a much better understanding of what the rebuild will look like and the timeframe and likely flow-on effect on that. We will keep you posted there.

Answer to Question - Edgar Dam Cost Breakdown

Mr DUIGAN (Windermere - Minister for Energy and Renewables) - Mr President, while I'm on my feet, I have some information that I sourced for the member for Hobart on the Lake Edgar Dam refurbishment and cost breakdowns of that proposal, particularly in light of the community facilities.

Edgar Dam project was budgeted at \$35.5 million and includes a \$400,000 community allowance which covers the rehabilitation of the Edgar Dam Campground. These works are currently underway with further improvements planned in the lead-up to summer 2026 ahead of the campground's planned reopening in January 2027. Hydro Tasmania confirms that while a full upgrade to the boat ramp and campground toilet facilities are not included in the scope, minor works to the boat ramp and campground toilet facilities will be completed as part of the project. This will restore these facilities to an equal or better standard than existed prior to the

commencement of the project. The cost for these works are included as part of the \$400,000 community allowance.

Further community initiatives are currently being investigated and developed for implementation and will focus on actions identified by local stakeholders and impact businesses, such as initiatives that support local tourism, skills-building and visitor experience in the region. These initiatives will also be funded through the \$400,000 community allowance included in the project costs.

Mr President, I do have a breakdown of the project costs here, which I seek leave to table.

Leave granted; document tabled.

Answer to Question - Wellington Park Action Plan - Funding

Mr DUIGAN (Windermere - Minister for Parks and Heritage) - While I'm also on my feet, with your indulgence, changing my hat to the minister for Parks I have information for the member for Hobart about direct spending in Wellington Park.

Ms O'Connor - I'm very happy for you to summarise and table if the Council agrees.

Mr DUIGAN - Are you happy for me to table?

Ms O'Connor - Well, if there's anything you want to read in first?

Mr DUIGAN - It's not too long. I can read it.

Mr Gaffney - As long as it's shorter than three minutes.

Mr DUIGAN - It's shorter than three minutes.

The Parks and Wildlife Service provides both financial and in-kind support through staff based at the Derwent Field Centre and Southern Regional Office, including land management, asset management, compliance and bushfire management activities across Crown land within Wellington Park.

The Wellington Park Management Trust received \$390,000 through the 2025-26 State Budget to support land management activities in Wellington Park.

I'm further advised that last financial year, \$6000 was spent on Collins Cap Trail repair works and costs associated with supporting Wellington Park Management Trust operations, including staff remote work call-ins.

It should be noted that a significant proportion of the Crown land managed by the Parks and Wildlife Service within Wellington Park comprises water catchment areas where management activities are primarily focused on catchment protection.

Wilkinsons Point - Crown Land Disposal

Ms THOMAS question to MINISTER for PARKS and HERITAGE, Mr DUIGAN

[2.58 p.m.]

Minister, my understanding is, before any Crown land can be disposed of it needs to be declared surplus land, and that is a power that rests with you as the minister.

Could you confirm whether this power rests with you and is not a power assigned to the Department of Education, firstly, and secondly, advise whether you have yet declared the land at Wilkinsons Point as surplus land or received a request to do so?

ANSWER

I will seek some advice.

Land would come to me as the minister for Crown lands before disposal typically, and nothing I'm aware is in front of me for Wilkinsons Point.

Firmus Energy Policy - Concerns About Leadership

Ms O'CONNOR question to MINISTER for ENERGY and RENEWABLES, Mr DUIGAN

[2.59 p.m.]

To finish off my series of questions on Firmus for now, when Hydro Tasmania briefed you, minister, in relation to Firmus' purported energy policy, did they raise any concerns that are now being expressed by super funds, particularly based in Melbourne, about Firmus' leadership and their capacity to deliver this project?

ANSWER

I would say that no, none of those kinds of issues were raised. There was an understanding of Firmus and its energy policy aligning with our energy policy as government. We have always said that new load brings with it new generation, so there is a general alignment there, but certainly my conversations with Hydro were and are about energy and not about persons or other things that might be leading that.

MOTION

Closure of Hobart Hospitality Businesses

Resumed from above (page 31).

Mr EDMUNDS (Pembroke) - Thank you, Mr President. I didn't make a note of where I was up to when I was dinged at 1.00 p.m., so I will start where I was on the pressures facing hospitality.

There is no single reason why hospitality businesses are under pressure. Households are under pressure, which affects discretionary spending. When people have less money available after paying for essentials, eating out, going to the pub or attending entertainment can become less frequent. At the same, businesses are facing rising operating costs. As the Energy Committee heard directly from Hospitality Tasmania at our hearings, energy costs are putting pressure on Tasmanian businesses.

Insurance costs are another significant expense. Regulatory and administrative requirements add cost and complexity and can throttle opportunities for businesses to diversify their offerings. These pressures are particularly difficult for businesses that already operate on relatively tight margins.

We should also recognise that hospitality is affected by the broader performance of the Tasmanian economy. As was reported in the *Mercury* in July, several sources, including the United Workers Union's state secretary, Amy Brumby, said 'When people are uncertain about their jobs or household finances, businesses feel that uncertainty too.'

This is why the government needs to consider both the immediate pressures on hospitality and the broader economic conditions that determine whether businesses have confidence to invest and employ. As easy as it is to point the finger at Hobart City Council, for instance, or councils in general - and the councils do need to shoulder some responsibility - governments and those of us in this place should be delivering on our promises and all this should be coming forward in constructive ways. That is consistent with the message coming from Hospitality Tasmania. The organisation has welcomed the growing focus on practical measures to support the industry and has made clear that governments at every level have a role to play.

Importantly, Hospitality Tasmania has not suggested there is one simple measure that will solve every problem. Instead, it has called for practical ideas that reduce costs, encourage patronage, and support investment. That includes measures such as:

- seasonal council fee relief, including consideration of outdoor dining fees during quieter winter periods;
- strong support for live music; and
- broader reforms that will make it easier for businesses to operate.

This final point was one that was re-emphasised to me, and probably the member for Rumney and yourself, Mr President, at Labor's recent Northern Economic Forum held at UTAS in Invermay. This forum was attended by industry leaders, people who run businesses, economists, union leaders and local government. My takeaway from that day, in case anyone didn't already know it, was that setting up the right business conditions should be the priority - not one-off handouts, playing favourites, or splashy gimmicks that look good in a headline but are difficult to deliver. I can't think of any of those, Mr President.

We should listen to the industry and look at measures that can make a genuine difference. One of the most significant opportunities is to develop a genuine night-time economy strategy for Tasmania. Labor has put forward a positive vision for a more vibrant and diverse night-time economy. The starting point is recognising that Tasmania's economy does not stop at 5.00 p.m. Our cities and towns should be places where people can continue to work, eat, socialise and experience culture into the evening.

Importantly, a night-time economy is about much more than alcohol. It represents restaurants and cafes, includes live music and theatre, galleries and cultural events. It includes festivals and markets; it includes things like outdoor cinemas and family-friendly activities. It includes non-alcoholic drinks and experiences for people who choose not to drink. A successful night-time economy should provide choice and give people different reasons to go out and spend time in our towns and cities. If we can encourage more people to stay in our city centres or our hospitality hubs after work, attend an event, have dinner, see a performance or visit a local venue, that creates economic activity and adds to the vibrancy of our communities.

Mr President, Tasmania has the ingredients: we have the food and beverage producers, the tourism industry, the arts and cultural sector, the musicians and performers. We have hospitality operators who are willing to invest, but we need to get the conditions right with a regulatory and policy framework that allows those sectors to work together.

That's why Labor has committed to complete review and modernisation of Tasmania's 35-year-old *Liquor Licensing Act*. The act was developed in a very different Tasmania. Our wine industry was in its infancy, the craft beer industry as we know it today simply didn't exist, yet the regulatory framework has not kept pace.

Labor has said we will introduce a simplified low-cost liquor licence for small business, pop-up events and food trucks. We would streamline permits for festivals and events through a one-stop shop approach. We would provide certainty around liquor licensing approval timeframes, so businesses and event organisers know when decisions will be made. I did stop at a local business on my way in here today, and that was a business that faced almost six months waiting for its liquor licence. We all know the knock-on effect of what that would be, which is people losing work and businesses not making money because they have to wait and wait for their liquor licence.

Ms Rattray - Six months?

Mr EDMUNDS - Yes, nearly six months, yes. Dreadful. These changes, reducing uncertainty barriers while maintaining appropriate safeguards, are about making the system work for the modern hospitality industry.

We also need to look at the way we support live music and cultural activity. We would establish live music and cultural precincts, providing greater certainty for venues, while recognising the role these areas play in our night-time economy. This is particularly relevant to the Republic Bar case study. If we want Hobart and other Tasmanian cities to have a strong live music scene, we need viable venues where musicians can perform, pull in audiences and create jobs. These things are all connected.

We should also make sure our night-time economy is accessible to more Tasmanians. That means supporting family-friendly activities such as twilight markets and outdoor cinemas. It means encouraging venues to expand their non-alcoholic offerings. It means supporting cultural events that are not centred on drinking, and it means ensuring people have a safe and affordable way to get home. Therefore, our approach includes expanding affordable late-night transport options and working with public and private providers. Transport is an important part of the night-time economy, and there is little point encouraging people to attend a concert, restaurant, market or cultural event if they cannot get home safely and affordably.

Ms Rattray - Public transport is free, isn't it, at the moment?

Mr EDMUNDS - Yes, but not necessarily accessible to everybody that I've -

Ms Rattray - Oh, okay, it's the time factor.

Mr EDMUNDS - I'm certainly not trying to clip the government with this, I think the spirit of this entire motion is about being constructive and taking on the feedback from people in the industry who want people to come forward with positive ideas about how we can support the industry. A successful night-time economy needs the supporting infrastructure as well as the venues themselves.

I'm going to talk about cutting red tape and delivering on commitments. There's also a more immediate issue around red tape. Hospitality businesses were told earlier this year they would no longer need separate approval to serve alcohol in beer gardens. Tasmanian hospitality businesses were told six months ago that red tape requiring a separate permit to serve alcohol in beer gardens was gone, but it isn't. In March the then hospitality minister Jane Howlett - I will table three press releases at the end of my address - announced venues would no longer need separate approval to serve alcohol inside and in their beer gardens. In June, the government doubled down through the Treasurer, saying red tape reductions were being delivered, quote, 'right now', including removing the need for on-licensed venues to obtain an off permit, but the law hasn't changed. The fee still exists, and Treasury's current application form still tells venues they need an off permit for outdoor areas such as beer gardens.

At a time when hospitality businesses are under enormous pressure, they shouldn't have to chase the government to find out whether its announcements are real. This illustrates why certainty matters. If the government announces that a regulation has been removed, businesses should be able to rely on that. They should not have to navigate conflicting information or spend time trying to establish what the rules actually are. This is exactly the kind of practical issue that government can address, and it reinforces the points made by people, including Hospitality Tasmania, that the industry is looking for solutions. It does not expect government to solve every challenge, but keeping their word would be a good start.

The motion also calls on the government to outline what it is doing to support the workers affected by the Pub Banc collapse, because that's important. More than 80 Tasmanian direct workers were stood down. We need to ensure those workers can access appropriate employment and support services should they require it, and we want to see the venues reopened as soon as practical. Government should be looking at whether there are regulatory or other practical barriers that can be removed.

We also need to acknowledge the broader economic uncertainty facing Tasmania. Boag's Brewery is a Tasmanian icon. I think I've said this before in here, but my first legal beer was a Boag's Draught at the Mowbray Hotel on my 18th birthday. I think it was a Tuesday afternoon with my dad, my brother and his best mate, Matt. Boags is ingrained in the Tasmanian psyche and has been for generations.

So, it is worth noting that on 26 June 2025, the Premier issued a media statement titled 'Reforming trade waste framework to future-proof major employers', which rightly criticised TasWater and said the Liberals would 'secure the future of 3000 regional jobs', including at Boags, which was named up. A quote from the release about Boag's and these other businesses

said that they were 'facing shifting regulatory pressures and unrealistic timeframes to comply with trade waste requirements from TasWater'.

It took 12 months for a contract to be awarded to start an independent review of this policy announcement. The review is due this month, as we know from questions to the government earlier in this sitting block from myself. This policy is due only who knows when and Boag's is shutting up shop. Again, we are seeing what will help these businesses the most is for promises made to them to be delivered.

Likewise with TasInsure. Now, I don't blame businesses and peak bodies for continuing to hope that the government will deliver relief from insurance cost. But who really has any faith in them to deliver it? Let's not forget that the punters, the very people facing a cost-of-living crisis, were promised \$250 off insurance and cheaper groceries, which would have put more walking-around money in their pockets to support industries like hospitality.

There is a clear opportunity here for governments and indeed all elected members and industry to work together. Despite the broken promises on trade waste, insurance and cutting red tape, there are still many key stakeholders in our parliaments and councils who remain determined to work on solutions. Indeed, as I've said, Hospitality Tasmania has welcomed practical proposals from the state government, from local government and from the opposition, and continues to ask for constructive ideas and a willingness to work through them.

That should be the spirit of this debate. We can hold governments and councils to account and disagree about individual policies while agreeing on the objective. To be very clear, the objective, in my view, is to:

- (a) have a hospitality sector that is viable, innovative and able to employ Tasmanians;
- (b) have a night-time economy that is vibrant, diverse and safe;
- (c) have regulation that protects the community without unnecessarily holding business back; and
- (d) have an economy where people have the confidence and capacity to participate in hospitality and entertainment.

I think I've run you through this, Mr President, but I will return to it. Labor's approach therefore, based off those objectives, is about practical reform: modernise the *Liquor Licensing Act*, simplify licensing for small operators, streamline event approvals, provide certainty around approval timeframes, establish live music and cultural precincts, support live music through measures such as an excise rebate, encourage partnerships between arts organisations and venues, support family-friendly and non-alcoholic night-time activities, improve night-time transport, and work with councils and industry on practical cost reductions. These are measures designed to support activity, and many of them were announced 18 months ago. We need to be proactive about the challenges rather than simply respond to problems after businesses have closed.

Now, I know members miss him, so I'll read in comments from Labor leader Josh Willie, the former member for Elwick, in the current Hospitality magazine - just maybe not in the same tone as Mr Willie:

By virtue of spending more time travelling around Tasmania, I am reminded just how lucky we are to live here, and that our hospitality and tourism industry punch well above their weight.

As a small island at the bottom of the world, we've built an international reputation that far exceeds our size, consistently delivering experiences that rival anywhere in the world. That reputation has been earned through decades of commitment to quality, creativity and hard work.

In speaking with operators, I'm also reminded that great hospitality doesn't happen by accident. Visitors don't just come to see 'Tasmania', they come to see what Tasmanians have created - our produce, restaurants, cafes, pubs, wineries, breweries, distilleries, festivals, museums, markets and experiences. The uniqueness of our island, the pride in our produce and the passion of our people is what drives our visitor economy and gives Tasmanian hospitality a place on the world stage.

Despite records in both visitation and spend in recent months, these operators can't run on postcards and tourism campaigns alone.

Supporting one in six jobs across the state, Tasmania's tourism and hospitality operators are under immense pressure, being squeezed from all sides as the cost of doing business, and the cost of living continues to climb.

Business owners, industry bodies, and workers are waiting for the Liberals to deliver on their word to lower costs. Lofty 'TasInsure' claims were dead-on-arrival; the night time economy policy [was talked about but] never written; reforms to trade waste legislation not delivered; no relief from TasWater price increases; and no red tape has been slashed.

If we want Tasmania to remain one of Australia's premier dining destinations, our operators and those they employ deserve support through economic uncertainty. We need to celebrate hospitality as a career, and ensure the people who make our industry exceptional can afford to build their lives here.

That means supporting venues with the rising cost of doing business; forming stronger pathways into hospitality and tourism careers through apprenticeships, traineeships and high-quality vocational education; investing in housing and services so workers can afford to comfortably live - particularly in regional areas where tourism is growing - and backing infrastructure that will support both visitors and locals.

Tasmanian Labor welcomes investment to strengthen and grow our visitor economy. This industry delivers enormous economic and social value, but growth for growth's sake isn't enough to thrive.

The Government needs to back the people whose skill, warmth and professionalism shape how visitors experience Tasmania.

Success can't simply be measured by visitor numbers or how much they spend. It should also be measured by whether the people welcoming those visitors can afford a home, whether businesses can find staff, whether young Tasmanians see a future here, and whether regional communities are stronger because of tourism and not struggling despite it.

Tasmania is an extraordinary place to visit because it is home to extraordinary people.

If we continue investing in them, our visitor economy will remain one of the state's greatest strengths for generations to come.

So, to wrap up, Tasmania's hospitality industry creates jobs, it supports tourism and makes our cities and towns better places to live. But venues are closing, workers are losing their jobs and operators are questioning whether they can afford to keep their doors open. The impact is being felt by consumers, workers, musicians, contractors, suppliers and small business.

We all have a job to identify practical solutions and we cannot afford further closures. Where government has the ability to make things easier and honour its promises, it absolutely should.

Tasmania's hospitality sector has enormous strength. We have great businesses, talented workers, outstanding food and beverage producers, a strong tourism industry and a vibrant arts and cultural community. The opportunity is to bring those strengths together through a modern night-time economy, because if we can create the right conditions, Tasmania's hospitality industry has a very positive future. And when our hospitality sector succeeds, Tasmania succeeds. I commend the motion and look forward to others' contributions.

Before I sit down, Mr President, I seek leave to table three press releases referred to during my speech.

Leave granted; documents tabled.

[3.19 p.m.]

Ms ARMITAGE (Launceston) - Mr President, I rise to make a short contribution. As the wife of a former publican whose hotel, The Royal Oak in Launceston, was, and still is, renowned for live music, I do understand the situation. Hobart's live music scene has taken a real hit. The sudden closure in July of several venues, including the Republic Bar, Cargo, Jack Greene, Observatory and Post Street Social, removed spaces that had been important not just for audiences, but for local musicians just trying to get regular gigs.

The concern is bigger than simply having fewer places to hear a band on a Friday night. Venues are the infrastructure of a music scene. When they disappear, emerging artists lose opportunities to play, audiences lose places to discover them, and the city gradually loses part of its cultural identity. Musicians are already saying it's becoming harder to secure gigs because of the cost of putting on live acts and complaints about noise. There are still venues supporting live music, but the loss of multiple smaller and mid-sized venues leaves a noticeable gap. Hobart needs to treat live music as part of the city's cultural infrastructure, not simply as a

by-product of the hospitality industry. If we want a vibrant city after dark, we need places where local musicians can actually play.

Supporting existing venues, making it easier to host live music, addressing noise concerns sensibly and creating more affordable spaces for performers should be a priority, not something we worry about after the last venue has closed. I note the motion by the member. I'm not sure I can support all, I feel that (7) and (8) are a bit political, so I really don't want to be political calling on the government to do certain things. I certainly support (1) to (6); I'm a little bit reticent about (7) and (8). As I said, I do feel they probably are a little political.

But I will mention Boag's, because even though it didn't come under the live music scene, it was mentioned by the member and it's been something I've really wanted to mention for some time, seeing the honourable member mentioned Boag's and TasWater and fair enough. One of the other issues to do with Boag's - and I know that it was something that was such an issue for them when it came to recycling and the Recycling Awards, and other members in this House and particularly I sort of lobbied for them very hard, went to Western Australia, had a look at their systems there. One of the issues that Boag's had said was that they publicly pushed back against the Tasmanian government's chosen split responsibility operational model. I still don't believe it was the right model and nor did Boag's and obviously it was going to cost them considerably. I don't know if it impacted the closing in Launceston, but I'm sure that the extra cost did.

One of their concerns was that Boag's argued that the government's model would lead to higher than necessary price increases for consumers and production costs for local brewers compared to the alternative industry-backed models like TasRecycle. So as Boag's was mentioned by the honourable member moving the motion, even though it didn't come under the actual heading of the Hobart music scene, I thought it opportune to mention, I believe, one of the reasons that could be seen for a cost for Boag's ultimately closing in Launceston. As I said, I do note the motion and I certainly acknowledge the difficulties faced by the music scene in Tasmania as a whole.

[3.23 p.m.]

Ms THOMAS (Elwick) - I rise to contribute on the motion brought forward by the member for Pembroke regarding the closure of seven well-known hospitality venues in Salamanca, and I thank the member for Pembroke for bringing this important matter before the Council. The sudden closure of seven well known Hobart hospitality venues following the Pub Banc Group entering voluntary administration was incredibly sad news. Cargo Bar, Jack Greene Bar, Post Street Social, Observatory Bar, Republic Bar and Cafe, Franklin Wharf Restaurant and Bar, and Franklin Moore Function Centre are all names that would be familiar to many Tasmanians.

I'm sure I'm not the only one in the Chamber here today who has been a patron at one or more of these iconic Hobart venues over the years. These are venues where people have made friends, celebrated birthdays and milestones, attended functions, listened to live music, shared meals and, importantly, earned a living.

As we've heard from the member for Pembroke, more than 80 people were employed across these businesses when they entered voluntary administration. For those workers, the announcement wasn't simply another story about difficult economic conditions or a company entering administration. It meant uncertainty about their next shift, their next pay packet and

potentially their next job, and I think it's important that our first thoughts in circumstances like these are with those people.

I know something about what hospitality work means, particularly to young Tasmanians, because hospitality was part of my own introduction to the workforce. As an 18-year-old, I started work at Cooleys Hotel in Moonah under the firm but fair supervision of legendary Tasmanian publican Mr Stephen Salter. It was a very different Cooleys to the venue people know today, but like so many local pubs, it was a community meeting place and an important local employer. This was the early 2000s and hospitality venues were thriving at this time. On a Friday night, I'd knock off work at Purity in Glenorchy Central at 9.00 p.m. and head on to Cooleys, where things were just starting to ramp up. It's just starting to get busy at 9.00 p.m. on a Friday night. There'd be five or six of us behind the bar and it would be pumping. There'd be a live band, lines out the door, inevitably a fight that was brought under control very quickly, but everyone generally was having a good time. I'd go home with my hair stinking of cigarettes, all the people could smoke in the pub back then and thank goodness we outlawed that, but perhaps that was just the start of what was to come in terms of additional regulation in these sorts of venues. Maybe I knew less at this time about regulation and the economy, but it really did feel like simpler times.

For me, working there wasn't just about earning some money, it was about learning many valuable life skills. It taught me how to interact with people from all walks of life, to work as part of a team, to communicate, to handle pressure and to take on responsibility. These are skills I've carried with me throughout my working life. I suspect there are thousands of Tasmanians who can tell a similar story about their first job in a pub, cafe, restaurant, hotel or takeaway shop. Hospitality has traditionally provided that first foot in the door for so many young people. It provides flexible employment for students and opportunities for people returning to the workforce. It employs chefs, cooks, bar staff, cleaners, managers, musicians, security staff and countless others. Behind every venue is another network of businesses and workers: their suppliers, producers, tradespeople, cleaners, transport operators and contractors. So, when seven venues close at once, the consequences extend well beyond their front doors.

There's also something less tangible that we lose when hospitality venues disappear. A good pub, restaurant, cafe or live music venue isn't simply a commercial enterprise, it becomes part of the fabric of a community. The Republic Bar is perhaps a good example of this. It's long been a part of North Hobart's identity and was an important venue for live music for decades. These places create memories. They provide opportunities for local musicians to get their start, spaces for community organisations to hold functions and places for people to gather. That social and cultural contribution is difficult to quantify on a balance sheet, but it's very real. That is why I truly hope that as many of these businesses as possible can ultimately reopen and continue under new ownership.

We also need to look at these closures in their broader context. Hospitality businesses are operating in an extremely difficult environment. The reasons given by Pub Banc for the closure included increases in food and beverage costs, utilities, insurance and other operating expenses, at the same time as changes in consumer behaviour and spending. This is concerning. Hospitality businesses are caught in something of a vice. Their costs are increasing, but their customers are also experiencing the same pressures. When household budgets are stretched by groceries, electricity bills, insurance, water bills, rent or mortgage repayments, one of the first things families understandably reconsider is discretionary spending. Dinner out becomes dinner at home. A few drinks after work might become just one. A night out might happen once

a month instead of once a week. Businesses cannot simply keep passing every additional cost on to customers because eventually customers either cannot or will not pay it.

The Tasmanian government's own Business Tasmania figures demonstrate just how challenging the environment has become. In the 12 months to February 2026, employment in accommodation and food services fell by 11.1 per cent to 19,600 people. Full-time employment in the sector fell by more than 16 per cent. Between June 2024 and June 2025, the number of accommodation and food service businesses operating in Tasmania also declined.

These are concerning figures. They tell us that what happened with Pub Banc cannot simply be regarded as an isolated business failure. It comes at a time when many businesses, particularly small businesses, are telling us that margins are extremely tight. It comes alongside the deeply disappointing announcement that beer production at the historic James Boag brewery in Launceston will cease later this year, affecting 42 local jobs. As the member for Launceston recalled, that brewery is important to the city of Launceston and it's been producing beer there for 145 years. Again, the significance of that decision extends well beyond the employees directly affected. It affects suppliers, hospitality, tourism and the identity of a city.

I think we need to be careful about suggesting that government can prevent every business from failing, though, and even more careful about suggesting that it is right for government to save a business when it does. That's not the subject of this debate, but when the government can't even run hospitals effectively and is cutting \$700 million from the Health budget, Tasmanians are right to ask whether it really ought to be buying a brewery and investing in the establishment of Beer Tasmania, especially with no business case or planning. Tasmanians are right to question the government's priorities there.

Anyway, the reality is the government simply can't prevent every business from failing, nor save it when it does. Nor should it. Nor should we or the government pretend that it can or should. Businesses succeed and fail for many different reasons, and governments cannot guarantee the viability of every venue. But governments absolutely have a responsibility to create the conditions in which businesses have the best possible opportunity to succeed. And, when a significant employer does collapse, government should be doing everything reasonably possible and, importantly, within their means to support displaced workers and facilitate viable businesses reopening.

I, therefore, support the call in this motion for the government to clearly outline what assistance is being provided to the workers affected by these closures and what it is doing to support efforts to reopen viable venues - short of buying them, that is. I note the concerns raised by the member for Launceston, but if the government can respond by pretty quickly announcing what it's doing to support the workers at Boag's, I think it ought to match that and respond to this motion in regard to these venues.

I'd also like to see the government looking beyond the immediate circumstances of these seven businesses. As the member for Pembroke said, it needs to be a broader conversation with the hospitality and broader sectors and suppliers across Tasmania. What is it hearing from hospitality operators across Tasmania? What are the most significant pressures government can realistically and meaningfully do something about? Are there regulatory costs or processes that can be reduced without compromising important protections? What more can we do to encourage Tasmanians and visitors to support local venues? How do we support our live music and night-time economy? And, importantly, how do we ensure Tasmania remains a place where

people have enough disposable income to actually participate in that economy? Importantly, can we have this as a broader non-political conversation, where we see people from all parties and Independents talking, joining the conversation here, with the shared goal of being able to make a difference and support these venues?

This does not need to become a political issue, and we could achieve the best outcomes if it's not. It's important, whatever the measures are, they're not just things that sound good or make for good photo opportunities or media releases, that they are also evidence-based things that will make a real difference. There's little benefit encouraging a hospitality business to open its doors if fewer and fewer Tasmanians can afford to walk through them.

There also needs to be a broader conversation about the health of our economy. The loss of hospitality jobs, the closure of businesses and the decision to cease production at Boag's should reinforce the importance of economic growth and private-sector employment. Tasmania needs businesses that are prepared to invest, employ people and take risks. We need young Tasmanians to be able to find their first job here, people to be able to build careers here, and an economy that supports businesses not simply to survive but to grow.

Finally, I want to return to the people at the centre of this motion. When we talk about more than 80 workers being stood down, it is easy for that number to become another statistic. Each of those 80 people has their own circumstances. Some will have mortgages or rent to pay. Some will have children. Some will be students relying on casual shifts to get through university or college. For some younger workers this may have been their first job, for others, hospitality is their profession and their livelihood. I remember being that young person at Cooleys Hotel and what earning my own money meant, but more importantly, I remember what I learned from the people I worked alongside and the experience of being part of that workplace. These opportunities had a real influence on who I am today. So, when hospitality venues close, yes, we should care about the businesses and the economic impact, but we should also care about the communities that gather in them and, above all, the people who work in them. I sincerely hope these seven venues can find a viable future and that as many of these workers as possible can return to work.

I also hope this moment prompts more than expressions of concern. It should prompt a serious conversation between government and the hospitality sector about what practical steps can be taken to support businesses through what is clearly an extraordinarily difficult trading environment. Our hospitality industry contributes enormously to Tasmania's economy, our tourism offering, our culture and our communities. It deserves our support and the people who work within it deserve our support, too. I support the motion.

[2.35 p.m.]

Ms RATTRAY (McIntyre - Leader for the Government in the Legislative Council) - Thank you, Mr President. I would like to acknowledge the bringing forward of this motion for debate by the honourable member for Pembroke. I also endorse the words from the honourable member for Elwick about us being mindful of the people - those 80 people - and the flow-on effects from the closure of those seven businesses. It was right to put that on the public record and I fully endorse that on behalf of myself and on behalf of the government.

It's already been said a number of times, but I'll restate that the closure of the seven iconic Hobart venues is deeply disappointing, and again, particularly for workers who have lost their jobs, suppliers who have lost business and the broader hospitality industry. These venues have

been an important part of Hobart's hospitality and night-time economy for many years, and their closure is a significant loss to the city.

It's known, the pressures facing hospitality; the cost of doing business has increased significantly, while consumers are also facing cost-of-living pressures. Rising wages, energy, insurance, food, rent and compliance costs can quickly erode already-tight margins. Businesses cannot endlessly absorb rising costs, but they also cannot simply pass them on to customers who are under financial pressure. That means higher operating costs, constrained spending and tighter margins. These pressures are being felt right across Australia, but that does not diminish the impact in Hobart. Every venue closure means lost jobs, affected suppliers and another part of the hospitality culture disappearing.

The government cannot fix every commercial challenge, but it can make sure that government policy is not making it harder for businesses to operate, invest and employ. That means reducing unnecessary costs and regulatory burdens, streamlining processes, supporting the workforce and encouraging people to spend time in our cities and towns. A strong hospitality sector depends on viable businesses, a sustainable workforce, and confidence to invest and spend. The government will continue working with the industry to understand these pressures and identify practical measures that support viable businesses, protect jobs and strengthen Hobart's economy, including that particularly important night-time economy.

Behind every venue closure are people, workers, apprentices, suppliers, and small businesses whose livelihoods are affected - and haven't we heard that repeatedly today and we should not forget it. Hospitality is an important source of jobs and opportunity for Tasmanians, particularly young people entering the workforce. For many young Tasmanians, hospitality provides their first job, and we've heard that from the honourable member for Elwick, her first job. Hospitality provides their first job and the opportunity to build valuable skills in customer service, communication, teamwork, leadership and responsibility. These roles can also provide genuine career paths: from entry-level positions through to chefs, venue managers, event professionals and business owners.

We all want young Tasmanians to see hospitality as more than a first job. It can be the beginning of a rewarding career in Tasmania's visitor, tourism and events economy. Venue closures have an immediate impact, particularly on younger people relying on casual and part-time work while studying, gaining qualifications or starting their careers. When a venue closes, it's not just a business that disappears; people lose jobs, experience, and opportunities. Supporting hospitality is therefore about protecting jobs, building skills and creating opportunities for the next generation of Tasmanians.

Again, the government will continue supporting workers through training, skills development and workforce initiatives, while working with industry to address workforce pressures. We want young Tasmanians to see hospitality not simply as a job, but as a pathway to a career and a future in Tasmania.

The closure of Boag's brewery was a significant loss to Tasmania, northern Tasmania particularly, given its long history of jobs, brewing and community connection. The government's response has been to look forward and invest in new opportunities to create jobs, attract visitors and support northern Tasmanian businesses. The government is reinvesting return funding associated with the Boag's closure back into initiatives that benefit the region. This includes \$240,000 to establish Beer Tasmania, supporting Tasmania's independent

brewing industry, and building on the strong brewing capability already operating across the north, that is from Little Rivers to Du Cane. Northern Tasmania has independent brewers producing high-quality products with strong reputations and building.

Beer Tasmania will help turn that existing strength into an economic and tourism opportunity, including initiatives such as a northern beer trail and northern beer weekend. This is about supporting local businesses, attracting visitors, and creating new jobs and opportunities across northern Tasmania.

The commitment to northern Tasmania extends well beyond brewing. The government is investing across tourism, hospitality, businesses, events, infrastructure and regional economic development, and \$200,000 for Business Events Tasmania will help attract more conferences to the north, with an established \$6 million in economic activity for local accommodation, hospitality, retail and tourism businesses. The government has also committed \$10 million towards a new \$35 million convention facility in Launceston, providing another major opportunity to grow the region's visitor and business events economy. In 2025-26, \$9.8 million, 30 per cent of the total event sector investment, went directly into northern Tasmania. Tourism investment is also supporting regional businesses, with \$5.21 million already provided to four northern Tasmanian businesses through the Regional Tourism Development Loan Scheme.

Boag's closure is a significant loss, and the government's response is about looking forward, backing northern Tasmania's existing strengths and creating the next generation of jobs and opportunities. Boag's place in history cannot be replaced, but there can be investment in the future of northern Tasmania, and this will be by taking return funding and putting it back into the region, supporting local businesses, and attracting visitors and creating new economic opportunities. The message to northern Tasmania is clear: the government is backing the region and investing in its strengths, and is focused on creating jobs and growth.

The government recognises the significant pressures facing hospitality, including rising costs, workforce shortages and changing consumer behaviour. The response is practical and broad, supporting businesses directly, strengthening the industry and investing in the workforce. Through the \$500,000 Hospitality Business Boost Grant Program, 89 hospitality businesses receive \$5000 grants for projects including marketing, website upgrades, diversification and minor venue improvements. The program also allowed funding to help offset higher business insurance costs, identified by industry as a significant pressure.

The government is also building the sector's long-term resilience with \$8.4 million over three years for Hospitality Tasmania to support business sustainability, workforce development, customer experience, mental health and leadership. Workforce development is critical. Since 2021, the government has provided more than \$4 million to the Tasmanian Hospitality and Tourism Academy, with a further \$2.55 million in the 2026-27 Budget. THTA will receive \$850,000 annually through to 2028-2029 for industry-led training and workforce development. This investment is particularly important for young Tasmanians, providing opportunities to get their first job, develop practical skills, and build a career in hospitality, tourism, and events.

The government understands the pressure hospitality businesses are under. That's why it is responding and supporting the sector at every level, providing direct assistance to businesses, strengthening industry capability and investing in the skilled workforce the sector needs.

Supporting hospitality is not just about supporting businesses; it's about supporting workers, creating opportunities for young Tasmanians, and building a strong, sustainable visitor economy. Mr President, I'm sure we all want viable hospitality businesses and a skilled, supported workforce, because you need both for Tasmania's hospitality industry to thrive.

Supporting businesses directly - the \$500,000 Hospitality Business Boost Grant Program, as I've said, provided 89 businesses with \$5,000 grants.

Building industry capability - the government has committed \$8.4 million over the three years, again to Hospitality Tasmania, for business sustainability.

Investing in skills and training - more than \$4 million has been provided to the Tasmanian Hospitality and Tourism Academy since 2021. Building the future workforce, THTA will receive the \$850,000 annually through to 2028-29.

Mr President, in regard to reducing red tape and costs, the government is simplifying outdoor dining licensing and modernising liquor licensing processes, while continuing to identify unnecessary regulatory burdens. To respond directly to the honourable member for Pembroke's question relating to the government's action, the change that was referred to has reduced costs and red tape for businesses such as restaurants and cafes, where an outdoor area that is part of the property no longer requires an off permit. In these circumstances, the commissioner can now adjust the boundary of the licensed premises to include the outdoor setting, saving the cost of \$392 of a permit and the requirement to regularly reapply. That has actually happened.

I will continue on. In supporting workers and wellbeing, government funding supports initiatives, including HOSPO Health, mental health programs and Women in Leadership. The government recognises hospitality is doing it tough with rising costs, workforce shortages and changing consumer behaviour, putting pressure on businesses and workers. The government is particularly proud of HOSPO Health, Tasmania's free health, wellbeing and psychosocial safety program for hospitality. HOSPO Health has been recognised as a national finalist in the 2026 National Safety Awards of Excellence for Best Safety Leadership Program/Initiative. This is about looking after people who make Tasmania's hospitality industry work and creating safer, healthier and more sustainable workplaces.

It's recognised the important connection between live music and viable hospitality venues, which is why Tasmania proposed a 50 per cent live music excise rebate pilot to the Commonwealth. The proposal was designed to reduce the cost of hosting live music, supporting venues, musicians, technicians, event staff and hospitality workers. Unfortunately, the Commonwealth did not support Tasmania's proposal. The government is prepared to work with the Commonwealth on a practical pilot to help venues put on more live music and support jobs across the sector and will continue advocating for measures that reduce the cost to live music to help keep Tasmanian venues viable and, I expect, very active.

The government's view is that a genuine debate about the pressures facing Tasmania's hospitality industry needs to also address Labor's public holiday bill. Hospitality businesses, industry bodies and employers across the state have consistently raised concerns that the proposal would increase costs at a time when many venues are already under significant financial pressure. The hospitality survey found that nearly 80 per cent of businesses oppose the proposal, with 44 per cent saying that they would close completely on that Easter Sunday

and 23 per cent reducing hours. That means, we know, fewer shifts and less income for workers. The impact will be particularly significant in regional Tasmania, where Easter is one of the busiest tourism periods, so reduced trading means fewer places for visitors to eat, drink and spend, with flow-on impacts for jobs, suppliers and communities.

In summary, Mr President, the closure of seven iconic Hobart venues is deeply disappointing - acknowledging those 80 and perhaps more flow-on workers who lost their jobs. The cost of doing business has increased and consumers are also facing cost of living pressures. The government is proud of a number of measures that are practical and supporting businesses directly and the industry, and investing in the workforce.

[3.51 p.m.]

Mr VINCENT (Prosser - Deputy Leader of the Government in the Legislative Council) - Thank you, Mr President, I make a short contribution to this subject - it might be a little bit agricultural the way I go about it - but just having made a few notes through it all. Without my young drinking days involved, I've been involved with the hospitality industry for well over 40 years now and seen all sides of it. To this very day, I'm still heavily involved in it. It's a great industry, and it doesn't matter whether you're a hospitality industry as a casino and that level of corporatism, or whether it's just a mum and dad business with a coffee shop or a small restaurant or whatever, margins are extremely tight and have been for some time. It's not easy to reduce costs because you have so much static cost involved and discretionary spending, which was touched on by the member of Elwick, is becoming more and more limited. Things like the two little old men in *The Muppet Show* that sit there at the bar having a quiet drink from 11 o'clock to 2 o'clock and then they're allowed to go home.

Ms Forrest - You don't look at all like them.

Mr VINCENT - I'm just classing those little old men in *The Muppet Show*, they still spend the same amount of money and just have slightly less beers. The beer tax going up every six months has certainly hurt and affected a lot of that category that are there during the day when you're trying to get everything prepared for the night, meals and things like that, where you can just go have a chat to them and pour them a beer and leave them for 10 minutes while you go and prep some tables and some cutlery ready for the night. That's changing dramatically now and you have to look at your actual hours of operation of when you can afford to be open because it's just not the same anymore.

Things like electricity and all those static things are very easy to budget for. It's very easy to add them up and be within 5 per cent and know what you've got to do. But your salaries and wages, regardless of whether it's family working or staff, can be very difficult around hospitality because you just don't know all the time now whether you're going to get that rush of an evening that's going to justify having four or six or eight or 10 or 12 staff on to do that, or how long you can afford to keep them for before you knock them off and then a rush comes in. Yes, there's a fair bit about knowing your business, but that's becoming more and more fickle now as the times are changing. Where places used to be able to rely on gambling, that's not always the same now. A lot of people don't like to have the gambling in their pubs or anything, and certainly a lot of restaurants don't have it.

If you look at a lot of restaurants, the successful ones are ones that have been owned for decades by an individual who works extremely long hours to make that family business work decade after decade, in many cases. As soon as you see a restaurant open, or even a coffee

lounge, where the owners don't put a lot of work in themselves, you know that business is going to struggle because of that extra wage increase. I can talk firsthand about that and there's no easy formula to that. It is very tight and we're seeing things now like TAB, with the enormous cost of having a TAB in a hotel, where a lot of them now are just dropping it off. On my recent trip to Queensland, I was surprised by a whole group that had dropped away from having TABs because they were just too dear to have there on site anymore. People moving towards using their phones for internet gambling now isn't the same as what it used to be in your local pub.

Yes, there are always some permits that we can look at cutting and doing things a little bit easier there because when you do have to go outside your liquor licensing area or you are having a function or something, it does get to be very, very awkward. One of the beautiful things about the Hobart waterfront - and I don't want to go into the details why the seven pubs closed - we had a magnificent summer down here with events that the government and council supported and moved around, and one of the beautiful things about the Hobart waterfront is that even when there's a function on, people are moving around everywhere else and making other businesses work and that, but when you move out of an area like the Salamanca waterfront, that's a lot harder to do.

So, you actually see a detrimental effect sometimes of having a big event where you have a lot of food vans and a lot of food vendors coming in that are owned and operated by the individual or their family against nearby businesses that don't always get that overflow of the benefit of so many people moving around in an area. So, it's very important that we continue to support things like down the west coast and the Unconformity, where you have hundreds and hundreds of people go in for that event and book out all the accommodation, so they eat in all the different places and it's an accumulation on the town of generalisation, not so much in just one spot, but it's the accumulation that happens in the whole town that is the benefit there.

The Spoke Motorcycle Festival up at Mayfield actually generates, even though a lot of guys and their partners and kids are on motorbikes going crazy, and a lot of caravans there, that actually flows on right throughout several towns from Orford, Triabunna Swansea, and Bicheno where the effects are booked out also. So we have to be very conscious of how we put our money into those sorts of events because we talk about the *Spirits* and what they do, bring tourism to Tassie, both old and new, but it is all about circulating people around the state to make sure we do the right thing with golf tours or mountain biking and so many other good things - bushwalking and the so many brilliant things to happen in Tassie.

But we have to think of how we make these people move around, and one of the interesting things is, at least in Hobart with all the university students, the same in Launceston, there is a relatively decent pool of hospitality workers who are trained to work in all sorts of different varieties, from a pub to a casino to a restaurant to a café and those schools, the education that they have, and training and being able to work in a lot of different places like that, has flow-on benefits because you quite often find they'll work in three or four different venues over a month and have that relationship moving around.

It's not quite as easy when you move into regional areas where it's a lot more important and we see an enormous reliance on - in the vicinity of 60 per cent of the workforce in regional areas quite often, immigrants like from the Nepalese community up the east coast for a lot of years during COVID, and the couple of years after COVID were just enormous and businesses would not have existed without that community of people moving around.

But even in Tasmania we have some really weird things that happen with immigration rules that the federal government keeps saying they're going to fix but don't - where you can train somebody at an east coast place and they'll stay there for a few months, but then they can get an extra 88 days on their visa by going to Coles Bay because that's isolated. That's totally out of the way of the middle of Alice Springs or something, but it's only Coles Bay, but you can actually go and work there for a longer period.

So that throws a big cost onto a lot of the other local businesses that have spent three or four months training an individual in that role and then they say, 'Well, sorry, I can go and get a couple of months' and they just float down the road to - because of individual immigration laws. When you look at that over 12 months -

Sitting suspended from 4.00 p.m. to 4.30 p.m.

MOTION

Closure of Hobart Hospitality Businesses

Resumed from above.

Mr VINCENT (Prosser - Deputy Leader of the Government in the Legislative Council) - Mr President, I'll just take a couple of minutes to finish up. I was talking about the cost of training. The cost of not training is always far greater than the cost of training. But the cost of training is something you can measure very easily and for a small- to medium-sized establishment, it can run into \$30,000 to \$40,000 a year without even trying, without all the hidden stuff as well. So, when you lose staff because of immigration rules and laws it is awkward, and it's a cost that you can't get full benefit from sometimes. I just note that as an issue in a lot of regional areas.

The thing that we really have to think about with businesses is that it's a very small, fine line between a good weekend and a bad weekend or a good night and a bad night. It doesn't matter whether you're a small coffee shop or a large casino-type business in hospitality, it's the consistency over summer, it's the consistency during winter. You can budget for a certain amount to reduce your staff, but it is very important that we look at ways of how we can smooth the trade out over time, because then you can work your numbers, you can know what you're up against staffing-wise and everything like that.

But the main thing we really need to understand, as a community and a state, is it's not the government that's got to prop up businesses; it is us, as a community. If we want those businesses, regardless of what they are in the hospitality industry or small business, it is essential that we, as a community - like we did with those vouchers during COVID that proved very successful - just grab a few friends or family and just go to Dunalley or George Town, Somerset or -

Ms Rattray - Scottsdale or Bridport or Deloraine.

Mr VINCENT - Scottsdale, thank you, Leader. Scottsdale - it doesn't matter where, just go somewhere, enjoy the afternoon and spend a bit of money and wander around to other businesses, because that provides that good feeling for everybody of moving around and makes

it enjoyable for everybody and just adds a little business to a lot of towns that mightn't normally get it. It's no different to here in Hobart. Salamanca is one of the most beautiful places anywhere in the world you can go and enjoy a drink or a quiet vanilla slice or whatever takes your fancy. But I encourage everybody to just get out and about, enjoy this beautiful state and make it work for all of us.

[4.33 p.m.]

Mr EDMUNDS (Pembroke) - Mr President, noting my comment about my handwriting in my opening speech, I will do my best to work through my notes here. I thank members for their contributions and for their consideration of this notice of motion.

I will cover off on a few comments made by the member for Launceston. Exactly right - when venues have their challenges, there are knock-on effects for everybody who uses them, including the musicians. I appreciate her comments and I totally echo them. I talked about in my speech as well about being proactive about what are the challenges with Tasmania that we're facing and her acknowledgement as well, and the member for Elwick's acknowledgement, of the 42 jobs, families and livelihoods affected through the Boag's closure. I know she raised issues with a couple of points in the motion, but I'll deal with them perhaps when I'm summing up some of the other responses.

Thank you, member for Elwick, for your contribution and talking about the consequences and impact, both commercial but also in the fabric of our communities and in people's homes and your comments about the overall business conditions and all of our responsibility to bring forward, as you said, realistic and meaningful ideas and that it has to be a broad conversation across all parties, which was the intent of what I was trying to bring here. It is easy to just kick governments and - to turn to some of the response from government - I framed this in a way where people could bring their ideas to the debate. It's easy to kick government, but I believe I spent quite a significant amount of my contribution on when people say, 'What would you do?' Well, there's a pretty clear outline of it in my remarks to go back to.

To the comments from government spokespeople and members, I think there's some really good stuff in what was said about working with businesses on practical measures to help them. I appreciate the comments from the Leader about actions that have been taken north of Oatlands around the challenges faced by Boag's brewery. It's a comprehensive package and I think, as I said in my opening speech, it's not necessarily everyone having the same approach but acknowledging the issue, which I think we all do around Boag's.

The member for Prosser ran through some of the regional events and government programs that are targeted at our regional hospitality and tourism sectors. We didn't hear a lot about what's been on offer for the south though, so, I think that's a bit of a missed opportunity, frankly, which honestly, I felt like this motion was more of an alley-oop to government to run us through what they're actually doing, but if it's not much then, I guess, that's where we're going to have to continue to prosecute the case.

I appreciate the update on permits but I note that there's no change on the website still, and I did raise this - through media, actually - a week or so ago. It wasn't corrected, to my knowledge, on the day, although I was playing a charity game of football later that afternoon. So, I'll go back and read the *Hansard* and see whether that's actually been updated online because that's where the original confusion came from.

In terms of thinking about ideas, yes, I thought it might come up, the suggestion by Acting Premier Mrs Archer on the weekend about asking the federal government for assistance, but I guess my consistent theme through this whole conversation from the start was that we need to take care of our own backyard. While there are problems at the local government level, we have to acknowledge that the role of people in this place is to deal with things that this place can deal with. Indeed, the thought bubble - or whatever you want to call it - which was kind of indicative of the problems we face sometimes, where policy ideas are cooked up over a weekend in response to an emerging issue and aren't necessarily thought through, and I believe a similar scheme already essentially exists from the federal government, as one of their media releases, I think, pointed out in response.

Yes, Easter holiday, Easter Sunday. I won't dwell on that. I think the case was pretty well made by overwhelming majority of members of this place and the other place about that. Yes, it is an issue if you're talking about escalating costs. Mr Vincent talked about the beer tax; well, Hospitality Australia - or whatever it's called, the AHA - actively campaigned about freezing the beer excise and the Albanese government has frozen it until August next year. So, I would like to correct the comments about the beer tax going up. It might not even go up in August 2027, but it's certainly frozen until then. I note that the cost of a can of beer went up 30 cents when the recycling program came in here, which, again, I understand how it works in the community because they see the 10 cents and they add up and then the community group gets the money at the end. However, the implementation costs of that in Tasmania are significantly higher than in other states and it does increase the price of a drink at the pub. Freezing the beer excise neutralises the cost of a beer, putting 30 cents onto every can of beer - and most people at the Shoreline Hotel tend to drink out of cans - has seen that increase -

Ms Rattray - Bring back the barrel.

Mr EDMUNDS - Maybe. I think these things tend to end up being linked, don't they though? I think they're sort of level pegging with the same cost.

Ms Thomas - Six ounces.

Mr EDMUNDS - Yes. The bin tax. I've heard the comments about this being too political and it's not a place I want to go, but if we want to talk about increasing costs and impact on regional tourism, let's talk about the Airbnb tax, the tourism tax on regional Tasmanians. A fairness policy that puts money in retail and hospitality workers' pockets for working one day a year that they don't spend with their family seems like a drop in the ocean compared to a 5 per cent broad-based tax on many tourism operators in our regional community. So, I'll just make that point; it's not a place I particularly wanted to go to.

Mr Vincent talked about the cost of training and I will applaud the government for having the program to help younger Tasmanians get their Responsible Service of Alcohol (RSA) training through Hospitality Tasmania. That's a government program, again, which I was setting this motion up to be spoken about and would applaud, and do applaud, because it's a way for people to get qualifications and training to enter the hospitality industry.

So, I'm not angry, I'm just disappointed. This was brought with the right intent. But people's jobs and livelihoods, their families and their social cohesion have been impacted by a significant event. And there hasn't really been much of a response to the challenges in southern Tasmania as there perhaps were to the north. Now, I don't want to play a parochial card, but I

would have thought this was an opportunity to run through some serious policy grunt and talk about the broader suite of packages that government is doing, perhaps even acknowledge a couple of challenges or failures.

So, unfortunately, Mr President, if there are 'no' votes, I think they're indicative of attitude. This motion, you might have concerns with certain words in it, but goodness gracious me, have a look at some of the other motions that have gone through this place and some of the contributions made and directed at people. Try to bring positivity to a struggling sector: an opportunity to lay out policies and responses, to work together, to be multi-partisan and to reach across the aisle.

I guess the case about this might need to be made more clearly and bluntly. I would urge members to take on the spirit of the motion and to look at the words. I will go through these dot points, I'm sorry to take so long, but just to really make the point, Mr President.

Mr PRESIDENT - You have another 50 minutes.

Mr EDMUNDS - Yes, might use them.

Point (1) notes that the seven well-known hospitality venues have closed - a statement of fact. The impact on workers in point (2) - a statement of fact. Recognising the social, cultural and economic benefits from hospitality seems pretty easy to support to me. Point (4), expressing support for impacted workers and all those other people in the supply chain and noting the effect that this will have on younger Tasmanians in particular - tick, I think, pretty uncontroversial, I would have thought. Noting that they come at a time when Tasmanian businesses and workers are already facing significant economic uncertainty and jobs losses, including at Boag's - that's a statement of fact as well. Noting the hospitality industry is welcoming a growing focus on practical measures to support Tasmania's hospitality industry, saying everybody, essentially, has a role to play - again, the spirit of the motion. Point (7), calling on an outline from government about what action is taking place to support affected workers - we got a pretty good rundown of what's happening to support some workers, but I'm actually a little bit disappointed with the response. However, there was a response given about affected workers. And point (8), acknowledges that Tasmanian businesses and workers are paying the price for a weak economy - the economy is struggling. Rising costs - costs are going up - and they need a government with a plan to grow the economy and protect jobs. That's it. That's the end of the motion.

Are people who are going to vote against this motion arguing that we don't need a government with a plan to grow the economy and protect jobs? It is our job as elected members in this place, Mr President. So, I really don't see how (7) and (8) and, indeed, the whole motion is particularly political. It's an opportunity for people to talk about what they're doing to support an important industry that employs, yes, one in six Tasmanians.

So, I urge members to acknowledge the spirit of the motion, look at the words that are actually on the page and I'd love to have your support, as would the hospitality sector.

Motion agreed to.

MOTION

Public Accounts Committee Report (No. 27 of 2026): 18th Australasian Council of Public Accounts Committees (ACPAC) Conference - Consideration and Noting

[4.45 p.m.]

Ms THOMAS (Elwick) - Mr President, I move -

That the Report of the Parliamentary Standing Committee of Public Accounts 18th Australasian Council of Public Accounts Committees (ACPAC) be considered and noted.

Mr President, it's a pleasure to speak about this report and to reflect on what was an exceptionally successful Australasian Council of Public Accounts Committees conference hosted here at the Parliament of Tasmania on 20 and 21 April 2026. From hereon in I'll refer to the Australasian Council of Public Accounts Committees as ACPAC.

The conference brought together members of public accounts committees, auditors-general, parliamentary staff and other experts from Australia, New Zealand and the Pacific. It provided a valuable opportunity to share experiences, learn from other jurisdictions, and strengthen the relationships that support parliamentary scrutiny and public sector accountability across our region.

Before addressing the substance and outcomes of the conference, I want to place on the record my particular appreciation for the extraordinary work undertaken by our committee chair, the member for Murchison, the honourable Ruth Forrest MLC, and our committee secretary, Mr Simon Scott. Conferences such as this can sometimes appear effortless to those attending them. Delegates arrive, registrations are processed, speakers appear at the right time, presentations are available, rooms are prepared, catering is provided, and the program moves smoothly from one session to the next. However, anyone who has been involved in organising an event of this scale knows that this apparent effortlessness is the result of an enormous amount of planning, coordination, persistence and attention to detail behind the scenes.

Our chair, the member for Murchison, showed tremendous leadership throughout the entire process. She played a central role in developing the theme and content of the conference, engaging with other jurisdictions, building relationships with the audit community, and ensuring that the program focused on real, engaging and emerging challenges confronting public accounts committees.

The chair was also instrumental in bringing together three important regional networks: ACAG, the Australasian Council of Auditors-General, and the Pacific Association of Supreme Audit Institutions, also referred to as PASAI. This was the first occasion on which ACPAC and Pacific PAC delegates joined ACAG and PASAI delegates at the same conference function. It's a mouthful. That was more than an administrative achievement, Mr President. It created opportunities for stronger professional relationships between parliamentarians, committee staff and auditors, whose distinct but complementary responsibilities are all essential to public accountability.

The chair also opened and concluded the conference, facilitated a number of its substantive sessions, led the ACPAC general meeting and represented the Tasmanian

parliament with great distinction. Her leadership was energetic, inclusive, and deeply informed by her longstanding commitment to parliamentary scrutiny and responsible financial management.

Mr President, the conference success was also due, in an enormous measure, to the exceptional efforts of our committee secretary, Mr Simon Scott. The report records that Simon devoted considerable effort before, during and after the conference facilitating attendance, drafting the program and engaging with third parties to ensure the event proceeded as seamlessly as possible. That description is entirely accurate, but it perhaps understates the magnitude of the task. Our Public Accounts Committee has a secretary of just one key parliamentary officer, Simon Scott, supported also by Allison Scott and I also acknowledge Alli's contribution, which is a very important support role that Alli plays. I also note - my understanding is - they are of no relation, because that might sound odd to people who are listening.

Simon was simultaneously supporting the committee's already significant program of inquiries and hearings while undertaking the detailed work necessary to deliver a major international conference. He coordinated with parliamentary committees and audit officers across numerous jurisdictions. Simon worked with ACPAC, PASAI and the Pacific Network of Public Accounts Committees - which I note are spared of an acronym, but if they had one, I guess it would be PNPAC or PPAC - anyway, Simon helped delegates navigate travel arrangements, accommodation, registrations, program requirements, and the inevitable changes that arise when coordinating people who are travelling from across Australia and the Pacific. He drafted and revised the conference program, coordinated presenters and panellists, prepared conference material, dealt with venues and service providers, and helped to ensure every session was properly supported. He also undertook the substantial task of assembling the report that is the subject of this motion and its comprehensive attachments, which preserve the conference presentations and jurisdictional reports as a valuable resource for current and future committees, which is why the report is 270-something pages long. Simon's professionalism, calmness and good humour were evident throughout. No request appeared too difficult, no last-minute change seemed to unsettle him and no detail was too small to receive his attention. So, on behalf of the committee, I really thank Simon for his work.

The conference was among the best attended in ACPAC's recent history. This reflected the persistence and commitment of the chair and secretary in encouraging participation and overcoming the practical challenges faced by many delegates, particularly those travelling from Pacific jurisdictions. On behalf of the committee, I offer both the member for Murchison and Simon my sincere congratulations and thanks because they did an extraordinary job. The Parliament of Tasmania can be very proud of the way they represented and showcased our institution. The conference was attended by 71 delegates who included 31 members of parliamentary public accounts committees, 9 auditors-general, an ACAG representative, 25 PAC staff, 2 PASAI representatives and 3 guest speakers. A further 11 delegates had intended to participate but were prevented from attending by unforeseen circumstances. Achieving this level of attendance during a period of cost-of-living pressures, disrupted travel and international uncertainty was remarkable. It was around the time, in fact, or not long after we had the emergency fuel bill, which members will recall how urgent that was because we had the uncertainty about the fuel crisis. It also demonstrated the continuing relevance of ACPAC and the strong appetite among jurisdictions to learn from each other.

The central theme of the conference was the role of public accounts committees in holding executive government to account for the effective management of risk, whether fiscal, social, climate related or otherwise. I'm sure honourable members will agree that that theme could hardly have been more timely. Governments are making increasingly complex decisions involving major infrastructure, digital transformation, cybersecurity, procurement, climate adaptation and the delivery of essential services under considerable fiscal pressure. In that environment, parliamentary scrutiny cannot simply occur years after a decision has been made and the money has been spent. To be effective, scrutiny must be independent, rigorous and timely. It must identify emerging risks before they become crises and follow public expenditure through to the outcomes it was intended to achieve.

The conference program explored these issues from a number of perspectives. It examined audit office independence and the principles necessary to protect that independence. It considered the role of public auditors in detecting fraud, the risk trends emerging from performance audits, and the respective responsibilities of audit officers and public accounts committees. It also considered the relationship between PACs and supreme audit institutions, the scrutiny of executive decision-making, the follow-up of auditor-general reports, the use of own-motion inquiries and the implications of climate risk for government insurance premiums.

These discussions went directly to how committees such as ours can improve their work and maximise the impact of the limited resources available to them. I was pleased to facilitate sessions on the work of PASAI and on the role of public auditors in detecting fraud, during which a particularly sobering case study was presented by the Western Australian Auditor-General, Caroline Spencer. The presentation focused on the Paul Whyte fraud within Western Australia's Department of Communities, not fraud within the Western Australian parliament itself. Whyte, then one of Western Australia's most senior public servants, used an elaborate false invoicing scheme over approximately 11 years to misappropriate \$27 million in public funds. Three shell companies with no employees repeatedly invoiced the department for work that was not performed. Whyte was able to approve the invoices, with the payments flowing into accounts he could access. The money helped fund racehorses, gambling, extensive household expenditure and a \$3 million riverside mansion. Whyte pleaded guilty to more than 500 corruption offences and was sentenced to 12 years imprisonment. Ms Spencer used this case to explain why Western Australia established Australia's first dedicated public sector forensic audit function. The central lesson was that ordinary financial auditing was not necessarily designed to uncover a carefully concealed fraud of this kind, particularly where one senior officer could exploit poor segregation of duties, weak payment controls and inadequate scrutiny over many years. The sheer scale and duration of that fraud demonstrated how weaknesses in basic internal controls, insufficient segregation of duties and inadequate scrutiny can be exploited even within a major government agency. It was a powerful reminder that audit and accountability systems must continue to evolve in response to increasingly sophisticated risks. This is very relevant at a time where we're asking some significant questions in this place right now.

The participation of delegates from Pacific jurisdictions was a particularly important feature of the conference. It added perspectives from parliamentary and audit systems operating in very different geographic, economic and administrative circumstances. At the same time, the discussions demonstrated how many challenges are shared across jurisdictions: maintaining independence, accessing appropriate information, securing adequate resources, following up recommendations, and ensuring that scrutiny produces meaningful improvements.

The conference also marked the approaching bicentenary of the Tasmanian Audit Office. Tasmania's Audit Office traces its origins to the appointment of a civil auditor by Governor Arthur in November 1826. The opportunity to recognise almost 200 years of public audit in Tasmania was a reminder that accountability for public money has been an essential function of government throughout our parliamentary history. While the institutions and techniques of audit have evolved considerably, the underlying principle remains constant: governments hold and expend public money on behalf of the community and must be accountable for the way that that money is used.

One of the most important messages from the conference was that neither public accounts committees nor audit offices can operate as effectively in isolation. Audit offices provide independent professional analysis and identify weaknesses in financial management, governance and performance. Public accounts committees bring those findings into the parliamentary arena, question agencies and ministers, draw public attention to systemic problems and pursue the implementation of recommendations. The independence of each institution must be protected, but their relationship should be constructive, respectful and effective.

I thank the Auditor-General for his thoughtful and well-researched presentation, which included a fitting and sensitively delivered tribute to the Palawa people as traditional owners and ongoing custodians of this island, Lutruwita.

Another valuable focus was the importance of following up reports and recommendations. It is not enough to conduct an inquiry, table a report and move on. Committees must have mechanisms to determine whether accepted recommendations have actually been implemented and whether they have delivered the intended improvement.

Tasmania has strengthened its approach to this work, with our secretary developing a systematic process for monitoring responses to auditor-general recommendations, supported by our chair. This follow-up work helps ensure that the considerable public resources invested in audit and parliamentary scrutiny translate into better administration and better outcomes.

The conference also produced significant governance reforms for ACPAC itself. Delegates agreed to amend the organisation's constitution to allow mid-term meetings to be held virtually through a secure video conferencing platform. This will make participation more flexible and accessible, particularly for jurisdictions facing significant travel costs and distances. The definition of 'Australasia' was also modernised and made more inclusive, opening full membership to parliamentary public accounts committees across a broader range of Pacific jurisdictions. This was an important and welcomed reform.

If ACPAC is to fulfil its purpose of sharing knowledge and strengthening parliamentary accountability throughout the region, its structure must support meaningful participation by all eligible jurisdictions. Further discussion will occur about options for financial assistance to support Pacific members to attend future conferences, and I do hope that work progresses because the value of these conferences lies in the breadth of experience represented around the table.

The conference also confirmed that the New South Wales Public Accounts Committee will host the 2027 mid-term meeting and the 19th conference in 2028. The Northern Territory

has indicated its intention to host in 2029 and 2030, with Victoria indicating its intention to host in 2031 and 2032, subject to future ratification.

An event of this scale relies on the efforts of many people. I join the committee in thanking Parliamentary Catering, whose service throughout the conference was seamless; front reception for assisting with security and welcoming delegates; Parliamentary Education for conducting tours; ICT staff for supporting the audio-visual requirements; and Legislative Council officers for preparing conference materials, producing identification cards, processing delegates and helping our visitors to feel welcome. I also acknowledge Jenni Tierney, Executive Director of ACAG, Sarah Markley, Esther Lameko-Poutoa, Kirsten Murfitt, Nico Hennevel and the New Zealand Tai a Kiwa team for their work in connecting the conference with Pacific PACs and supporting travel and accommodation arrangements. I thank our guest speakers Mr Andrew Young, Dr Catherine Williams and Ms Alicia Leis, and all of the auditors-general, parliamentarians, committee staff, presenters and panellists who generously contributed their experience and expertise. I acknowledge Prue McLaren and the staff of Hadley's Orient Hotel; Jacob Brennan, Daniel Hanna and the staff of the Henry Jones Art Hotel; photographer Alastair Bett; Darren Simpson of Creative Paper, and everyone else whose contribution helped deliver such a professional and positive event. I also thank you, Mr President, for hosting the farewell reception in the Long Room.

Finally, I acknowledge my fellow members of the Public Accounts Committee, our chair, the honourable Ruth Forrest MLC, the honourable Luke Edmunds, MLC - I think the sessions the member for Pembroke facilitated maybe got the biggest laughs for your humour. I'll let you hopefully share because I can't remember exactly what you said about being a PAC man, but hopefully that comes to you because I was trying to think of it when I was writing this.

Ms Forrest - There was another joke that didn't go down so well, not from the member for Pembroke.

Ms THOMAS - Yes, certainly I felt that my facilitation of sessions, Mr President, was extremely dry compared to the member for Pembroke, who got a few laughs around the room. So, if you ever need an MC -

Mr Edmunds - Member for Elwick, I thought you'd left me nothing to say after this speech, but I will tell that joke when I get the chance.

Ms THOMAS - Please do. Mr Dean Winter MP, Mr Roger Jaensch MP, they all attended and helped facilitate the conference and every member's contribution made everyone in the room feel welcome and added to the vibrancy of the conference. Our other fellow PAC member Mr Marcus Vermey MP, was an apology.

The success of the conference reflected a genuinely collaborative effort and our shared commitment to the important work of our Public Accounts Committee. Public accounts committees do not administer departments, award contracts or make executive decisions. Our influence comes through transparency, evidence, persistent questioning and public reporting. We ask whether public money has been used for the purpose authorised by the parliament. We examine whether decisions have been properly made, whether risks have been appropriately identified and managed, and whether the community has received the promised outcomes. That work is sometimes uncomfortable for governments and public entities, but it is fundamental to good administration and to public confidence in our democratic institutions.

The 18th ACPAC conference strengthened the knowledge, relationships and practical tools available to those charged with this work across Australasia and the Pacific. It showcased our Tasmanian parliament as a professional, welcoming and active participant in regional parliamentary cooperation. Most importantly, it reinforced the principle that effective scrutiny of public money must be independent, timely, rigorous and persistent. Again, I congratulate our chair, the honourable Ruth Forrest, and our secretary, Mr Simon Scott, for the outstanding leadership, organisation and sheer hard work that made this conference possible. It was an exceptional achievement and is one of which our committee and this parliament should be extremely proud. I commend the report to the Council.

[5.04 p.m.]

Ms FORREST (Murchison) - Mr President, I want to first thank the member for Elwick for putting this report on notice for debate, but also for her very kind words. I echo her view that our little PAC, with its limited resources, did the state proud and put on a really successful conference. I will cover some of the areas that the member for Elwick has covered, but she's done a really amazing job in picking up the main content of the conference and the importance of it.

The ACPAC conference is a biennial conference. I can't remember how many I've been to now - but quite a lot - and they're always really informative and really interesting, and you'll always learn something new that you can bring back to your own committees. I'm sure many of the attendees in our Hobart conference would have said the same. That was four years ago, just after COVID, when we were allowed to travel again, and the ACPAC conference was in New Zealand, and I was lucky enough to attend that one.

I remember sending a hurried text to the Clerk to say 'Can we put our hand up for 2026?' because I thought I can't really make that decision unilaterally, it was going to be a big burden for our parliament. I was really glad that that was received favourably - I'm sure with some degree of reservation. I think it was really great for Tasmania to be able to do this and show that a small jurisdiction can put on a really successful conference. There are many other smaller jurisdictions in the Pacific that are now full members of ACPAC since the annual general meeting and the resolution that was passed then - I'll come to that a bit more in a moment - that may or may not have put on conferences in the past, but it makes them feel like they're not so tiny that they don't matter in the big scheme of things, because they do. Their work is just as important as ours, albeit slightly differently structured in many of the jurisdictions.

It did take a lot of work, a lot of time, but it was a real joy to put on the conference and to engage with our fellow public accounts committee members or their equivalents around the nation. Queensland was the only jurisdiction that couldn't attend because they were sitting at the time, but they did come in online for a number of the sessions. They certainly had their staff engaged in the online opportunity and the chair of their committee did participate in the ACPAC general meeting.

What was really gratifying at the end of the conference was that there was more than one jurisdiction who wanted to put their hand up for 2030; 2028 was pretty much settled because you've got the ducks in a row for that one, but 2030 and 2032 are sorted. New South Wales in 2028, and 2030 will be in the Northern Territory, which is great - nice warm climates to go to for those who may still be here at the time and on the PAC. It was really gratifying that the other jurisdictions were really willing to consider 'well, if Tasmania can do this, so can we'.

I do note the success of the 18th ACPAC conference in Hobart in April this year. It was, by any measure, a significant undertaking for a committee with a secretariat of one, with the support of another, and the outcome reflects great credit to all involved. The committee brought together 71 delegates. We did lose a few just at the last minute with the fuel crisis. The Fiji delegation, which I think there was eight - I think a directive was made that they were not to travel internationally until things became more clear, and obviously the costs were quite high at that time. We would have had around 80, but we did end up with 71 delegates from right across Australasia and the Pacific.

We also, as we have had in other years, for the first day had the auditors-general from around the nation, and sometimes some from the other Pacific nations attend, as well as some parliamentary staff and other stakeholders.

It was, as the member for Elwick said, one of the best attended ACPAC gatherings in recent history, notwithstanding the cost-of-living pressures and the impact of conflict in the Middle East had on the financial capacity of some of our smaller Pacific jurisdictions and the clash with the parliamentary sitting for the Queensland parliament. No matter when you have this, there is always likely to be a clash, and we were quite grateful it was only jurisdiction that was actually sitting at the time. They're only one House - as we know, foolishly got rid of their other House, in my view - so it made it even harder for members to attend because they needed to be in parliament.

The theme for the 2026 ACPAC conference centred around the role of the public accounts committees in holding executive government to account amid financial, social and climate-related risk. This was decided at our mid-term meeting, which is held the year between conferences, where we discussed - and that meeting is with committee secretaries and the chairs of the PACs or their equivalent around the nation - and we felt, with all that was going on in the world a year ago, that this was a really important topic to talk about, particularly the risks and how risk assessment is managed in all areas but including the climate-related risk.

The host jurisdiction holds the chair of ACPAC for two years, so I took over the role of the chair from our last conference. That also meant that our secretary takes over the secretariat. So, it is a significant body of work and that continued until the end of the conference when I was very pleased to hand it over to New South Wales. I know our secretary, Simon Scott, did work really hard on this and he did it all brilliantly off the side of his desk.

As has been said, the conference included the annual meeting of ACPAC, which, I think for the first time that I can recall, delivered two lasting governance outcomes. The ACPAC constitution was amended and it was the first time since 2015 - I don't recall whether I was at that meeting or not - to permit mid-term meetings to be held virtually, which makes sense. It used to be an in-person conference, but we have been doing it virtually in recent years and we wanted to make that clear in the constitution that that was a legitimate meeting platform. And, to broaden the definition of 'Australasia' to be more contemporary and inclusive, extending full membership to all Australasian parliamentary public accounts committees, including a wider range of Pacific jurisdictions; Papua New Guinea and Fiji were already full members, but all the others weren't.

This has been on the ACPAC agenda for some time. There have always been concerns raised about whether we are expected to fund these small jurisdictions to attend conferences and things like that. Those matters sit outside of the constitutional change that would enable

them to be full members. In the past, there has been Australian Government funding to support some of our Pacific nations to attend professional development like this, and one would hope that might continue. That was a really positive change. These changes over time should strengthen participation from our Pacific neighbours in this important accountability forum.

I had previously attended a Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA) public accounts committee conference in Fiji that was put on by CPA. It was a pretty full program there as well, but it just goes to show when you get the Pacific nations in the room around this really important matter, many of them struggle with resources, their circumstances - I've been sitting in conferences where you have a minister sitting as the chair of the PAC - some might see that as a bit of an issue. You have ministers for finance that are on the PAC or its equivalent. I think it's really helpful for us to share what best practice looks like and why that's not really the most appropriate way to truly hold the executive and the government of the day to account.

As the record records, our committee secretary Simon Scott devoted considerable effort before, during and after the conference. We had a number of meetings with Jenni Tierney from the Australasian Council of Auditors-General in the planning to make sure that we could bring together a conference that was helpful to the auditors-general on the day that we had them with us, and for all members who are members of PACs and all their staff, to assist with that. This conference was the first time we actually had the auditors-general join us for the conference dinner. Normally they went off and did their own dinner and had their own day the next day. But it was really nice to be able to have a social engagement with the auditors-general as well as them attending the welcome reception up at Hadley's Hotel - and they all came, it was great. They were all there and it was really great to sit down and chat with them in between sessions and at the dinner to hear more about what's happening in their jurisdictions.

The drafting of the program was a big body of work, and I really want to thank the members of the PAC for stepping up and for facilitating the individual sessions. Some of those are allocated rather than selected by the individual members, but everyone brought their own touch to it and it was really a great touch. I think seeing that engagement right across, and every member being engaged in the whole process, was really beneficial to us as a committee, but also to the delegates who were there.

I also acknowledge the parliamentary staff who supported the event behind the scenes, like Parliamentary Catering, for a seamless and really great service across both days; front reception, obviously helping with security and getting people in a timely manner; our education officers for assisting with the parliamentary tours that were offered to members who wanted to have a tour; and ICT for setting up the audio-visual technology in the Reception Room. It's only when these things go wrong you notice them, and they didn't and so it looked, and it was, really seamless, but it's because all the work goes on in the background and our staff, including the officers of the Legislative Council who welcomed and supported delegates, particularly when they first arrived, everyone arrives in a bit of a rush, so making sure that everyone has the right name tags and can be welcomed into the room was really important. Conferences of this kind can leave lasting impressions to be deemed successful or not on how this often unglamorous, essential work is done behind the scenes, and it was done superbly.

I just want to acknowledge the external contributors, too, who are named in the report. The member for Elwick has gone through a lot of these, but I just want to particularly note Jenni Tierney from ACAG, the Australasian Council of Auditors-General, Sarah Markley, Esther Lameko-Poutoa, and colleagues from the Pacific Association of Supreme Audit

Institutions and the Pacific Network. Many jurisdictions, including New Zealand, call their audit office the supreme audit institution, we tend to call them audit offices, but that's the correct terminology if you're looking from an international sense. There were a number of guest speakers as well as the staff of the venues that hosted us.

This conference strengthened the committee's regional relationships and reinforced the roles of public accounts committees in promoting transparency and good governance across Australasia and the Pacific.

The conference covered a range of topics. I won't go into all of them, the member for Elwick has done a pretty fine job of all of that, but I want to note particularly our Auditor-General, who had the keynote, if you like, after I welcomed delegates and gave a brief contribution on the importance of our roles. He made a really interesting and informative contribution on the Tasmanian Audit Office's 200-year history, tracing its origins for the office of the Civil Auditor established by Governor Arthur in November 1826. The presentation highlighted the need for a robust independent audit office, but it was a really lovely presentation the way he presented it, showing a lot of historical buildings. He based it around buildings in many respects and referred to the different times of our history on the architecture as well.

This was followed by a presentation from the Deakin University team of Dr Amy Nethery and Mr Andrew Young, who presented their audit office independence report, benchmarking each jurisdiction's legislation against the INTOSAI independence principles. This report assesses and critiques every audit office against a set of benchmarks, and what was clear - we knew this to be the case because the report was out publicly before the conference - was that Tasmania is falling behind because other jurisdictions have amended their audit acts to enhance the independence to ensure appropriate access to information and other mechanisms like that. Tasmania needs to catch up. We've slipped down the rankings, which is a bit disappointing.

We then had some interesting discussions and debates with auditors-general and PAC members, sometimes on the same panel, discussing their various views. I want to thank the Auditor-General from Victoria, Andrew Greaves and also our former Tasmanian member of our audit team, but now Northern Territory's Auditor-General, Jara Dean, who spoke about the challenges that these findings in the INTOSAI report posed for PACs and audit offices, and they do have very different experiences. The Northern Territory's is a tiny office; we think we're poorly resourced, but I think Jara could say it's worse and more challenging, and the government up there recently changed the legislation to undermine his independence further. So, things could always be worse.

Esther Lameko-Poutoa, the Chief Executive of the Pacific Association of Supreme Audit Institutions, spoke of PASAI's role in supporting the supreme audit institutions and parliamentary relationships across its membership. That's a really important role because many of the Pacific PACs are quite new and perhaps have some processes or practices that we perhaps would not think were best practice. It's a work in progress and I think it's really important that we're in a position to assist them in that.

We also had another panel discussion that comprised our Auditor-General, the New South Wales Auditor-General, Bola Oyetunji - I don't know how to say his name, I apologise for that, but we just called him Bola - Esther Lameko-Poutoa, and the honourables Tjorn Sibma and James Milligan, two PAC members in other Australian jurisdictions. They looked at how PACs and supreme audit institutions manage their independent relationship to ensure effective

scrutiny. When we hear how things work in other jurisdictions, I think the PAC's relationship here with our Audit Office is very strong. There's a mutually respectful relationship; we don't cross over in our work, and we collaborate on work that needs to be done.

Another really important session was with auditors-general from Western Australia and Queensland - Caroline Spencer from Western Australia and Rachel Vagg from Queensland. They addressed the role of public auditor in detecting fraud, noting the duty of care auditors carry under international auditing standards.

We've seen our Auditor-General in Tasmania have to take on some pretty difficult tasks of recent time and front the media on some of them, which I know is not his most comfortable place to be. Particularly, I've met Caroline Spencer a number of times and I've spoken over in the Western Australia and then had an Impact 2025 conference, which is a performance auditors' conference, where she's also had to stand up and be really public when things haven't gone as well as perhaps they should.

We also had a session covering emerging risks and trends through performance audits, procurement, contract management and cybersecurity, which are all very important matters here, for us in Tasmania. As the PAC has been doing quite a bit of work in this space, and as has another government admin committee in the ICT and procurement space, it really does warrant attention.

We also had a dinner speaker, Dr Catherine Williams of the Centre for Public Integrity, and that was a really interesting contribution. With dinner speakers, you don't want them to go on too long, but she was very good and it was a really appropriate addition to the day.

There were also contributions from the Victorian Public Accounts and Estimates committees on their own-motion inquiries, which is something that we certainly do in this place. That was from Michael Galea MP, a Victorian member of the PAC.

We also had an outside speaker, Alicia Leis, the Deputy Chancellor of UTAS, who did a session with a relatively newly elected ACT PAC member, Fiona Carrick MLA, and they discussed how PACs scrutinise the executive's decision-making as a safety mechanism for effective risk management, drawing on bipartisan evidence-based reviews supported by audit office findings.

It's interesting hearing from new members of PACs who find it really strange that you might have, in some jurisdictions, a government member who is the chair. Anyway, I spent quite a bit of time talking to Fiona about that. We don't have that in Tasmania; we haven't had it for as long as I've been on the committee. But there are swings and roundabouts on that, and I think you can make a case either way, but it really comes down to the skill and the non-politicisation of the PAC regardless of who the chair is and their skill at chairing rather than whether or not they're a party member or a non-party member.

The other thing that was quite amusing, to close off the day a bit when everyone's getting a bit tired, Simon Scott, our secretary, did lead a cross-jurisdictional analysis of the jurisdictional reports. That's a pretty dry topic, so what he did was pull all the jurisdictional reports into one document and summarise them, then he and I both had a go at producing a little AI-generated clip about what the reports told us. It was pretty clunky, but it was a bit of

fun and it also made it just a bit different at the end of the conference. We had the serious, full-on reports available to all members.

I thank all members for their contribution, and also note that New South Wales has taken over the reins for the next conference in 2028.

Just one matter I wanted to raise, Mr President, in one of the latter sessions we had the honourables Dr Deborah Russell and Nancy Lu, from a New Zealand finance and expenditure committee. They did a session that was quite emotional for them on climate risk and government insurance premiums, reinforcing the Commonwealth select committee's 2024 report with its eight recommendations on the growing disaster insurance gap. For them it was very real because they had been in areas that have been hard-hit by adverse weather events. In one circumstance - they showed us some photos of this - with a massive rain event, a house just, I think it was about four or five houses down the street from one of them, had slid down the bank. Theirs was okay, but one house had slid down the bank. There was also a photo of a car sitting up on top of a fence, and that was their very recent lived experience, so it was pretty relevant and I think it was quite personal for them, so I thank them for being willing to share that because it wouldn't have been particularly easy.

I don't want to say anymore on this. I just again want to commend my PAC committee members. I really appreciate the hard work they've put in, they're willing to step up and engage. I hope they're all still on the PAC, and I am too, for the 2028 conference and we can go to New South Wales and engage in that process. I encourage them to also look at information they might like to share at the next conference and participate by presenting because it's a great event, it's a great way to share knowledge. It's also a great way to get to know your committee colleagues from other jurisdictions. So, I thank them, and I particularly want to again thank Simon Scott for his hard work.

[5.27 p.m.]

Mr EDMUNDS (Pembroke) - Mr President, I thank the members for their indulgence. When I was first elected to this place, one of the things I talked about was an inquiry into power pricing in Tasmania, and setting up a committee around that. We had the swearing in on the steps and took a nice photo with yourself, the member for Rumney and the member for Elwick, said a few words, did a press conference, walked in the security gate, and was met by the former clerk, Mr Pearce who greeted me to the parliament and ran me through a bit of a walk and talk about the building.

We went down to the atrium, and he pointed and said: 'We've got the three committee rooms down here, I know you're interested in an energy committee, but there's also a few others'. He says 'We've got a few standing committees', and it's funny you should mention public works, Leader. He said, 'We've got the Public Works Committee, so for someone your age' - I think he thought I was a bit younger than I actually am - 'you could probably equate public works with Minecraft. It's about building and putting things together'. I looked at him and I said 'I'm a bit older than you think, Mr Pearce. I'm a bit more old-school with my computer games, I'm more of a Pac-Man'. Which, having had the member for Elwick give away the punchline of my joke, I hope that crept up on at least a couple of you. It's not quite the same gag that I told to break the ice, but as I said to the member for Rosevears as she was leaving and I was disappointed she wasn't going to hear the joke, I told her, it's a pretty dry room, so I think people are just looking for an excuse to laugh. The other gag I used in the other - I could go on forever here, Mr President.

Mr PRESIDENT - For an hour.

Mr EDMUNDS - Great point, I might seek leave, actually. No. We got up and we were talking about something to do with the House, and I said I'm the member for Pembroke in Tasmania's upper House, the most powerful upper House in the country, and a few people went 'oh-oh-oh.' And I said, 'Well, it's more powerful than Queensland's upper House.' Again, brought the house down, Mr President.

Look, I think everything has been pretty well covered by the previous two speakers. I won't seek to repeat their immaculate rundown. It actually reminded me of a couple of highlights of the conference. Sometimes we are pretty quick to move on from those events because we get back to the grind.

I did appreciate seeing a few familiar faces from our PAC inquiry into the parliamentary budget office from the PACs that we had interviewed, particularly Mr Galea from Victoria, a great fellow, and establishing a few other contacts around the country, which will be invaluable, and following a few of them on social media and seeing if we can get a few tips on how they approach accountability, whatever side of the aisle they might be on.

I just want to reiterate my thanks to everybody involved in pulling that together. So many people in this building were involved in pulling it together. We walked in, it was very seamless. Then I had Mr Reynolds, one of our supporters up here in the Legislative Council, and he was there doing the name tags. I thought, 'Oh, wow, everybody's involved in this'. I'm sure it probably was a good experience for the people who work in this building to be able to be part of it. I certainly look forward to the CPA conference later this year. To echo your comments, member for Murchison, it's what got me to put my hand up to do a session at that later this year as well, so I look forward to doing that.

The whole thing just flowed brilliantly. It had a bit of fun, a bit of dry stuff, and it was a really good networking event and seeing the challenges that we all face despite our different jurisdictions. On that note, Mr President, I commend the report.

[5.32 p.m.]

Ms THOMAS (Elwick) - Thank you, Mr President. In short, I'll thank my fellow PAC members from this place for their contributions to the noting of the report and particularly for sharing that humour again in this place, member for Pembroke, it is greatly appreciated. I commend our report to the House.

Motion agreed to.

STATUTORY HOLIDAYS AMENDMENT (CENTRAL COAST MUNICIPALITY) BILL 2026 (No. 24)

Consideration of Bill as Amended in Committee of the Whole Council

Mr HISCUTT (Montgomery) - Mr President, I move -

That the bill as amended in Committee be now taken into consideration.

Motion agreed to.

Amendment read the first time.

Amendment read the second time.

Amendment agreed to.

**STATUTORY HOLIDAYS AMENDMENT (CENTRAL COAST
MUNICIPALITY) BILL 2026 (No. 24)**

Third Reading

Bill read the third time.

ADJOURNMENT

[5.34 p.m.]

Ms RATTRAY (McIntyre - Leader for the Government in the Legislative Council) -
Mr President, I move -

That the Council at its rising adjourn until 11 a.m. Wednesday 9 September
2026.

Ms RATTRAY - Mr President, I move -

That the Council do now adjourn.

The Council adjourned at 5.35 p.m.