PARLIAMENT OF TASMANIA

HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY

REPORT OF DEBATES

Tuesday 16 June 2026

REVISED EDITION

Contents

Tuesday 16 June 2026 1

SPEAKER - ABSENCE 1

SUSPENSION OF SITTING 1

Funeral Attendance 1

STATEMENT BY PREMIER 1

Ms Howlett Resignation from Cabinet - Question Time 1

QUESTIONS 1

Tasracing - TasInsure Text Message 1
Supplementary Question 3
Tasracing - TasInsure Text Message 3
Supplementary Question 4
Member for Clark, Ms Ogilvie - Ministerial Code of Conduct 4
Supplementary Question 4
Taxpayer-Funded Legal Fees 5
Supplementary Question 5
Boags Brewery - Closure 6
Tasracing - TasInsure Text Message 7
Supplementary Question 7
Estimates and GBE Hearings - Accountability Reforms 8
Member for Lyons, Ms Howlett - Ministerial Code of Conduct 9
Supplementary Question 9
Taxpayer-Funded Legal Fees 10
Taxpayer-Funded Legal Fees - Ms Ogilvie 10
Supplementary Question 10
Confidence in Government 11
Forest Practices Authority - Fines 12
Taxpayer-Funded Legal Fees - Ms Howlett 13
Taxpayer-Funded Legal Fees - Ms Ogilvie 13
Supplementary Question 14
Government Accountability and Transparency - Commitments 14
Supplementary Question 15
Taxpayer-Funded Legal Fees - Scrutiny Offered by Minority Parliament 16
Supplementary Question 16
Taxpayer-Funded Legal Fees - Ms Ogilvie 17
Taxpayer-Funded Legal Fees - Ms Ogilvie 18
Taxpayer-Funded Legal Fees - Ms Ogilvie 18
Supplementary Question 19
Cost-of-Living Support 19
Supplementary Question 20

CONSTITUENCY QUESTIONS 21

Liberal Cabinet Integrity 21
Taxpayer-Funded Legal Fees - Commission of Inquiry 21
Solar Energy Incentives 22
Mature Artist Dance Experience 22
Kingston Volunteer Fire Brigade - New Firefighting Medium Urban Pumper 22
Department of Natural Resources and Environment - Procedural Fairness and Justice 23
Trevallyn Dam - Potential Damage 23
First-Home Buyer Schemes 23

QUESTIONS ON NOTICE - ANSWERS 24

No. 9 of 2026 - Marinus Link 24
No. 10 of 2026 - Hydro Tasmania 24

NO. 23 OF 2026 - PUBLIC HOUSING TERMINATIONS 24
TABLED PAPERS 24
PUBLIC ACCOUNTS COMMITTEE - REPORT 24
PUBLIC ACCOUNTS COMMITTEE - REPORT 24
MESSAGE FROM THE GOVERNOR 25
ROYAL ASSENT TO BILLS 25
TAXATION AND RELATED LEGISLATION (MISCELLANEOUS AMENDMENTS) BILL 2026 (NO. 21) 25
FIRST READING 25
MATTER OF PUBLIC IMPORTANCE 25
INTEGRITY IN GOVERNMENT 25
APPROPRIATION BILL (NO. 1) 2026 (NO. 18) 34
APPROPRIATION BILL (NO. 2) 2026 (NO. 19) 34
REPORTS OF ESTIMATES COMMITTEE A 34
REPORTS OF ESTIMATES COMMITTEE B 35
APPROPRIATION BILL (NO. 1) 2026 (NO. 18) 36
APPROPRIATION BILL (NO. 2) 2026 (NO. 19) 36
IN COMMITTEE - ESTIMATES COMMITTEES - CONSIDERATION OF REPORTS 36
ADJOURNMENT 80
RESPONSE TO MOTION NO. 108 - MINISTERIAL DIARY DISCLOSURE SCHEME 80
COMPREHENSIVE PALLIATIVE CARE IN AGED CARE PROGRAM 81
NATIONAL CORRECTIONS OFFICERS' DAY 82
LAND JUSTICE - PALAWA PEOPLE 83
PROFESSOR RICHARD SCOLYER AO - TRIBUTE 85
SPORTS FUNDING PRIORITIES 86
DECISION ON EXTENSION OF SITTING TIME 87
BUSHFIRE RISK 88
ITALIAN CLUB - 70 YEAR ANNIVERSARY 89
MEN'S HEALTH WEEK 91
BRADDON - POTHOLES 92
LONGFORD ROUNDABOUT 92
HOWTH ROUNDABOUT 92
APPENDIX 1 93
APPENDIX 2 96
APPENDIX 3 103

Tuesday 16 June 2026

SPEAKER - ABSENCE

The Clerk informed the House of the absence of the Speaker and called upon the Chair of Committees to take the Chair. The Deputy Speaker, **Ms Burnet**, took the Chair at 10 a.m., acknowledged the Traditional People, and read Prayers.

SUSPENSION OF SITTING

Funeral Attendance

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

That:

(1) The sitting be suspended until the ringing of the bells at 1 p.m. for the purposes of Members attending the funeral of Father Michael Tate AO; and

(2) Standing Order 19 be suspended for this day's sitting.

Motion agreed to.

Sitting suspended from 10.02 a.m. to 1.00 p.m.

STATEMENT BY PREMIER

Ms Howlett Resignation from Cabinet - Question Time

Mr ROCKLIFF (Braddon - Premier) - Honourable Speaker, following the resignation of Ms Howlett from Cabinet, I wish to inform the House that for this week I will take questions in relation to the portfolios of the Minister for Arts, Minister for Community and Multicultural Affairs, Minister for Racing, Minister for Tourism, Hospitality and Events, and Minister for Women and the Prevention of Family Violence.

QUESTIONS

Tasracing - TasInsure Text Message

Mr WILLIE question to PREMIER, Mr ROCKLIFF

Emails released under RTI and reported by the ABC in March showed former minister Howlett's office was aware of Tasracing's communication before it went out. Labor repeatedly questioned your government about this repeatedly during parliament, but you and Ms Howlett dug in and refused to admit the truth. You even got a staffer to sign a false statutory declaration

which has been directly contradicted by evidence from Cor Comms during a committee hearing yesterday. When asked under oath, Mr Turner from Cor Comms said:

> All I can do is tell you what I did, and what I did was provide a version of what Tasracing was going to say to the minister's office. I can't speak to why she said that.

Why did you protect Ms Howlett for so long when she clearly misled parliament?

ANSWER

Honourable Speaker, I thank the honourable member for his question. Today I accepted the resignation of Ms Howlett and I want to thank Ms Howlett for her service across a number of ministerial responsibilities and acknowledge her contribution to this place, to the community and, of course, her decision to step aside at this time.

What we have seen from the honourable member who has asked the question is a pattern of sustained personal and political attack, one that has increasingly undermined the functionality of this parliament and distracted from the work of government. This is a pattern that has been driven by those opposite. The Labor Party have made a deliberate choice to prioritise political point-scoring over constructive engagement.

What the people want is constructive engagement from this parliament in our communities, delivering on the things that actually matter for Tasmanians, like supporting the workers at Liberty Bell Bay; like cost of living, such as the Ticket to Wellbeing and free bus travel; like supporting jobs; the BreastScreen clinic in Devonport, for example; literacy, adult literacy, of course, another example of what we have done over the course of the last week when it comes to focusing on the things that matter to Tasmanians, not these incessant political attacks and point scoring by those opposite -

Ms HADDAD - Honourable Speaker, Standing Order 45 -

Mr ROCKLIFF - who have got one aim, and that's to destabilise this parliament.

The SPEAKER - Honourable Premier.

Ms HADDAD - Speaker, Standing Order 45, relevance. The question was about misleading parliament.

The SPEAKER - I draw the Premier to the question.

Mr ROCKLIFF - It's clear that rather than focusing on alternatives to policy, rather than focusing on what people actually care about or solutions for Tasmanians, those opposite have leant in, in a very personal way, to destabilise individuals, to focus on personal attacks, grubby accusations, and also effectively destabilise the parliament that the Tasmanian people elected last year, where they wanted a parliament to work together, not a party led by the honourable member who has no ideas except how to personalise -

The SPEAKER - The Premier's time has expired.

Supplementary Question

Mr WILLIE - Premier, why did it take sworn evidence at a committee for Ms Howlett to finally step down?

Mr ROCKLIFF - I will point to Ms Howlett's statement in terms of her resignation from the ministry. My understanding at the centre of this is a misunderstanding caused by a simple matter of crossed purposes. My understanding is that Mr Turner sent the adviser an email which the adviser believed was a clarification about whether TasInsure would cover workers' compensation -

Mr Willie - It's a PR firm.

Mr ROCKLIFF - Mr Turner did not tell the adviser the intention was to distribute the words as a general message to industry. The adviser has, in a sworn statement, stated that he thought he was simply providing clarification and commentary about the policy, but was unaware it would be distributed in that form, hence Mr Turner's belief that he was not receiving policy detail. These were two people communicating at cross-purposes, I am advised, and it's my understanding. Ms Howlett's answers in parliament reflected -

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

Tasracing - TasInsure Text Message

Mr WILLIE question to PREMIER, Mr ROCKLIFF

[1.06 p.m.]
Mr Gaetani signed a statutory declaration stating:

> ... at no time was I aware of Tasracing's intended plan to issue any public communication about TasInsure policy on any platform.

Yesterday, Cor Comms executive chairman Nick Turner gave sworn evidence to a parliamentary committee that directly contradicts those versions of events. Mr Turner said that after sending the draft message to Tasracing CEO Andrew Jenkins, he forwarded the full content to Mr Gaetani. When asked whether Mr Gaetani was aware of the Tasracing intention to issue a public communication about TasInsure policy, Mr Turner said:

> Yeah, we sent it to him in that context.

In addition to the seriousness of misleading parliament, making a false statutory declaration is a criminal offence punishable by imprisonment. Premier, did you or your office, Ms Howlett or Ms Howlett's office have any role in preparing, requesting, reviewing or approving Mr Gaetani's statutory declaration before it was tabled in parliament?

ANSWER

Honourable Speaker, I thank the honourable member for his question. My understanding is the person you refer to stands by the statement. As I say, these were two people

communicating at crossed purposes. I'm advised that Ms Howlett's answers in parliament reflected the adviser's true belief of the exchange and did not mislead parliament.

On the matter of Tasracing's communications with industry in relation to TasInsure, we have answered every question to us. We released the RTI as requested by the parliament. Your claim of misleading is simply untrue and not supported by the evidence presented to the committee hearing. The minister's adviser did not have the knowledge of Tasracing's intended plan to issue public communications, as per his statement. The adviser did what he was employed to do and answered stakeholder questions about the policy.

Supplementary Question

Mr WILLIE - Who asked Mr Gaetani to sign the statutory declaration? Was it your office, Ms Howlett's office, or someone else in government?

Mr ROCKLIFF - My understanding is that the person that you refer to offered that up.

Member for Clark, Ms Ogilvie - Ministerial Code of Conduct

Dr WOODRUFF question to PREMIER, Mr ROCKLIFF

[1.09 p.m.]
Do you agree that former minister Ms Ogilvie breached the ministerial code of conduct?

ANSWER

I refer to my previous answers with respect to this matter. I refer to Ms Ogilvie's statement. Ms Ogilvie is no longer a minister in this government. I expect all our ministers to abide by the code of conduct. A number of ministers, when they needed to correct the record, have done so. I did so myself in an answer to Legislative Council questions, and others have done throughout the course of Estimates week as well.

Supplementary Question

Dr WOODRUFF - The Premier didn't answer my question. It's a pretty simple yes or no: does he think the former minister, Ms Ogilvie, upholds the ministerial code of conduct, specifically the part that says, 'the highest standards of integrity, honesty and be accountable in the performance of all a person's duties'?

Mr ROCKLIFF - Ms Ogilvie has accepted the circumstances that her answers were poor, if I paraphrase Ms Ogilvie's statement and reflection to her answers at a hearing in November.

Dr WOODRUFF - 45, relevance. With respect, this is about your views Premier, not about what Ms Ogilvie has said about herself. Could you please answer the question?

Mr ROCKLIFF - I expect all ministers to -

Members interjecting.

The SPEAKER - Order.

Mr ROCKLIFF - I expect all ministers to abide by the ministerial code of conduct.

Taxpayer-Funded Legal Fees

Ms JOHNSTON question to PREMIER, Mr ROCKLIFF

[11.11 a.m.]

When asked by media last week about the indemnity of legal expenses in relation to members of your government, you said:

> If these individuals are found to be in the wrong, then all those legal fees will need to be paid back to the Tasmanian taxpayer, and that's always been the case.

Your answer clearly infers that multiple members of your government who have made claims under the Legal Indemnity Policy are under investigation for wrongdoing. How many members of your government are under investigation for wrongdoing? How many of those members are or were ministers? In each instance, when did you first become aware that they were under investigation for wrongdoing?

ANSWER

Honourable Speaker, I thank the honourable member for the question. As members know, public officers, including ministers and members of government, are entitled to indemnity or legal assistance for proceedings that arise out of doing their job in good faith. The policy and guidelines governing the granting of indemnities and legal assistance is publicly available, and the guidelines note that legal indemnity against legal process was issued in 2008 under the previous Labor government. Legal indemnity has been continued by our government, and I understand policies are also in place in other states.

The policy and guidelines clearly state that indemnity and legal assistance can be considered against legal processes brought under several circumstances. These circumstances include civil proceedings, criminal proceedings, inquiries or investigations including integrity bodies, coronial inquiries and discrimination matters, and any other body with inquisitorial powers. Ministers and members of government are entitled to seek indemnity from losses or expenses incurred while acting in good faith. Good faith, according to the policy and guidelines, means actions and omissions that are honest, sincere and reasonable, done or admitted without any intervention to harm the interests of the Crown. If individuals are found to, as per your question, not have acted in good faith, then the legal fees are required to be paid back by that individual.

Supplementary Question

Ms JOHNSTON - Thank you for your information, Premier, about how the application of the guideline works. My question was: how many members of your government are under investigation for wrongdoing? How many of those members are or were ministers? In each instance, when did you first become aware they were under investigation for wrongdoing?

The SPEAKER - Thank you, honourable Premier. I remind members that it's supposed to be just one question. You really asked three questions in the one question there.

Mr ROCKLIFF - I thank the honourable member for the questions. For the honourable member to ask me such questions, the honourable member knows the challenge around the law with which I answer certain questions of that nature. I am not going to break the law, and I accept the fact that we are in parliamentary privilege but let me tell you this: I will not be saying in here what I won't say out there. I want to make that very, very clear because complying with the law matters to me.

Boags Brewery - Closure

Prof RAZAY question to the MINISTER for BUSINESS, INDUSTRY and RESOURCES, Mr ELLIS

[11.15 a.m.]

The Boags Brewery site occupies a significant strategic location in the heart of Launceston and has long been an important part of northern Tasmania's economic and industrial heritage. Can the minister advise what discussions the government has had regarding the long-term future of the site and whether any plans are being considered to support investment, redevelopment or economic activity that would maximise employment and economic benefits for the region?

ANSWER

I thank the member for his question. Firstly, by your leave, Speaker, can I just acknowledge the service held today in Ulverstone for Constable Keith Smith, 12 months since his passing and our thoughts and prayers remain with his family, loved ones and Tasmania Police colleagues.

Turning to Mr Razay's question. Thank you, Mr Razay, for this important question. These are the kind of questions of substance which the Tasmanian people are turning their minds to at the moment: the families and the workers at Boags, the suppliers and the people who've been involved in that supply chain and the broader northern community for which Boags has been a pivotal part for more than 100 years. This is an important business, it's going to be a big loss and as a government, we're extremely disappointed to see this commercial decision from Lion, the owner. We've been working closely with this business for many, many years as I know people right across this Chamber, who either have an affection as a member of parliament, or just a consumer, and I'll certainly declare a conflict of interest there from time to time as well.

You are correct in saying that the site is extremely strategically located and that's important for us to remember as we work closely with Lion around the future of that site. The office of the Coordinator-General is already engaged with Lion as the owner about what potential there may be. Certainly, there's precedent in other jurisdictions, the Westend Brewery, for example, effectively became a new suburb in Adelaide and drove a more-than-$1 billion investment in that location. There'll be time for those discussions and we'll continue to work through those as appropriate.

Right now, though, of course, our focus is on supporting the workers through this transition. We appreciate, and I know many of the workers on site appreciate, the additional support provided for training and redeployment opportunities that have been considered already for the workers there on-site and the government has already stood up Jobs Tasmania to work closely with the business and the workers should additional support be needed in that process through the local jobs hub there, the career connector service and, of course, the rapid reskilling initiative, too.

It's important that we're supporting the people on the ground who are most affected by this and we will, of course, continue to look to the future at the appropriate time. I will also note our appreciation that Boags has made the decision to repay the million-dollar grant, and we'll be working closely with the northern community on redeploying that grant so that we can continue to support jobs and economic opportunity in that beautiful part of the world.

Tasracing - TasInsure Text Message

Mr WINTER question to PREMIER, Mr ROCKLIFF

[1.18 p.m.]

Former minister Howlett maintained that her office was not aware of Tasracing's communications promoting TasInsure during the election campaign but yesterday, when asked under oath, the executive director of Cor Comms said:

> All I can do is tell you what I did, and what I did was to provide a version to Tasracing of what Tasracing was going to say to the minister's office.

Both the statement by the former minister Howlett and her chief of staff have been proven to be false. Premier, have you referred the matter of Mr Gaetani's statutory declaration to Tasmania Police, given that making a false statutory declaration is a criminal offence? If not, why not?

ANSWER

Honourable Speaker, I thank the honourable member for his question. I refer to my previous answer around two individuals being at cross purposes and I also point to the fact that the adviser you refer to stands by that statement.

Supplementary Question

Mr WINTER - How could anyone believe this story that you're currently spinning? There is unequivocal evidence from the director of Cor Comms.

Members interjecting.

The SPEAKER - Order.

Mr Rockliff - I missed that.

Mr WINTER - Premier, how could anyone believe a word that you say? There is now unequivocal evidence from the director of Cor Comms that there were communications between himself and the chief of staff of your former minister for Racing. Why will you not just admit that the statement was false?

Mr Willie - It's been tabled in parliament. It's very serious.

The SPEAKER - Order.

Mr ROCKLIFF - I reject the premise of the question. I've detailed in the first question from the honourable Leader of the Opposition here today in terms of the crossed purposes in terms of the adviser and, indeed, Mr Turner as well, and the adviser sticks by that statement. I reject your question.

Estimates and GBE Hearings - Accountability Reforms

Mr O'BYRNE question to PREMIER, Mr ROCKLIFF

[1.21 p.m.]

Budget Estimates and GBE hearings are meant to be serious accountability mechanisms, but anyone who has experienced them in recent years knows they're not working as intended. Apart from a few moments, Estimates and GBE hearings have deteriorated into a game of gotcha. Questions are more about the politics of the day rather than the content of the Budget. At times, ministers avoid answering questions or simply stonewall attempts at genuine scrutiny. Last week's Estimates hearings were a case in point. I've written to you and other members of parliament with suggested reforms to make these hearings more useful. These are reasonable suggestions which are key features of Westminster parliaments around the world. Will you commit to working with others in the parliament and reforming Estimates and GBE hearings so they better serve the interests of the parliament and the Tasmanian people?

ANSWER

Honourable Speaker, I thank the honourable member for his question and agree with most of the categorisation of his budget Estimates assessment.

Mr O'Byrne - I say that as a former minister.

Mr ROCKLIFF - It was my 25th Budget Estimates, and 12 of those were on the other side of the House, and, as I recall, all of my questions were very constructive over those dozen or so years, but I do thank the honourable member for raising these questions.

An enormous amount of work is done by departments, ministers and minister's offices in preparation for Budget Estimates and a lot of detail would be of great interest to the Tasmanian public in terms of expenditure.

There is an obsession, at times, with gotcha moments; I agree with you there. What I have done with respect to the legal fees matter, Mr O'Byrne, is ensure that I want to listen to the views of the crossbench, which is very new territory, and we've committed to reform in this area, with greater transparency and stronger accountability. We need active disclosures when

it comes to legal fees as well, and I want the crossbench and all members of parliament to be able to contribute to that reform. I'm very committed to that. I'm also committed, if there are ways we can reform Budget Estimates to be more constructive and transparent, with more information being presented to the Tasmanian people, then I will.

I note your comments as well around government members asking questions. I'm mindful that our government members are individual members of parliament and are entitled to ask questions on behalf of their electorates or on other passions as well, so I'd be cautious about ruling out individual members of parliament's ability to scrutinise ministers of government, for example. I've seen backbenchers in Labor governments taking on each other, and I recall Ms White taking on Mr Green around housing circa 2011 or 2012 maybe.

Mr O'Byrne - I think it was energy.

Mr ROCKLIFF - Right, there you go. Yes, I'm very open to that. I appreciate the constructive spirit in which the suggestions that have been made are being brought forward, and I believe reform is right. I believe that the Groom government brought in the Estimates type of system we have. It used to be -

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

Member for Lyons, Ms Howlett - Ministerial Code of Conduct

Dr WOODRUFF question to PREMIER, Mr ROCKLIFF

[1.25 p.m.]
Do you agree that former minister Howlett breached the ministerial code of conduct - yes or no?

ANSWER

Honourable Speaker, I thank the honourable member for the question. I point to my answers yesterday in terms of circumstances. Ms Howlett has issued a statement with respect to her individual circumstances and has taken responsibility in the best interests of a stable parliament, and I commend her for that.

Supplementary Question

Dr WOODRUFF - The Premier didn't answer the question. The Premier is responsible for the ministerial code of conduct. He, personally, is responsible for it. Premier, do you believe that Ms Howlett, as minister, breached the ministerial code of conduct?

Mr ROCKLIFF - I point to the fact that neither Ms Ogilvie nor Ms Howlett are ministers anymore.

Dr Woodruff - So what, just sweep it away? Moving on, like it never happened.

The SPEAKER - Order.

Taxpayer-Funded Legal Fees

Mr WINTER question to PREMIER, Mr ROCKLIFF

[1.26 p.m.]

Under the guidelines for legal indemnity and legal assistance, ministerial staff can receive taxpayer-funded legal advice. Tasmanians are already paying hundreds of thousands of dollars in secret legal fees to Liberal politicians. Given that making a false statutory declaration is a criminal offence, can you rule out taxpayers now being asked to pay for Mr Gaetani's legal defence?

Members interjecting.

The SPEAKER - Order.

ANSWER

That's an appalling question. I reject it. I've stated that, to the best of my knowledge, Mr Gaetani stands by his statement for the reasons I've outlined today. Frankly, even as low as you go, I would have expected better from you.

Taxpayer-Funded Legal Fees - Ms Ogilvie

Ms BURNET question to PREMIER, Mr ROCKLIFF

[1.27 p.m.]

Throughout Estimates, you and your ministers repeatedly responded to questions about Ms Ogilvie's legal matters with virtually identical words, that these were 'complex matters subject to confidentiality requirements' and you were 'not able to comment further'. We now know that neither you nor your ministers obtained legal advice before appearing before Estimates about what you could or could not say. Who drafted those talking points? Who directed ministers to use them? On what legal basis did the government conclude that those statements were accurate?

ANSWER

Honourable Speaker, I thank the honourable member for her question. I've sought and received advice over many years and formed a view. I'm aware of mine and others' legal obligations, which have informed my approach to Estimates. They are complex matters. There are laws that apply. There were good reasons, and still are, to be cautious with respect to these matters.

Supplementary Question

Ms BURNET - You said that they are complex matters, again, but these are serious matters. My question, again, is: who provided you with this advice to inform your stonewalling for Estimates committees?

Mr ROCKLIFF - I reject your assertion. I am well aware of the legal parameters within which I can speak with respect to certain matters. I'm not going to risk breaking the law.

Confidence in Government

Mr GARLAND question to PREMIER, Mr ROCKLIFF

[1.30 p.m.]

Premier, Tasmanians have been asked to trust this government on the *Spirit*s debacle, on Marinus Link, on the stadium, and now on a budget that cuts services while debt continues to grow, but trust is not something a government can demand, it must be earned. Increasingly, Tasmanians see expert concerns dismissed, legitimate questions avoided, and major decisions pushed ahead regardless of the warnings. The result is a growing sense that this government is out of touch with the concerns of ordinary Tasmanians and unwilling to change course. Do you accept that confidence in your government is declining? What is your plan to restore it?

ANSWER

Honourable Speaker, I thank the honourable member for his question. I will answer it this way: our government speaks of and acts on behalf of Tasmanians to what they really care about. In the last seven days, if my counting is correct, we have been focusing on a new permanent BreastScreen clinic in Devonport, a commitment at the last election; ensuring Liberty workers have the support they need; supporting Tasmanians with the cost of living - free bus travel and Ticket to Wellbeing, for example. Why do we do this? We listen to Tasmanians and understand their concerns: better health care, building homes for Tasmanians, and lifting literacy for adults across the state to ensure they can participate in life and in work. They're the things Tasmanians really care about.

They are turned off by the personal attacks and the gotcha moments that the Labor Party is utterly obsessed with. They don't like it. What they want is a government that focuses on them, listening to them, their needs, protecting their jobs, saving their jobs - doing everything possible to save their jobs. That is our focus when it comes to Liberty Bell Bay and elsewhere across Tasmania because times are tough and they expect a government that listens. They also expect all members of parliament to act responsibly - and there's no reflection on you, good sir, this is not a reflection on you, the honourable member who asked the question. They expect what they elected us to do just 12 months ago, and that is work together in the best interest of the Tasmanian people. They expect us to have vigorous debate and they expect us to have disagreements but they also expect us to engage in a constructive manner for the benefit of Tasmania and the Tasmanian people.

That is our focus. Others focus on elsewhere, trying to tear people down every single day. I know they've been trying to tear me down from the first day that I arrived at this job, but I'm not going anywhere and I will always stand up for Tasmanians. Tasmanians know full well that, unlike the honourable Leader of the Opposition, who would fold at the first hurdle with any challenge that came his way if he were premier, I keep going and get things done.

Forest Practices Authority - Fines

Mr Di FALCO question to MINISTER for BUSINESS, INDUSTRY and RESOURCES, Mr ELLIS

[1.34 p.m.]

Since highlighting this issue in this Chamber about a month ago, I have heard from dozens of landowners who have been on the end of significant fines. It was confirmed during Estimates that the Forest Practices Authority (FPA) has handed down over $2 million in fines over the last five years. We all understand the need for environmental protections but the regulation has gone too far. We are penalising generational Tasmanian farmers for doing their job. When will the review of the Forest Practices Regulations commence and will you commit to fixing the system that is clearly broken?

ANSWER

Honourable Speaker, I thank the member for Lyons for his question. He's focused on the substance of things that really matter for people, particularly those people who are seeking to feed Tasmanians and the rest of the world. Our farmers do an incredible job. We need to continue to work with them so that they can get the balance right to manage their land and the future prosperity of Tasmanians. We expect to be opening consultation on the review process for the Forest Practices Regulations in the next 100 days. We're committed to delivering a system that is more user-friendly because Tasmania's forest practices regulations stand as among some of the best in the world, and are certainly national leaders.

However, there are always opportunities for us to improve. What we've heard from farmers, led by your advocacy as well, honourable member for Lyons, is about the importance of making sure that those regulations, in a complex space, are user-friendly because our farmers are practical people. They're out there making sure that they can manage the land in a sustainable way for future generations, and they want to do it in a way that is competitive and that helps them to put food on our tables as well as theirs.

We've set out a few key principles that we believe are important as we work through making sure our forest practices regulations are more user-friendly: firstly, getting the balance right so that farmers can manage their land appropriately; secondly, cutting red tape for private growers when they're either growing plantation or native forest and thirdly, we think that there are opportunities to deliver on our election commitment to back the special species sector through appropriate land access across land tenures. That will be important as we progress this work.

We welcome feedback, as the portal opens in this next 100-day plan, from people right across the sector, whether they're engaged in managing their land as farmers, private growers of timber resource or our amazing special species sector which takes some of the most iconic Tasmanian timbers to our state and the world. This will be an important process.

I have a high level of respect for our Forest Practices Authority. They are excellent scientists who know their work well but it is a complex space and farmers, in particular, are practical people, so making sure we're getting that balance right and making it more user-friendly is critically important.

I thank Mr Di Falco and members of the farming community who've come forward and raised those concerns. We hope to work proactively together to get the balance right for the regulations in the future.

Taxpayer-Funded Legal Fees - Ms Howlett

Ms HADDAD question to PREMIER, Mr ROCKLIFF

[1.37 p.m.]

The last update that Tasmanians received on how much taxpayer money has been spent on Jane Howlett's private legal fees was three months ago. At that time, it was a total of $303,800. How much is the total now?

ANSWER

Honourable Speaker, I thank the honourable member for her question. My understanding is that the question has been answered in a question on notice as a result of the budget Estimates process. I'm not sure what the processes are. My understanding is they were accessible -

Ms Haddad - We don't have those yet.

Mr ROCKLIFF - and the answer will be $405,000.

Taxpayer-Funded Legal Fees - Ms Ogilvie

Ms HADDAD question to PREMIER, Mr ROCKLIFF

[1.38 p.m.]

In 2006, you moved a no confidence motion in the then deputy premier on the basis that he had misled parliament by omission. It's clear that once upon a time, when you were in opposition, you considered misleading parliament to be a serious issue. Do you still believe that misleading parliament, including misleading by omission, is a serious issue? If so, why did you allow Ms Ogilvie's misleading statement to remain uncorrected for six months?

ANSWER

Honourable Speaker, I thank the honourable member for her question. You are going back to 2006. I'm not going to speak of the individual out of respect for the individual, who I've known for a very long time. I'm not going to go into the nature of the no confidence motion. I remember it well. I actually stepped in for the honourable Will Hodgman to present the no confidence motion because Will's third child, Lily, was born on that very morning. I received a 5 o'clock phone call from him. I have a pretty solid account of the circumstances.

Ms Haddad - Do you remember what your values were back then?

Mr ROCKLIFF - I've canvassed these matters publicly. I've answered questions that have been provided to me by the crossbench and all crossbenchers, including the letter around

the circumstances of Ms Ogilvie. I accept that I dropped the ball, I regret that and I've apologised for that.

Supplementary Question

Ms HADDAD - The question was about the standards the Premier expected in opposition versus the standards he's willing to accept now in government. My question was: why was Ms Ogilvie's misleading statement allowed to stay on the parliamentary record uncorrected for six months?

Mr ROCKLIFF - I've answered that very clearly and, to that end, I've instructed my department to progress reforms to strengthen the transparency and accountability of legal indemnity arrangements for members of parliament. This work will include enhanced public reporting of legal expenditure where indemnity is granted, consideration of options to provide greater cross-party visibility in indemnity decisions and a review of the existing guidelines to ensure they reflect contemporary expectations of openness while preserving necessary legal protections. Importantly, I see this as a piece of work that should be shaped with the input and confidence of the entire parliament.

Government Accountability and Transparency - Commitments

Mr GEORGE question to PREMIER, Mr ROCKLIFF

[1.41 p.m.]

Blaming your political opponents for the mess that you and your government find yourself in today through your lack of transparency and accountability is simply wrong, and you know it. It's disrespectful to claim that Tasmanians have no interest in matters of integrity and that they're a distraction from the business of government. Let me tell you, they tell me that they care and they know integrity is the bedrock of good government, and you know it, too. My question is: what practical steps will you take to improve transparency and accountability in your government? Will you commit to properly funding the Integrity Commission so that it can do its job, or would you prefer an accountability vacuum that protects your ministers from proper scrutiny?

ANSWER

Honourable Speaker, I thank the honourable member for the question. I reject the assertion in the question. I didn't say that Tasmanians don't care about integrity; they do.

Mr George - You said it was a distraction from good government.

Mr ROCKLIFF - Excuse me. What I did say was that Tasmanians really care about where their next meal's coming from and how they're going to pay their mortgages. Yes, they care about the things that you care about, but they also care about putting food on the table for their families, making sure their kids can read and write, accessing a healthcare system that is responsive, for example, and they care about cost-of-living measures as well -

Members interjecting.

The SPEAKER - Order.

Mr ROCKLIFF - So, the answer to your question: there's another $500,000 in the Budget for the Integrity Commission. My understanding is, in the last decade, the integrity commission has increased it's funding by 86 per cent. There are reforms to be made with respect to our integrity system -

Mr George - Still can't do its job.

Dr Woodruff - Gobbled up paying for ministers-

The SPEAKER - Honourable members for Franklin, Dr Woodruff and Mr George, I ask you both please to allow the Premier to finish his answer in silence, please.

Mr ROCKLIFF - of which I understand the Attorney-General has sought counsel from crossbench members about the Integrity Commission changes to the act. I can point to a whole range of areas and, honourable member, we are light years ahead of where we were when we came to government in terms of transparency and accountability.

RTI reforms, integrity reforms, diary disclosures, for example, and I'll be very interested to see who volunteers their diaries as well in the interest of transparency because the crossbench have got more say in policy development than ever before. There was actually heightened interest and what you do with your time and the meetings that you have as well as, of course, ministers as well. That is that opportunity to increase transparency, as well. I appreciate the work of professors Tim McCormick and Rick Snell when it comes to the RTI reforms. I was with them when they tabled their report in September last year, and I look forward to continuing to implement a number of recommendations of those reforms as well. It is unrecognisable: the difference in transparency between the Labor-Greens government, in actual fact, and where we are now.

The SPEAKER - The Premier's time has expired.

Supplementary Question

Mr GEORGE - I remind the Premier that it was under the Bartlett government that ministerial diaries were first introduced but my question is: are you seriously satisfied that the Integrity Commission has enough resources to do its job when its own CEO says it doesn't have enough members to work to achieve its outcomes?

Mr ROCKLIFF - My recollection might not be 100 per cent around all this, but I don't believe premier Bartlett had much to do with the diary disclosure. What premier Bartlett did was set up the Integrity Commission as a result of a Joint Standing Committee, which I was on, in around 2008 or 2009, if my memory serves me correctly, which provided recommendations to government to establish the Integrity Commission -

Mr George - I might have to stand corrected.

The SPEAKER - Order, Mr George.

Mr ROCKLIFF - We will always listen and understand the needs of government entities across government in terms of their resourcing. As I say, our Attorney-General has argued for and successfully achieved an increase in funds for the Integrity Commission of some $500,000 in this year's Budget.

Taxpayer-Funded Legal Fees - Scrutiny Offered by Minority Parliament

Dr WOODRUFF question to PREMIER, Mr ROCKLIFF

[1.47 p.m.]

Today, Tasmanians know that hundreds of thousands of dollars of their money has been spent on legal fees for former minister Howlett and former minister Ogilvie. They know that former minister Ogilvie misled parliament. They know that she is in the Supreme Court. They know that you failed in your responsibilities as Premier to uphold the ministerial code of conduct and to ensure honesty and integrity, and they know that both former ministers Howlett and Ogilvie have allegations of wrongdoing against them that are under active consideration.

This has all come about only because of the relentless and forensic questions from the Greens and colleagues across the Chamber. Do you agree that Tasmanians would still be in the dark about all of these matters, Premier, if it were not for the relentless scrutiny offered by this minority parliament?

ANSWER

Thank you, honourable member, for your statement of congratulations. I appreciate the scrutiny, as I always do and never shy away from. This is a minority parliament. I've spoken to a few crossbenchers who acknowledge a parliament that, up until this point in time, has been working constructively, largely and well, albeit my previous comments around the motivations of those directly opposite myself and this government.

We expect scrutiny: there's an opportunity for the minority parliament to actually work together well, firstly, on the honourable member for Franklin's desire to improve Budget Estimates process, but also when it comes to the matters we speak of in the last few weeks, in particular around legal fees, disclosure of legal fees, transparency and stronger accountability, around these matters of which we want, are needed frankly, and we would benefit from a cross-party discussion and ideas on how we can implement those reforms, so whoever is in government of whatever colour has a better system with which to deal with these matters.

Supplementary Question

Dr WOODRUFF - The Premier said he appreciates the scrutiny. The question, fundamentally, Premier, was about your role. Do you agree that these two ministers would still be in place today -

Mr Jaensch - I thought it was about your role?

Mr Abetz - It was self-praise.

The SPEAKER - Order, sorry Dr Woodruff, I'll ask to clock to stop. Honourable members of the government, I ask that interjections cease. The only one who has the call right now is the honourable Leader of the Greens.

Dr WOODRUFF - Do you agree that if it weren't for the scrutiny of this parliament and the relentless questions, that ministers Howlett and Ogilvie would both be there today because you would take no action if it hadn't been for this?

The SPEAKER - Honourable Premier.

Dr Woodruff - You did nothing for six months.

The SPEAKER - Order. Dr Woodruff, you've finished your question.

Mr ROCKLIFF - Once again, I want to reiterate - as I've said in a statement publicly and to yourself and by extension others in the letter - that I regret the circumstances. I dropped the ball and I apologise for that. We have two people who were ministers two weeks ago and now they're not.

With respect to your question and the scrutiny of the example that the honourable member raised with respect to 2006, that was quite a large majority Labor government at the time and there was a lot of scrutiny applied to that circumstance, as there would be whether in minority or majority government. We would always expect that because that's how the Westminster system works.

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

Taxpayer-Funded Legal Fees - Ms Ogilvie

Ms HADDAD question to PREMIER, Mr ROCKLIFF

[11.51 p.m.]

During budget Estimates you said dozens of times that you could not answer questions about former minister Ogilvie's legal fees. You also said at the Estimates table dozens of times that you were unable to answer those questions, but in your letter in response to the Greens and other crossbench members, you were able to answer a series of the same questions. You've also admitted that you didn't receive any formal legal advice saying that you could not answer or were unable to answer the questions at the Estimates table. Premier, were you unable to answer those questions at the Estimates table or were you simply choosing not to answer them?

ANSWER

Honourable Speaker, I thank the honourable member for the question. I am well across the law to do with certain matters and certain entities and ways of scrutiny, so I am naturally cautious about any circumstance around where I would be potentially breaking the law. I've sought and received advice over many years and formed a view. I am aware of my legal obligations, which informed my approach at budget Estimates.

Taxpayer-Funded Legal Fees - Ms Ogilvie

Ms HADDAD question to PREMIER, Mr ROCKLIFF

[1.53 p.m.]

Is the reason you would not and will not answer specific questions about the legal fees scandal that every member of Cabinet knew that Madeleine Ogilvie had misled parliament six months ago and every member of your Cabinet sat silently while the cover-up continued?

Mr BARNETT - Point of order, Speaker. Is this a supplementary or a new question?

The SPEAKER - It's the next question. Question time today will go to 2.01 p.m.

Mr Abetz - Labor have had their share.

The SPEAKER - We have gone through the full allocation. We're now on the questions that come after it.

Mr Willie - Get with the program.

The SPEAKER - I will get the honourable member to read out the question again for the benefit of everyone.

Ms HADDAD - Happy to, thank you, honourable Speaker. Premier, is the reason that you will not and did not answer specific questions about the legal fees scandal the fact that every member of Cabinet knew that Madeleine Ogilvie had misled parliament six months ago and every member of Cabinet sat silently and joined the cover-up that continued?

ANSWER

Honourable Speaker, I thank the honourable member for the question. I reject the assertion and point to the answers I've provided, both in correspondence to the honourable members, predominantly Ms Woodruff and other members who I've spoken to, and the answers today.

Taxpayer-Funded Legal Fees - Ms Ogilvie

Dr WOODRUFF question to PREMIER, Mr ROCKLIFF

[1.54 p.m.]

In Budget Estimates last year we asked every minister whether they had been subject or party to any Supreme Court matters and whether they had received any taxpayer funding to cover legal fees. When we asked you this question, you had an interesting response. You said:

> I see where all this is going, Dr Woodruff. Me, personally, I can't speak for others, but no.

You said yourself that you saw where all this was going. You knew then that former minister Ogilvie was involved in a Supreme Court matter and had legal fees paid for from the public

purse. You've since admitted that your office had discussions with former minister Ogilvie at that time about the so-called 'clarification statement' she provided. Given you could 'see where all this was going', Premier, how is it possible that you are not aware that your office was having those discussions? Can you tell us what was discussed?

ANSWER

I've detailed those answers to your questions in the correspondence. I'll have to go back and see the context in which the question was asked, but I assumed that you were going to ask every single member, of which I was one. I answered it correctly.

Supplementary Question

Dr WOODRUFF - It is implausible for people in this Chamber and people in Tasmania to believe that your paid staff in your office had conversations with Ms Ogilvie and/or her office and you knew absolutely nothing about it. Are you telling Tasmanians you knew nothing at all about that clarifying statement and the work of your staff?

Mr ROCKLIFF - Thank you for that question. I stand by my answers.

Dr Woodruff - What is it? What is the answer?

The SPEAKER - Order. The honourable member for Clark, Mr Vermey, has the call.

Dr Woodruff - What is the answer?

The SPEAKER - Honourable Leader of the Greens, you never know, you might get another question.

Cost-of-Living Support

Mr VERMEY question to PREMIER, Mr ROCKLIFF

[1.57 p.m.]

Can you outline how the government is supporting Tasmanians, and in particular low-income Tasmanians, with cost-of-living pressures, particularly through concessions?

ANSWER

Honourable Speaker, I thank the honourable member for his question and interest in this matter. Our government has a very long and proven track record of providing much-needed cost-of-living support for Tasmanians. We see it in the concessions that we provide Tasmanians to the tune of some $350 million over four years. We see it in the free bus travel for 12 months. At the Premier's Youth Advisory Council on the weekend - and in attendance, of course, was also the member for Bass, Mr Rob Fairs - every single young person got up and said how much they appreciated free bus travel for them in terms of accessing education, accessing employment, and in terms of safety on buses as well. That moment really struck me to say that this is a very good policy for cost of living for Tasmanians. The bus operators I've spoken to as well say the buses are safer -

Mr Mitchell interjecting.

The SPEAKER - Honourable member for Lyons, Mr Mitchell.

Mr ROCKLIFF - because there are more people on the bus and people are less aggressive because of the need not to hand over coin in terms of the free bus travel.

Our government provides a hundred different types of concessions to help Tasmanians with essential household costs, from electricity and water to council rates, transport and more. These concessions make a real and practical difference to Tasmanians every single day. I said $350 million, but my advice is that this Budget provides over $370 million over four years to eligible pensioners to help with the cost of electricity, council rates, travel on the *Spirit*s *of Tasmania* and water and sewerage bills. This ensures that low-income Tasmanians receive real support when it matters most. For anyone wanting to understand the full range of assistance available, the *Tasmanian Government Discounts and Concessions Guide* is available online and at Service Tasmania, councils and libraries.

We've also committed a $24 million investment when it comes to free bus fares until July next year. We've recently delivered $500,000 to food relief providers to take the pressure off the delivery of vital emergency food relief and support.

The Budget provides additional funding for the Neighbourhood House Community Connector program, as well as new funding for Ash Cottage as well.

When it comes to our free school breakfast and lunch programs, it continues giving children the energy they need to learn, and I have made a number of statements in those areas as well. We're also supporting Tasmanians with the cost of health care. The Budget includes $5 million to support families on their IVF journey with a rebate of up to $2000 and-

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

Supplementary Question

Mr VERMEY - I'd just like to know about the NILS update on that one, Premier, the NILS.

Members interjecting.

The SPEAKER - We've got 20 seconds.

Mr Willie - It's a new question.

Ms Badger - That's another question.

Mr ROCKLIFF - Thank you for that very relevant question. When it comes to the cost of living -

Ms Haddad - He could read his own press release issued this morning and learn all about NILS.

Mr ROCKLIFF - the No Interest Loans Scheme helps many vulnerable Tasmanians in need and it does highlight the fact that we do reach in and listen to Tasmanians when it comes to supporting them, supporting the organisations that support vulnerable Tasmanians and we are very proud to do so. When it comes to children and young people and their families, they also benefit from the Ticket to Play program, honourable Speaker, offering two $100 vouchers -

Ms HADDAD -Point of order, Standing Order 45, relevance. Mr Vermey's supplementary question went specifically to the NILS program?

Mr Willie - Which is a new question.

Members interjecting.

The SPEAKER - Order.

Ms Haddad - You were asked about NILS.

The SPEAKER - Order.

Ms Haddad - Just NILS. Just NILS.

The SPEAKER - Order. The honourable member for Clark, I thank you for your Standing Order 45, relevance. I ask the Premier to resume for three seconds.

Mr Ferguson - You used up his time, Ella.

Time expired.

CONSTITUENCY QUESTIONS

Liberal Cabinet Integrity

Dr BROAD question to PREMIER, Mr ROCKLIFF

[2.02 p.m.]

Susanne from Latrobe asks: does the Premier have confidence that the culture within the Liberal Cabinet and the staff surrounding it is operating with integrity or does he believe recent issues are the result of a few isolated individuals? In either case, what concrete steps is the government taking to restore trust, strengthen accountability and ensure these issues are not repeated?

Taxpayer-Funded Legal Fees - Commission of Inquiry

Mr GEORGE question to PREMIER, Mr ROCKLIFF

This is an appropriate question for today. My question comes from Jen Allen of Howrah, who wants to know the remainder of costs relating to legal support that has been provided to public servants who appeared before the commission of inquiry. As she understands it, the

government has disclosed the cost of legal representation of only some of those public servants in relation to their repayment. How much was paid in total to represent all public servants who appeared before the inquiry, and will the government publicly release this information to demonstrate its commitment to integrity?

Solar Energy Incentives

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

My constituent wants to know what the government is doing to encourage installation of rooftop solar and battery storage at not-for-profit aged care homes to help lower their costs and allow them to direct those savings to improve their service and offerings to residents.

Mature Artist Dance Experience

Mr BAYLEY question to MINISTER for ARTS, referred to PREMIER, Mr ROCKLIFF

From Shirley, a dancer and stalwart volunteer for the Mature Artist Dance Experience (MADE). MADE is an inspirational team of over 50 women selling out shows with contemporary dance performances developed in collaboration with some of Australia's leading choreographers, including Graeme Murphy and recently Darrell Braidwood. Shirley highlights a federal inquiry into the arts found a myriad of benefits from arts including improved social connection, physical and mental health and then wellbeing, and Shirley knows MADE delivers these benefits too. She says that without secure funding, these benefits are at risk and relying on volunteers and donations is not sustainable or tenable. The question is: how will you ensure community-based arts organisations are adequately supported so the benefits they deliver are realised?

Kingston Volunteer Fire Brigade - New Firefighting Medium Urban Pumper

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

On behalf of a resident in Kingston, minister, your media release from April this year proudly trumpeted that a new firefighting medium urban pumper was being provided to the Kingston Volunteer Fire Brigade. Can you confirm that, despite a 12-month delay, this $600,000 asset has since been delivered with an air leak and missing mud flaps which means the truck is non-compliant with Tasmanian roads? In addition, it was presented for duty with tyres fitted backwards and pink emergency lights. The 17 defects initially accepted by the TFS were so significant it was unsafe for the brigade to use and they are now fighting fires without a medium pumper, critical for urban areas like Kingston, and the TFS has refused to give their old truck back as it's now being used for training. Can you explain how a $600,000 emergency vehicle passed quality assurance with 17 defects? What immediate steps are being taken to ensure Kingston Volunteer Brigade has a fully operational defect-free medium pump appliance today? How many other recently delivered TFD appliances are currently sidelined for operating without accepted defects?

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

Department of Natural Resources and Environment - Procedural Fairness and Justice

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

This question is from Matthew of Shakespeare Hills Eggs. After applying for accreditation in 2021, my family repeatedly sought assistance from the Department of Natural Resources and Environment Tasmania (NRE) over the next 34 months, including 13 follow-up emails without receiving any substantive response. Biosecurity Tasmania operations then raided my property and imposed a prohibition order and commenced a major investigation. Once the department finally engaged, accreditation was achieved within seven weeks. Given the importance of procedural fairness and natural justice, can the minister explain how one part of NRE can fail to engage with my family business for almost three years, while another part pursues enforcement action over the very problem that departmental inaction may have helped create?

Trevallyn Dam - Potential Damage

Mr FAIRS question to MINISTER for ENERGY and RENEWABLES, Mr DUIGAN

My question is on behalf of my constituent Lisa in Launceston. As we enter the winter months and more rain and unfavourable conditions are upon us, we are likely to see an increase in debris washing into Trevallyn Dam. Minister, is there any risk of damage to the power station as a result of this?

First-Home Buyer Schemes

Mr VERMEY question to TREASURER, Mr ABETZ

On behalf of my constituent Eduardo from Lenah Valley: Eduardo has contacted my office seeking further information about the support available to assist first-home buyers to enter the housing market, particularly in the current environment of rising property prices and the cost-of-living pressures. Can the Treasurer outline what the government is doing to support these first-home buyers.

Time expired.

QUESTIONS ON NOTICE - ANSWERS

No. 9 of 2026 - Marinus Link

Mr GARLAND question to MINISTER for ENERGY and RENEWABLES, Mr DUIGAN

See Appendix 1 on page 93.

No. 10 of 2026 - Hydro Tasmania

Mr GARLAND question to MINISTER for ENERGY and RENEWABLES, Mr DUIGAN

See Appendix 2 on page 96.

No. 23 of 2026 - Public Housing Terminations

Mr BAYLEY question to MINISTER for HOUSING and PLANNING, Mr VINCENT

See Appendix 3 on page 103.

TABLED PAPERS

Public Accounts Committee - Report

Mr WINTER (Franklin) - Honourable Speaker, I have the honour to bring up the report of the Public Accounts Committee and its inquiry:

- Parliamentary Budget Office.

I move that -

The report be received and printed.

Motion agreed to.

Public Accounts Committee - Report

Mr JAENSCH (Braddon) **-** Honourable Speaker, I have the honour to bring up the report of the Public Accounts Committee and its inquiry:

- ACPAC 2026 18th Conference Parliament of Tasmania.

I move that -

The report be received and printed.

Motion agreed to.

MESSAGE FROM THE GOVERNOR

Royal Assent to Bills

[2.09 p.m.]

The SPEAKER - I am in receipt of a message from the Her Excellency, the Governor regarding assent to the following bills:

- Help to Buy (Commonwealth Powers) Bill 2026 (No. 9)
- Education and Care Services National Law (Application) Amendment Bill 2026 (No. 7)
- Building Amendment Bill 2026 (No. 1)

having been presented to the Governor for the Royal Assent, she has, in the name and on behalf of His Majesty the King, assented to the said Bills.

Barbara Baker, Governor
Government House, Hobart,
5 June 2026.

TAXATION AND RELATED LEGISLATION (MISCELLANEOUS AMENDMENTS) BILL 2026 (No. 21)

First Reading

Bill presented by Mr Abetz and read the first time.

MATTER OF PUBLIC IMPORTANCE

Integrity in Government

[2.12 p.m.]

Ms HADDAD (Clark) - Honourable Speaker, I move -

That the House take note of the following matter: integrity in government.

This is a matter of public importance that the parliament does need to consider today. It is the issue of integrity, and what we've seen in the actions of Jeremy Rockliff and his colleagues over recent weeks.

I will start by recognising the former minister, Ms Howlett, and welcoming her resignation. I am disappointed that she has tried to characterise the actions of this parliament

over recent weeks as personality politics. We also heard the Premier today calling it 'personal, political attacks', that there were 'grubby accusations', that the opposition and crossbench have lent in in a personal way to make personal attacks on a minister. I want to be clear that that is not the case.

This is about the standards and the accountability of government ministers, and the standards of transparency and integrity that we expect of ministers of the Crown. Ministers misleading parliament, or even an allegation or a suspicion of misleading parliament, is something very serious. It always has been in this parliament and every other parliament around the country. Misleading parliament can be intentional but it can also be a clumsy mistake. I've seen that happen in my own career as a staffer. It can be an accident, or it can be planned and premeditated but what is most important is what happens next.

If a minister has misled, parliamentary expectations are that they take the first available opportunity to correct the record. If they don't do that, or if they refuse to do that, then they stand down, or the premier of the day stands them down. That's not what we saw happen: not with Ms Ogilvie and not with Ms Howlett

Let's remember what happened with Ms Ogilvie. She made a clearly untrue misleading statement in November 2025 to the Estimates committee. She sought to table a clarifying statement in the days after that which didn't clarify the situation, and that incorrect information was allowed to sit on the parliamentary record, on the *Hansard*, for six months before it was exposed publicly. Only then, did the Premier act.

I want to remind the Chamber and the public that the ministerial code of conduct, which is the Premier's job to uphold, is very clear. It says:

> ... Ministers must commit themselves to the highest ethical standards to maintain and strengthen the democratic traditions of our State and its institutions.
>
> Merely avoiding breaking the law will not always be enough to guarantee an acceptable standard of conduct. Ministers must not only act lawfully but also in a manner which withstands the closest public scrutiny.

Neither Ms Ogilvie nor Ms Howlett acted in accordance with those expectations. Their behaviour, while perhaps not unlawful, did not withstand the closest public scrutiny.

It did withstand the scrutiny of the Premier, Mr Rockliff, because he knew and chose not to act for six months; and all his colleagues knew and chose not to act for six months. When it was publicly exposed, that's when he chose to act.

I know that he is making an appeal to the crossbench in saying that there is going to be more transparency and more honesty about these things now but let's not forget that he had very different standards when he was in opposition. No one can deny that Jeremy Rockliff is a very experienced politician. He has been here the longest of all of us in this Chamber, I think. He had different standards in opposition than what he has now.

Here's what he said in opposition when he moved a no confidence motion in the deputy premier of the day for misleading by omission:

> The Premier has made a massive mistake by not demanding the sort of standards of accountability by his members that the Tasmanian public expect and the Westminster system demands.
>
> The Deputy Premier tried to cover it up for weeks, refusing to answer questions and only coming clean when he was cornered and had no choice.

He might criticise me for going back 20 years in the public record, but those words apply today, 100 per cent accurately, to Jeremy Rockliff's behaviour. He only dealt with this matter when it became publicly exposed, or to use his words 'when he was cornered and had no choice'.

That's what he said about the deputy premier back in 2006 but he failed to expect and demonstrate those standards now that he is in government. He hasn't forgotten those values. He just forgot to apply them.

Time expired.

[2.18 p.m.]

Mr BARNETT (Lyons - Deputy Premier) - Honourable Speaker, I'm very pleased to speak to this matter of integrity in government. I reject the criticisms from Labor with respect to the Premier. We stand by the strong support that we have for the Premier. He's a fighter, he's resilient, he cares for his community. and what he said today was that we focused on the things that matter. He mentioned the cost of living, Liberty Bell Bay, the new BreastScreen centre in Devonport and a range of other initiatives just in the last seven days.

With respect to integrity in government, we have delivered much reform, with a lot more work to do with respect to the Integrity Commission and integrity in government. With respect to the Integrity Commission, those reforms are now well advanced. There's a large body of work and it's very complex. Just last year, we introduced the mandatory notifications legislation and that has progressed very positively through at least this Chamber and is now upstairs for positive consideration. That was the first of the three tranches with respect to the reforms of the Integrity Commission.

I put on record my sincere thanks for the leadership of Robert Hay KC as chief commissioner and Ellen McKenzie as chief executive, and her team who I met quite recently at a workshop where I was able to speak on our integrity reforms and interact with the staff from the Integrity Commission.

We have a large body of work to do, based on a number of reform recommendations, firstly, from the honourable Bill Cox, our former chief justice and former governor, who undertook that important work. We've accepted the report and recommendations of the honourable Bill Cox. We also have the commission of inquiry recommendations and findings, which we are progressing very positively and with much support across the public service. Likewise, the Weiss review and the five recommendations, for which we have provided support.

The first reforms were in 2017 in terms of amending the *Integrity Commission Act*, then in 2022 with the publishing of a discussion paper, and then, of course, the important role of the Integrity Commission with respect to education and awareness, promoting and enhancing ethical conduct in public service. It's really important. We are behind it. I want to thank those

members in this place who have supported me in my role and the government in its role to advance the cause - the crossbench, Labor and Greens accordingly - in terms of much of that important work.

The second stage relates to amendments again to the Integrity Commission legislation. There were three months of public feedback and consultation and now that bill is being finalised and very close to being ready for introduction. It's a very major body of work. There are some outstanding recommendations which will progress through to a third tranche which will start to be considered in the second half of this year. We are taking it very seriously and getting on with the job because that's where we haven't seen a response from Labor in terms of their alternative budget. We're debating the Budget this week and we hope to pass it, and I commend it to all members of this parliament.

It was this time last year when Labor were playing mischief makers and forcing an election. I just sense that, as a result of the political shenanigans that are going on, perhaps that's part of their agenda. I don't know for sure, but what we know is that we have a strong agenda. We're getting on with the job, but if Labor are playing their political antics again, like they were this time last year forcing an early election on the Tasmanian people, the Tasmanian people had their say. We will remain focused, not just on integrity in government but on getting on with the job. We're very pleased to be doing that and will remain resilient to that cause.

[2.23 p.m.]

Dr WOODRUFF (Franklin - Leader of the Greens) - Honourable Speaker, I just want to come back to what we're really here for. Thank you to the opposition and Ms Haddad for bringing on this matter of public importance. We're here now discussing integrity because it's the Premier's integrity that is under question. It is his actions and his failure to act over at least the last six months, through a series of events, that have caused, ultimately, this minority parliament - Greens, Independent members of parliament and the Labor opposition - to pile on so much scrutiny and demand answers that haven't been given that has forced two ministers to resign.

There has been no agreement from the Premier that there was any wrongdoing that occurred. There's been no defence of the minister but there's also been no acceptance of their culpability and their wrongdoing, but we have it on the record. In the Premier's answers to me this morning, he talked about the fact that they'd resigned, so move on, like, 'Will you stop wasting our time?' It reminded me a little bit of what Joseph Stalin used to do, which is to erase inconvenient truths in history just to literally take it out of the history books.

The Premier might like to pretend that we should all move on and that this is not a big matter, but the more he says that the more I'm convinced this is a very serious matter that we have to get to the bottom of. He doesn't understand, and fundamentally his behaviour seems to show, he's constitutionally incapable of understanding what integrity means, because if he did, he would have acknowledged the fact that two ministers have resigned because of wrongdoing.

He can have all the contrition he likes, make all the apologies, take the acceptance, but he's just sweeping it under the carpet. Why does it matter? It matters because we're talking about taxpayer money. The job of the government is to get on and govern. Yes, it is to deliver services. The job of the Greens, independent members and the Labor opposition is to advocate for people in the community, to protect, oversee and scrutinise the government's use of very precious resources and to make sure that they are good stewards of our natural environment.

What we're seeing is a government led by a premier who doesn't understand the ministerial code of conduct and is not prepared to uphold it. He has written a contract and has said at the front of the ministerial code of conduct that:

> The Code applies between me as Premier and each Minister. Ministers must observe the Code at all time and the consequences of any failure to do so is a matter between me and the Minister concerned ...

In relation to ministers making misleading statements, it says:

> Ministers are to give accurate and truthful information to parliament and the public. Ministers are expected to take all reasonable steps to ensure that they do not mislead Parliament [in the public duty].
>
> ...
>
> Ministers who intentionally mislead or are dishonest to Parliament ... will be expected to offer their resignation to the Premier.

However, what we know is that not only did Madeleine Ogilvie mislead parliament last November, but the Premier's own office was involved in working with that minister to provide a dishonest statement that was subsequently tabled back to Estimates. His office was involved, yet he expects Tasmanians to believe he had nothing to do with it.

Why do we care? It is because this is the government that's overseeing huge cuts to essential services because they say they have no money to spend. This is the government that has two ministers who have now racked up, we understand today, over half a million dollars: $520 000-odd dollars by my calculation they have spent on themselves defending cases that they won't tell us about. They won't even tell us what portfolios they're under, and they expect us to sit here and do nothing while they are covering up what's happening in the health system because people can't access information. They're covering up how many children are in watchhouses. This is what transparency means.

Time expired.

[2.28 p.m.]

Ms BURNET (Clark) - Honourable Speaker, I thank the opposition for bringing this important matter of public importance to the House. We all have a part to play in strengthening integrity and proper scrutiny. When we discuss integrity in government we cannot avoid discussing the *Integrity Commission Act* and, in particular, the secrecy provisions that sit at its heart. My contention is that those provisions have been increasingly unworkable and are now producing outcomes that undermine rather than strengthen public confidence in our democratic institutions.

We're confronted with a situation where allegations involving sitting ministers appear to have remained unresolved for years. Legal costs are approaching half a million dollars paid by Tasmanian taxpayers, yet the taxpayers funding these processes are told virtually nothing about them. That's not a healthy position for a democracy to find itself in. The secrecy surrounding these matters casts a shadow over every minister, every member of parliament and, indeed, the institution of government itself.

When the public is aware that lengthy investigations are underway but is unable to access even the most basic information about them, speculation inevitably fills the vacuum, rumour replaces fact, assumption replaces evidence, confidence in the political system declines, and at a time when trust in democratic institutions is already fragile, we should be very cautious about maintaining arrangements that further erode public faith.

The Premier himself appeared to acknowledge some of these difficulties in his responses to media questions over the past week. Likewise, the Integrity Commission's chief commissioner appeared deeply constrained during his interview on ABC radio. Listeners heard a senior statutory officer repeatedly unable to answer questions because of the legislative secrecy provisions governing his work. That exchange highlighted a fundamental problem: the public can see that investigations exist, they can see that significant sums of public money are being spent by ministers possibly defending themselves against those allegations; they can see that matters remain unresolved years later. Yet the law prevents meaningful explanation or scrutiny. It's not transparency; this is secrecy.

It was this veil of secrecy that arguably contributed to minister Ogilvie misrepresenting the existence of court proceedings she had commenced. It was the same veil that enabled questions about those proceedings to be avoided for months and the stonewalling at Budget Estimates.

Similarly, minister Howlett has refused to answer questions about a legal bill now exceeding $400,000. Such a system can only function if public confidence in those administering it remains strong, but when the trust is breached, as occurred when minister Ogilvie failed to accurately disclose the existence of legal proceedings, and when the government subsequently stonewalled then minimised or defended that conduct, the foundation upon which the secrecy rests begins to crumble, and at that point it becomes entirely legitimate to ask whether the balance struck by the legislation remains appropriate.

I'm not arguing for the abandonment of confidentiality protections. There are sound reasons why integrity investigation should not become a political circus. There are sound reasons why individuals should not be publicly condemned before findings are made. The challenge before us is to strike a better balance - which bodies uphold integrity and allow scrutiny - one that protects procedural fairness while also recognising the public's legitimate interest in understanding what is occurring when allegations concern elected representatives, public resources and the conduct of government. That's why I've asked the Premier to support a referral of this issue to the Joint Standing Committee on integrity. If the Premier is serious about strengthening integrity and rebuilding public confidence, he should welcome a review of these provisions. Having this as a ministerial statement from the Premier would be most welcome and a clear sign of integrity and shouldering responsibility.

[2.33 p.m.]

Mr WINTER (Franklin) - Honourable Speaker, I want to thank the shadow attorney-general for bringing this on, like others have. It's an important discussion to have, particularly on a day like today but I firstly want to address the way that the Premier answered questions this morning. The Premier seemed to indicate that demanding answers, demanding transparency, demanding integrity is a personal attack on his ministers, and that's the way that we were effectively gaslit this morning into the fact that we relentlessly for two weeks asked why these ministers were receiving hundreds of thousands of dollars of taxpayer-funded legal

advice or service, that that was a personal attack, that it was some kind of political distraction led by members in this place. By pointing his attacks at members of the opposition, and partly the Greens as well, he conveniently forgot, I think, that all members of this place have a real interest in integrity, in transparency and in the way that this government's being run.

We have not been satisfied in any way, shape or form by this instance. We haven't just identified that there's been one secret legal case, probably two secret legal cases, and potentially more. For me, anyway, I've found out that this can actually occur: that in our courts we can actually have not just cases that are suppressed, but also have cases that aren't even listed anywhere. You can have justice that's not just done, but not seen to be done by anyone. That can just go on for potentially years and we don't know anything about it. I'm not just saying members of parliament, I'm saying members of the public. We don't know what's going on here or what has gone on here. This has been the biggest cover-up I can think of in the last 10 years: the level of secrecy and cover-up that it must have taken to keep these matters secret. I also want to acknowledge, and I've said it privately and I'll say to the Leader of the Greens publicly, that whilst we don't agree on very much, it seems on policy, the way that the Greens have conducted themselves in forensically identifying these issues and pulling it apart has been exceptional. I want to acknowledge members of our team as well and the crossbench who've also participated in what's been something, I think, has been very important.

I have also been surprised, pleasantly surprised I have to say, by the interest that the public has taken. Again, to take the Premier's answers to task today, the idea that people aren't interested in this couldn't be further from the truth. Just in my interactions with members of the public over the course of the last week, there is intense public interest in this. They want to know where their taxpayer funding is going, and there's been an erosion of trust.

When a government avoids accountability, it signals to the public that there are two sets of rules, sets of rules for them and sets of rules for members of this government, and that's what has stunk up the public, I have to say; they are feeling very disconnected from the decision making of this government.

There's a loss of public trust in this government that's been evident more over the last two or three weeks than I've seen in the last five years. When public trust breaks in governments or in institutions, it breaks the social contract between the public and the democracy that they value so highly. This does have, and can have, severe impacts not just on the things that we've talked about in the integrity, but also on those things that the Premier talked about. If you want to have a strong economy, then you've got to have a strong parliament and a strong government with people having trust in it. When you break trust, that does impact public confidence in the institutions, but also business confidence as well.

Let's not forget that since August last year when this government was given confidence, 6600 jobs have been lost from this economy. We have a government that is in all sorts of trouble. We have two vacant seats on the front bench of the government for the first time in my five years, and I suspect for the first time in many decades that we've now got seats vacant on the front bench.

To couch this as simply a matter of personal attack or anything other than just a quest for the truth and demanding a high standard - and demanding that this Premier uphold his own ministerial standard - is unfair. That's all that this parliament has done. The Premier can't say, won't say whether his ministers have breached the Ministerial Code of Conduct, but I think it's

pretty clear that the view, certainly of members of the opposition from the contribution of the Greens, and I know some members of the crossbench, that that was our feeling as well. This is really important -

Time expired.

[2.38 p.m.]

Mr GEORGE (Franklin) - Honourable Speaker, this is an important issue, and I thank the opposition for raising it. Today, the Premier virtually dismissed three basic tenets of democratic government - integrity, accountability and transparency - as an irrelevance to Tasmanians. That is frankly outrageous. It's an insult and it's wrong.

As I've heard over recent months, indeed over years, trusting government lies at the core of Tasmanian's dissatisfaction with their political leadership. The truth is, trust in all of us as parliamentarians is at an all-time low, and that is primarily the fault of successive governments, including this one, and for all his aggressive defence of this government's accountability, the Howlett-Ogilvie saga has simply highlighted how far this administration will go in muddying the waters.

The whole-of-government strategy to dead bat all legitimate questions about legal matters and the misleading of parliament is simply grist to the mill of public discontent and disbelief in us. I quote from the Premier's media release today.

> In recent weeks we have seen a pattern of relentless political attacks that have added to distraction and taken attention away from the work that matters to Tasmanians.

Let me be clear: if distractions they are, then the Premier and his ministers have only themselves to blame, and the proof is in the pudding.

Ms Ogilvie has resigned over a matter of misleading parliament. Ms Howlett has done the right thing, difficult though it must have been for her, to step aside while questions of probity are resolved. She did the right thing, and I thank her for it because this is the Westminster Convention, applied as it should be. When Ms Howlett's legal issues have been dealt with, she may indeed return to the front bench with her reputation intact and unsullied.

Now, while I'm working with the Attorney-General and Integrity Commission reform, all the reform in the world will not overcome determined governments from dissembling, blocking, hiding and playing fast and loose with the truth and failing to maintain the highest standards of probity.

Let me say very clearly. This is how government is being viewed across the community, and not just by the politically engaged. These issues have been raised with me by people who are living tough lives, 'doing it tough' as they say, because this is a community-wide concern. This government needs to look in the mirror and say we must do better and more to regain public trust. That, honourable Speaker, is a job for all of us in this House, but it's the duty of government to lead by showing its commitment to better behaviour in public life.

[2.41 p.m.]

Mr BAYLEY (Clark) - Honourable Speaker, I thank my colleague from Clark, Ms Haddad, for bringing on this matter of public importance on integrity; it is an important one. It's one that I've spoken of previously in this place, but I think it's a particularly pertinent one this week as we go into the winter break, as we deal with the Budget and as we have two vacant chairs on the front bench of the government's benches.

These resignations really are an indictment on the government because they don't just relate to misleading statements when it comes to what was said in parliament or uncertainty over legal fees. I want to focus on the fact - particularly in the case of Ms Ogilvie - that statements were then tendered to try to cover up and clean up the misleading of the Estimates committee by way of a clarification, but a clarification that was tabled within another committee a couple of days later that wasn't read in is utterly disingenuous when it comes to parliamentary processes. It's utterly unacceptable and I think it flashes guilt as a red light when you read that clarification and understand the context in which it was made.

Both of these ministers have said they don't want to be a distraction to this government; this is part of the problem. There is no acknowledgement, there is no admission. I think to be able to properly address a problem, you've got to actually recognise that there's one there in the first place. The Premier's statement today is quite remarkable - 16 June - in relation to Ms Howlett's resignation, where the Premier said the government would continue to deliver stability and certainty for the Tasmanian community.

A lack of integrity, misleading parliament and trying to cover it up is the absolute antithesis of stability and certainty for the Tasmanian community because we have these two vacant chairs on the government benches. It's an utterly delusional statement, which is where I want to go, because a fish rots from the head and the integrity deficit in this government really does start with the Premier and it has been on show for quite a long time now.

We've spoken a lot in this place already in this debate about Ms Howlett and Ms Ogilvie, but the Premier himself has many questions to answer in relation to the handling of other issues, and the absolute case in point I want to put on the record is the stadium. Is it any surprise that ministers in this government feel they can be loose with the truth, or try to cover up with clever comments or clarifying statements, when the actions that are demonstrated at the top are so utterly disingenuous?

The stadium is a case in point. The original deceit when it came to this was the Premier looking Cassy O'Connor in the eye and saying, 'Don't worry, a stadium won't be part of our Tasmanian bid'. That is still a story on the AFL website today, as I understand it, and clearly, as we have heard in Public Accounts Committee hearings and other questioning, that is absolutely not the case. The government was working with the AFL well before that statement to deliver a stadium that's opposed by the majority of Tasmanians.

The commitment of '$375 million and not one red cent more' was an absolute clanger when it comes to the credibility of the Premier on this stadium. Of course no-one believed it at the time, but it was said on day one of an election in 2025 to try to deal with an issue that was deeply politically toxic - $375 million and not one red cent more. Of course, we've now seen in the Budget from a couple of weeks ago that there's hundreds and hundreds of millions of dollars in it. There's a $375 million cash injection from this government, there's $490.7 million that the Mac Point Development Corporation is going to have to borrow and there's at least

$30 million every single year that we will borrow, that will come out of the general government sector, to pay the interest on the loan for the stadium. This is the same place where we pay for our nurses, our teachers and our police officers.

Of course, the original commitment as part of forming government was to put this through a Project of State Significance (POSS) process, but as soon as the Planning Commission indicated that it wasn't going to get pushed around, we had this special approval legislation and the Premier was willing to drag down the reputation of the Tasmanian Planning Commission panel members by trying to argue that they had a preconceived opinion, that they weren't credible or genuine in this space, even though they are absolute experts.

Then most recently, we had the commitments to Mr Harriss, including funding the Auditor-General to do six audits. We heard last week in Estimates that the Auditor-General doesn't even have enough money to do three audits.

Time expired.

[2.46 p.m.]

Mr ABETZ (Franklin - Treasurer) - Speaker, integrity is vital in all areas of our life, both individually and in public life. Integrity requires that procedural fairness is respected, irrespective of what might be seen as a political advantage to be gained. Integrity requires no mentioning of staff members by name, yet this is what has occurred by those who are claiming integrity. Integrity requires not blandly asserting a staff member has committed a crime under parliamentary privilege, integrity requires balanced language is employed in discussing issues of the day, not the Stalin/Rockliff analogy that we were feted to by the Leader of the Greens. Integrity requires, in matters such as this, no extravagant hyperbole. Integrity requires a mature understanding of the legal restrictions that are placed on people in specific matters such as that which we have been discussing. Integrity requires not misusing parliamentary privilege. Integrity requires no allegation of cover-up when those asserting it know there are genuine legal restrictions in relation to what is able to be commented on. In that regard, I thank the member for Clark, Ms Burnet, for her contribution in relation to that.

We are told about the need for trust in public life and, unfortunately, I think all of us from time to time may gild the lily somewhat or seek a headline by making assertions. I think on occasions such as this, we should all reflect -

Time expired.

Matter noted.

APPROPRIATION BILL (No. 1) 2026 (No. 18)
APPROPRIATION BILL (No. 2) 2026 (No. 19)

Reports of Estimates Committee A

The following Reports of Estimates Committee A together with the minutes of proceedings, transcripts of evidence and copies of additional information were brought up and laid upon the Table by **Ms Burnet** on the Estimates of:

The Premier;

Minister for Health, Mental Health and Wellbeing, Minister for Ageing, and Minister for Aboriginal Affairs;

Treasurer, and Minister for Macquarie Point Urban Renewal;

Minister for Infrastructure and Transport, Minister for Local Government, and Minister for Housing and Planning; and

Minister for Business, Industry and Resources, Minister for Skills and Jobs, and Minister for Police, Fire and Emergency Management.

Reports received.

Reports of Estimates Committee B

The following Reports of Estimates Committee B together with the minutes of proceedings, transcripts of evidence and copies of additional information were brought up and laid upon the Table by **Mr Fairs** on the Estimates of:

Minister for Energy and Renewables, Minister for Parks, and Minister for Sport;

Attorney-General and Minister for Justice, Corrections and Rehabilitation, and Minister for Small Business, Trade and Consumer Affairs;

Minister for Primary Industries and Water, and Minister for Veterans' Affairs;

Minister for Education, Minister for Children and Youth, and Minister for Disability Services;

Minister for Tourism, Hospitality and Events, Minister for Racing, and Minister for Women and the Prevention of Family Violence; and

Minister for Environment, Minister for Innovation, Science and the Digital Economy, Minister for Community and Multicultural Affairs, and Minister for the Arts and Heritage.

Reports received.

APPROPRIATION BILL (No. 1) 2026 (No. 18)
APPROPRIATION BILL (No. 2) 2026 (No. 19)

In Committee - Estimates Committees - Consideration of Reports

[2.52 p.m.]

Mr WILLIE (Clark - Leader of the Opposition) - Chair, It's my pleasure to rise as part of the reporting back of the Estimates Committee to the House. It's been an extraordinary few weeks. If you look at the sitting days in this place, we've seen two ministers resign in two days, and not without just reason. We've had an extraordinary display from the government today, refusing to accept responsibility. Westminster traditions and conventions, and trust in government might not matter to this premier, but it matters to this parliament. We have relentlessly held this government to account when it comes to the secret legal fee scandal. Tasmanians, rightly, are questioning this government's integrity.

Everywhere I go in the community, people are stopping me and saying, 'Don't give up on those questions, Josh. It's our money'. It's not good enough that they're refusing to answer questions. I don't know what advice the Premier was relying on, and I'm sure he regrets this approach in hindsight, but we saw an extraordinary display through Estimates where there was a deliberate attempt to stonewall questions. Ministers, including the Premier, read off the same script all week: 'complex matters', 'there's legal confidentiality', 'I'm not going to comment further', 'I can't comment further'. It was unedifying to see the Premier of this state refusing to answer questions when they were reasonable questions that he could have answered without breaching legal confidentiality. He was relying on some advice where he could not comment on the questions. We found out a week later that that wasn't actually true because once he was under even more pressure, he did answer some of the questions.

Mr Rockliff had a different standard in 2006 when he was the acting opposition leader and moved a no-confidence motion in the deputy premier of the time about misleading through omission. As premier, two weeks ago, he did exactly what he was complaining about 20 years ago.

They can say that Tasmanians don't care about this issue. I beg to differ. Tasmanians care about this issue because it's their money. If we can't trust the government on these sorts of matters of integrity, how can Tasmanians trust anything they say on health, housing, education and the issues that do matter to Tasmanians, that they want this parliament talking about. The government can blame other members of parliament for doing their job, but the distraction is purely on them. They have breached Westminster conventions, they have not been upfront with Tasmanians, and they have had two ministers who have become absolute liabilities for the government. It's actually been in the government's interest to stand them down and put them on the backbench so that we can move on and start talking about other things.

That said, this issue is not going away. Until all of these secret legal fees are in the public domain, this issue will remain a stench around this government. If Mr Rockliff and Mr Abetz can't be honest about the secret legal fee scandal, why should Tasmanians trust them on hospital cuts, school cuts and job cuts in our public service?

We know that after 13 years of Liberal government, they are cutting jobs and services to pay for their waste. The Premier has put Eric Abetz in charge of that, and Mr Abetz has a track record in Canberra of doing exactly that. We've seen a $1.5 billion figure in the back of the

Budget that outlines the cuts across Health, Education and the entire public service. We've seen the government try and deny it.

We've seen different approaches from different ministers. We've had the Treasurer saying that he is going to make savings in Health, which means cuts. We've had the Health minister saying there are no cuts but we know that in real terms there are cuts. We know they have vacancy control. They're not replacing positions, and we know that's going to impact Tasmanians because they rely on health services. They're in the most demand they've ever been in.

They are cutting these sorts of things to pay for their waste over 13 years, and there's no greater example of that than the *Spirit*s debacle: over half-a-billion dollars to bail out the company. It's still in financial strife, with $1 billion of debt. The Treasurer has been unable to say whether there'll be future bailouts, whether it will be able to trade and be profitable or whether it will require further support. There's no greater example of waste than that, and their approach is to just start cutting things.

Something I'm passionate about, as a former school teacher, is education. We heard in Estimates that 150 jobs will go, with $228 million in cuts in Education. You can't cut 150 jobs out of Education and not impact the support for schools, and teaching and learning in schools. We heard in Estimates that some of these positions, administratively, will come from schools. If you're cutting leadership, management, administration, data, finance, HR, IT, marketing, and project and policy, that will impact schools.

I know from my time as a teacher, IT was already stretched to the bone. In fact, if you had an IT issue, you usually had to wait a week or a fortnight for an IT person to come to your school because they were going across so many schools. That would impact the teaching and learning you could do because the IT wouldn't work. If you're going to cut more of those positions, it will impact teaching and learning, particularly in the modern world with the need for young Tasmanians to learn about technology and how they can use that. That's 150 jobs going from Education. We don't know from where exactly. We just know some overarching areas.

We have a voluntary redundancy program opening up across the public service. We know that there's a cost to that, but that hasn't been budgeted for either. There will be questions that continue to plague the Treasurer and this government throughout the next few years as they cut these jobs and services to pay for their waste.

TAFE is another area I'm passionate about. You can't have a diverse economy or build the skills of Tasmanians by cutting TAFE. We saw that last year with Creative Industries. Creative Industries is a strength of ours. You think about the MONA effect on the state. However, you have the Skills and Jobs minister saying that those courses are no longer needed. There is also lab techs, another important course for Tasmania.

We know TasTAFE does a good job of lifting people out of poverty and skilling up Tasmanians, but this government's approach is to cut it. Investing in TAFE actually invests in the economy. It helps grow the economy, it helps grow skills, people become employed, they start paying taxes, which help deliver services. It's a very poor approach to TasTAFE.

Through right to information, we raised with the minister that part of the plan is to increase fees for TasTAFE by 7 per cent across the board. That's higher than inflation. They're not only cutting the services and courses so that people are looking at opportunities on the mainland; they're actually lifting the course fees across the board and putting up even further barriers to Tasmanians being able to skill up. That's the wrong approach.

There are 118 jobs forecast to go from TasTAFE, including teachers, and we know that they're going to deplete their cash reserves. TasTAFE is in all sorts of trouble under this government. It's Tasmanians who are paying the price for this government's waste over 13 years. Chair, I'm going to keep my contribution quite short because I know that there are many members who will want to make contributions and we need to make sure that we pass supply.

I will conclude with these remarks. I know that the independent member for Franklin talked about Estimates in an opinion piece, and he's written to other members, and I acknowledge that. Having been a member of both Houses, I've seen Estimates play out in both ways. They both have their advantages and disadvantages. I think the upper House can become a bit regimented in having to go through every line item, and the lower House you get this stonewalling from ministers at times and a political overlay at times, but it does actually allow flexibility to go to matters that are in the public interest.

There is an opportunity to have a look at it. I'm open to that, but I don't think we can say that there was just a whole theatre of parliament all week through the Estimates hearings. I believe there were good questions asked. I believe there were good answers given at times, but there was stonewalling at times, too, which is a frustrating thing to see. I highlighted that at the start of my contribution, but I'll conclude with just those remarks.

Mr BARNETT - Chair, I appreciate the opportunity to make a contribution with respect to Budget Estimates and welcome the opportunity to say we do need a responsible, financially sensible budget that's delivering a strong economy and a caring community.

I thank the chairs of the Budget Estimates committees that I was part of, and I thank all members of the committee for their contributions.

I thank and congratulate again the Treasurer, Eric Abetz, for his responsible approach to this Budget and, in terms of building our economy, creating opportunities and delivering a more positive future for Tasmania.

I will address obviously the key areas in my portfolio, as well as touch on some key points in my new portfolio of Environment and Climate Change. Before I do that, I will reflect on the fact that this time last year the Labor Party was playing shenanigans and forced this state into early election based on the fact that they thought the Budget wasn't up to scratch and I was in the hot seat at the time as the Treasurer; then we were forced to an early election on 19 July.

The fact is the Tasmanian people sent a message to the Labor Party and sent a message to the entire parliament that we need to work together to collaborate and to get things done and to stay focused on the things that matter. That's certainly what I've been doing, and I know our government's been doing - focusing on the things that matter.

I hope that the tactics of the Labor Party in recent times are not a precursor to last year because I think the Tasmanian people have had a gutful of that. They want us to focus on the things that matter, that are important for this great state and the various communities within it, their families in particular.

As a minister of a Small Business, I will share a few remarks about the more than 42,000 small businesses that we have, which are really the lifeblood of our rural and regional communities.

We now have an economy in excess of $42.8 billion in terms of our gross state product, as well as unemployment at record low levels. What we do know is that a strong economy allows us to invest in those essential services, whether it's Health, whether it's Education, whether it's community safety or whether it's into our prisons or supporting vulnerable Tasmanians. The Premier talked about the $350 million in concessions that this state provides to Tasmanians doing it tough; those on concessions, $350 million a year because of the cost of living, because the cost of living is tough for so many Tasmanians. I'm pleased and proud to be part of a government that provides such concessions and I used that as an example at the beginning of my Budget remarks today.

With respect to my role as Attorney-General, Justice and Corrections and Rehabilitation, I indicate that we're injecting $143.1 million in the 2026-27 and across the forward Estimates period extra. That's an additional amount that recognises that Tasmania's justice system deserves that support; it's critically important for a thriving democracy. I often talk about the separation of powers and the parliament, the executive and the judiciary, and we need to ensure that we have a well-functioning and efficient judiciary. I caught up with Lloyd Babb SC just last week with members of the Justice Forum and others, and I am really looking forward to that report and recommendations by 30 June, with respect to the reforms necessary to deliver a more efficient justice system and more efficient court system.

Part of the Budget that was discussed during Budget Estimates, part of that contribution extra funding is $4 million for those women who have suffered as a result of forced adoption practices many decades ago. I note that upfront. It was just yesterday that I announced that the applications were now open for those mothers affected by those forced-adoption practices to put in an application for funding support for a redress scheme of $75,000, which would consist of financial assistance and payment for psychological and counselling support all in that one figure. We certainly stay very steadfast in our commitment to not only acknowledge the harm experienced by affected mothers, but also ensuring they receive meaningful support, recognition and access to assistance, recognising the profound and lasting impact of these historical practices. I've met many of those mothers affected and I know others here in this Chamber have as well

In addition to that, $450,000 extra for Keeping Women Safe in Their Homes program, an initiative to support the Commonwealth-funded program in 2026-27. That's a very important thing. Family violence, domestic violence is a scourge on our community, and we need to do more. We've announced that we will do more. To the victims of family violence, our heart goes out to them. That's why we need to be proactive in this space, and we are with a lot more work to do, not just targeted in this Budget but in terms of government policy going forward.

In terms of the *Sentencing Act 1997* reforms that I've recently announced, the general exclusion of good character evidence in relation to serious offences, while restricting that good

character evidence for those types of offences, recognised that prior good conduct does not diminish the harm caused by serious offending, particularly where the crime involves violence against another person. That's another initiative that's now well progressed, and there will be a draft bill open for consultation until 5 July, so I'll draw those listening to that for their attention.

I've also shared with the committee last week in Budget Estimates the government's plans to introduce legislation in response to the Bondi terror attack and the massacre on those people who suffered so mercilessly at that time in December at Bondi in Sydney. That legislation will prohibit the public display of symbols of terrorist organisations and registered hate groups under Commonwealth legislation. It will enhance the protections for people at places of worship and engaging in religious assembly, and it'll criminalise damaging a place of worship. I've already received positive feedback with respect to that, but that bill is now out for public comment as well.

We've consistently said that our legislative responses to the horrific attack at Bondi must be targeted towards preventing anti-Semitism and support for terrorist ideology, along with the Commonwealth urgently addressing intelligence and information-sharing failings. Part of the royal commission's interim report recommendations made it very clear there was information-sharing failings at the highest and very senior level. No Tasmanian, including our Jewish community, should fear attending a place of worship or be confronted by the display of terror symbols. Places of worship should always be places of sanctuary, community and peace. I put on record my vested interest as a member of the Newstead Baptist Church, which I really love and cherish with my wife Kate and my family and so many others across this great state as well. Whatever your faith, that place of worship should be protected and be a safe place.

In terms of the justice systems, I am very pleased to be able to advise of the exciting opportunities to ensure access to justice now in Circular Head at Smithton, and likewise on the west coast at Queenstown. Good work has been done here by the Magistrates Court and this is allowing for access to justice, like it should be. People on the west coast deserve that access and likewise, in Circular Head in the far north-west. These are more recent initiatives; 6 May is my advice in terms of that suitable location being announced by the Chief Magistrate, Cath Geason, and my department is working with the West Coast Council to update facilities at the court site in Queenstown. We've also got the department's ICT video conferencing upgrade and again, this is all part of our budget and our strong agenda to ensure access to justice. Of course, that's on top of the Burnie court, which is a huge development in terms of a justice precinct in the north-west coast based in Burnie, with that work now underway. Congratulations to Fairbrother, the successful contractor, and no doubt many other jobs and contractors will be involved in the time ahead as that court is built.

I made mention during Budget Estimates of our recently announced reform to address the serious consequences arising from the High Court's case of *Bird v DP*. There's been a lot of interest in this all around Australia. It's been raised at the Standing Council of Attorneys-General consistently over a number of years. That judgment has caused significant concern and has certainly effectively limited the ability of some victim/survivors to pursue civil claims where abuse was perpetrated by a person considered 'akin' to an employee. In practical terms, that meant organisations could avoid liability in circumstances where, frankly, the community would expect accountability. We've already shown leadership there with amendments to the *Civil Liability Act 2002* to provide for vicarious liability in matters on a prospective basis. However, we realised that that didn't go far enough based on that High Court ruling, so that

reform is both necessary and fair and it reflects our commitment to standing with victim/survivors in strengthening the integrity of our legal system.

I want to put on record my thanks to Steve Fisher, the CEO of Beyond Abuse, who's been a very strong advocate in this space for more than a decade. I've known Steve for more than a decade and he's been a strong advocate who has never given up. I was able to announce that government position with Steve just some weeks ago, and I congratulate him also on his award of the medal of the Order of Australia just a few weeks ago and pass on sincere congratulations during that King's Birthday long weekend announcement.

In terms of Corrections and Rehabilitation, I take this portfolio very seriously. I know there's been quite a bit of media about it, but during Budget Estimates we were able to talk about the plans the government has for Ashley and the plans to repurpose the Ashley Youth Detention Centre in the Meander Valley. I know the area well, having been born and raised at Hagley in the Meander Valley and with an office in Deloraine, and I'm certainly aware of the views of the local community. Many are for it but there are some against it as well, and I respect their views and accept that. I look forward to consulting with the local community, obviously with the council and with the landowners who are adjacent to or near the Ashley Youth Detention Centre. Our views and our position that I've announced makes it clear that it will accommodate up to an expected estimate of 40 prisoners in a minimum-security adult facility and it'll be used for agriculture and rehabilitation purposes.

We did have the Hayes Prison Farm all those years ago in the Derwent Valley, but that was closed down by the Labor-Greens government in 2012. I think in hindsight most people see that as a misstep and a wrong decision, but that is in the past and I'm looking forward and on behalf of the government have made that announcement. There has been some concern that it could become in due course a maximum-security prison. That would absolutely undermine the fact that it would be for minimum-security prisoners and those at the end of their prison sentence who are transitioning to civilian life. It would allow them to do education and training in agriculture and related skills with training facilities and services. I'm very much looking forward to working with the community and key stakeholders to progress that.

Another reason it will not be a maximum-security prison is because we're investing $45.9 million in our Budget into a new maximum-security unit at Risdon in the south, the Correa Unit. That will provide accommodation for up to 50 prisoners as well as a dedicated drug and alcohol rehabilitation unit and will really help prisoners tackle drug and alcohol addictions. I must say I was very surprised, then disappointed, with the Greens' alternative budget that indicated they wanted to do away with that particular initiative. That's a matter for the Greens as to how they would respond to that during this debate and going forward, because I think it's very disappointing that they have that view.

At least they have a view, though, as opposed to the Labor opposition, which did not put forward an alternative budget. They have no policies and no plans and still are vacuous in terms of their agenda for the future, which is why the community is questioning their future.

In terms of Consumer Affairs, at Estimates I made it very clear and thanked the committee for its work, particularly in terms of the fuel issues coming out of the Middle East. We don't know but we hope there will be a ceasefire. We're all hoping for that, and the fuel will then flow and some alleviation and concerns will be mitigated or alleviated in the months and years ahead, but the fact is my Department of Justice and Consumer Affairs has done a

terrific job of ensuring that fuel prices are being accurately reported. We've done a lot of work, and I want to put on record my thanks to the department.

Between 23 March and 22 April, for example, CBOS audited 287 fuel retailers and, pleasingly, 96 per cent were complying with their obligations with targeted audits and they're continuing. The audit identified 10 instances of non-compliance, and I won't go through those exact details, but congratulations and thanks to my department in that regard. With respect to Budget Estimates, there's so much preparation and effort by both of my departments, and I say thank you on the record again to the secretaries and to my deputies and the various wonderful members of the State Service who have done so much to progress that effort.

I wanted to make mention of WorkSafe as well. The Budget provides $14.1 million total expenses in 2026-2027, ensuring continued focus on safety, healthy and productive workplaces. There's a big job to do in undertaking the modernisation of the *Residential Tenancy Act* with a discussion paper out for comment. I meet with colleagues in this place, on the crossbench and across the parliament in terms of this, members of the public and key stakeholders. There's a lot of feedback coming in. I look forward to continuing to work with colleagues in this place to collaborate to progress reform to the residential tenancy laws to ensure we get a balanced approach and an improved system.

I mentioned in the opening remarks of my Estimates contribution the importance of small business. I come from a small business, born and raised on a farm in Hagley in the Meander Valley and I ran my own business. I established, owned and operated my own business for 13 years, employed 15 people, started with nothing, and I know that small business people, primarily the small businesses, a good majority in Tasmania, are family businesses.

Ninety-seven per cent of our businesses are small business. Over 82 per cent are micro-business, which is five employees or less, and a good majority are family businesses. I pay a tribute to them right here and right now and say we've got your back, and we will do everything we can to deliver an environment in which you can prosper and succeed and grow. We want to ensure that we can cut the red tape, streamline the process and, in fact, get out of the way so that you can get on and do very well.

We now have a refreshed Business Tasmania website with new information, improved functionality, a grants and fund finder, and a tools and support finder, and I say thank you to those in the Business Tasmania part of our department who are delivering that important service. The Small Business Growth Strategy is definitely an important part of our plans going forward and that'll be setting priorities and action areas for the next 10 years. Consultation on that new strategy has been underway all this year and there's more work to do on that.

We've had a lot of feedback on that. I pay a special tribute to the Tasmanian Chamber of Commerce and Industry for their leadership role. I thank the Tasmanian Small Business Council, Hospitality Tasmania, COTA Tasmania, Pharmacy Guild of Tasmania as well for their submissions on that strategy and, of course, that will be released in the second-half of this year.

In terms of trade, we are absolutely gunning it in terms of Tasmania delivering more than $6 billion in exports now. In terms of good exports, that's $4.7 billion; what that means is jobs. Exports means jobs, and the more exports, more jobs. I'm so pleased and proud of our trade and investment advocates and put on record my thanks for their good work in the various

locations around the world; they are acting for and on behalf of our exporters and congratulations on what they're doing.

The trade missions and international trade shows a further generated $5.5 million in outcomes and my recent trade and investment mission to Singapore and Indonesia, again, very successful with meetings in terms of fuel security, in terms of fertiliser, and you saw the announcement just a week or so ago, with an extra 25,000 tonne of urea or fertiliser announced at Brian and Michele Lawrence's farm at the back of Meander there. Very good news, and thank you to Incitec Pivot and, of course, TasFarmers who were part of that announcement and are so supportive of our efforts to advance the cause of our farmers and the agriculture in Tasmania. Our trade strategy has now been released and the Budget invests more than $30 million over the forward Estimates to deliver that trade strategy.

I'm very pleased and proud of that and it's certainly people and businesses, when I go overseas and even interstate, they're incredulous with respect to what Tasmania has to offer: not just gourmet food and wine and a world-class whiskey and the like, but in terms of the Tasmanian brand, the clean, fresh, pure, natural brand, they love it. One hundred per cent fully self-sufficient in renewable energy, targeting 200 per cent and that's a legislated target. I want to do a shout-out to Tasmania's leadership in terms of one of the world's five Antarctic gateway cities, the Antarctic and Southern Ocean, as the minister responsible. It's great to see that that's $200 million annually that is delivering to the Tasmanian economy, obviously particularly in the south, but not just in Hobart; even at Triabunna, Elphinstone Engineering, employing dozens and dozens of locals, delivering Antarctic support for that great work and likewise 1100 jobs. That's what it's delivering for Tasmania.

The Budget is backing our exporters, it's backing investment, backing jobs in Tasmania and globally connecting us where we need to be.

There's a lot more work that we can do and we want to continue to build confidence, grow our economy and deliver a caring community.

I want to share a few remarks at the end as the newish minister for Environment and Climate Change and I thank Eric Abetz for sitting in as the acting Minister for Environment and Climate Change and to say how pleased and proud I am to have that role and to say I take it very seriously. Of course, we now have zero net emissions in Tasmania since 2014. It's a very good result for Tasmania and it's unsurpassed across Australia and in most of the globe. It's an incredible result and I know the former minister for Environment, the member for Braddon, is also a strong advocate on that result and I'm very pleased to be following in the footsteps of the former minister. I thank, on the record, Madeleine Ogilvie for her leadership and her advocacy in this portfolio and all of her portfolios and thank her for her work and her service as I do, of course, the honourable Jane Howlett for her work and her service. She's a wonderful, kind person, loves her community and is so dedicated, and I thank her for her efforts in every respect.

In terms of the environment, I would like to do a shout-out to Tasmania's record when it comes to being 100 per cent fully self-sufficient in renewable energy. Thank you to the 100 years or more of Hydro workers and their families in tough conditions. They are the pioneers who have delivered for Tasmania so that we can benefit now when you have 85 per cent of our energy from Hydro and of course 15 per cent or a bit less from wind and of course solar as well. We're very pleased and proud of our record but we have legislated in 2020

when I was the minister for Energy to target 200 per cent by 2040 and that's where we want to go. We've set a very ambitious agenda and I'm looking forward to that progressing.

Mr Winter - You haven't built any new generation since then.

Mr BARNETT - That's why I'm looking forward to that progressing. You would have seen there's a lot of work that has been done. There's more work to be done, so we're heading absolutely down the right track with more work to do.

I want to shout out and recognise our 50 per cent of the state in reserves, whether it be World Heritage National Park or some sort of reserves; we are way ahead of our mainland counterparts, way ahead of the rest of the globe. You would have seen in the USA they're targeting 30 per cent. Well, we're already at 50 per cent. This is an area that I'm just flagging. I'm very concerned with the federal government's plans for offsets. Put that on the record and their plans, of course, in principle, sound good, but we do not want to disadvantage Tasmania when we are already so far ahead of the rest of Australia. I am very concerned and I'll be expressing those concerns directly to my federal colleagues and federal ministers in due course in the not-too-distant future. A lot of work is going on behind the scenes.

I thank my department, Jason Jacobi and his team for the wonderful work that they do. I thank Andrew Paul and Catherine Murdoch, the chair and the CEO of the Environment Protection Authority (EPA) for the work that they do. I've had contact with them in the last six days since I was in this role - it's nearly seven days, in fact - so I'm looking forward to working with them as well. Of course, fourthly, I want to mention waste recovery, which we have put in place thanks to the good work of former ministers, one of whom is in the Chamber today, minister Jaensch, and of course, minister Ogilvie. Thank you for your leadership, your efforts to put in place a waste recovery program that's now working and it's only going to get better. It will improve as we become more waste-conscious and are able to continue with our objectives to deliver a cleaner and healthier community.

I'm very pleased and proud of this Budget. I hope it will pass. I commend it to all members in this place. I thank the Treasurer for his hard work, and that of his office, and that of the Treasury officials, because I know how hard they work in the lead-up to the Budget. People in this place and elsewhere probably have no idea of the amount of time and effort that's put in to preparing for the delivery of a budget and then making it happen. It is important that this Budget passes this week so that we can get on with the job of delivering on our agenda, to deliver a stronger economy and a caring community.

[3.31 p.m.]

Dr WOODRUFF (Franklin - Leader of the Greens) - Chair, I thank the Deputy Premier. I agree that we want to get on with passing the Budget. I'm a bit concerned that we haven't yet heard from the Leader of the House. Our understanding from members in this place - the opposition, Greens and Independent members - is that the parliament was going to sit until 9 pm tonight. We haven't had an adjournment extension. Normally, it's the practice of the House on a Tuesday to finish at 6 pm, but because of the state funeral we've had the House didn't start until 1 pm. We haven't yet heard that we'll be continuing through to 9 pm. I encourage the government to do that because I think it is the will of people in this place to be able to swiftly complete the budget replies and get on with the business of passing the Budget. I think I can speak for non-government members in encouraging the government to extend the hours of sitting tonight.

I will talk now about my experience of the Estimates process. It was a deeply disappointing exercise. It started to unravel the Premier's credibility as a person with integrity. We have heard him talk about transparency and accountability for many years now. Every question we asked him over the four hours was in relation to the legal matters, the payment of legal fees, the payment of taxpayer money to his ministers, Ms Ogilvie and Ms Howlett - now former ministers, and also the payment of legal fees to the government backbencher, the honourable Mark Shelton, member for Lyons.

What we have in the answers tabled today is that over half-a-million dollars has been spent by Liberal government members on legal fees. We are still none the wiser what that is for. We don't know if they were legal fees incurred in the course of ministerial duties because we've had confusing information from the Premier, and he expects us to take him on his word. The problem with that is what we heard in Estimates, the answers he gave me and other members of the Greens, the Labor Party and independents who asked him similar questions over the week, he has since directly contradicted.

He contradicted himself in the sworn testimony he gave to parliament in the Estimates committee hearing where he spoke on Monday. He's since contradicted his responses in a written letter in response to the Greens and independents, and in statements he's made to the media. A number of times he has contradicted the statements he made in the House and during Estimates. That leads us to ask: was the Premier misleading parliament when he gave us those responses? Was he being deliberately obtuse? Was he actively refusing to answer questions that he subsequently found within himself he had the capacity to answer? The only reason he subsequently went on and provided more information that he'd refused to provide to the Estimates committee was because of the public pressure. It became unbearable. The relentless questioning from the Greens, Labor members and Independents over the weeks since the Estimates process has unravelled Mr Rockliff's answers. He has more than made a hash of it. He's shown himself to be contradictory and potentially misleading of Parliament. There is a whole bunch of things we need to unpack here.

The matters at hand are serious, not just because more than half-a-million of taxpayers' money has been spent in secret, only now revealed to Tasmanians because of the work of the Greens and other members in getting the information out of the government - over three years, mind you, but because of the matter of integrity and what it says about the government and its capacity to function in good faith for Tasmanians. That is really the principle at stake here.

It's not just a principle that's an esoteric thing that sits on a wall on a plaque. Integrity is about Tasmanians being able to trust the government to do what it says it will do. What we've seen is a culture of secrecy from the Liberals that permeates everything they do.

It permeates the way they don't respond to serious questions about what's happening in the Health department. They remove information they once used to provide: monthly updates have become quarterly updates, have become annual updates. We have the Minister for Children and Young People saying she can't tell Greens member for Bass Cecily Rosol how many children and young people are in watch houses because that has to go to the Corrections minister. We have ministers of the environment refusing to answer questions about antibiotics, animal health and the impact of antibiotics on the waterways. They point the finger to the EPA, which points the finger to the department of Primary Industries, and we have a merry-go-round where Tasmanians never get information.

At stake here is a premier who has refused to answer questions honestly when asked but we do know from the answers that he gave during Estimates that in the last three months alone, on top of the $300,000 of taxpayers' money that has gone to former minister Ms Howlett's legal expenses, there has been another $97,000. So, there is $405,000, I think the figure is, of money that's been spent on legal fees for Ms Howlett. There has been $120,000 for former minister Ms Ogilvie in legal fees, and some $15,000 for Mark Shelton MP, member for Lyons. These things are now facts and that's the best information we have to hand but we don't know whether these legal fees were accrued by these members of the government in relation to their ministerial responsibilities.

The policy and guidelines for the grant of indemnities and legal assistance to public officers for the state of Tasmania, which the Premier swore he followed to the letter in the decisions that he has taken and the decision about granting legal fees, stipulates that indemnity may not be provided in relation to civil proceedings if the proceedings didn't arise from or relate to the employment, office or official duties and functions.

If the proceedings have been initiated or have been personally prosecuted by the public officer - in this case a minister, unless those proceedings form part of a necessary and legitimate defence to other legal proceedings in relation to which an indemnity or legal assistance has been provided by the Crown, there may not be a reason for those legal fees to be covered.

We need to know whether the former ministers have accrued those legal fees on the basis of ministerial portfolio work, and which ministerial portfolio they were accrued as a result of.

We had a minister who all week was stonewalling and has only come to tell us the truth subsequently after the Estimates table, kicking and screaming as a result of further pressure. He also, I believe, was possibly misleading in the comments that he made in answer to my questions about whether the legal costs that were approved for Ms Ogilvie related to a matter that predated her position as a minister.

The Premier said:

> I'm not able to comment.

He said later, noting the Chair's comments and he meant in relation to legal matters:

> I cannot provide any further information.

He went on to say:

> I am unable to comment. Ms Ogilvie will provide comments when she is legally able to do so.

That implied that he had some advice, some legal advice or non-legal advice that was preventing him from telling us the answer at the table. This is the same question that we asked him in a letter, at which point he did later provide an answer, after saying he couldn't do it. He pretended he had advice that did not allow him to speak to the Estimates committee, but after pressure he subsequently did provide that information.

It is deeply concerning to see the level of dishonesty that seems to be pretty comfortably displayed by the Premier. We have to ask ourselves: how can it be that we have a premier who has admitted in the answers that he provided to the Greens that his office did have discussions with Ms Ogilvie about the clarification statement that she provided to the Estimates table last year, and that he didn't check on that clarification statement until a week after the Estimates. We asked him that question during Estimates, and he didn't answer it. Yet, when we provided a letter and an abundance of pressure in conjunction with some Independents, the Premier was all of a sudden able to provide information.

The Estimates table ought to be a place where we get answers, and the reason that integrity matters is because this government is responsible for handling matters of hundreds of millions, billions of dollars of taxpayers' money.

I don't want to have a lengthy response because I will be talking about these matters elsewhere, but I can't let it go past without saying the heaviness that the Greens members feel with the responses from government ministers to the cuts that they are making in jobs and in output and defunding of programs across all the portfolio areas.

It is painful to see what happens in the third and the fourth year of the Estimates under Treasurer Abetz's Budget, under Jeremy Rockliff, the Premier's Budget, because it is the erosion of essential services in Tasmania and the vacating of support for some of the most vulnerable people through community services, and a complete removal essentially of funding towards protecting our natural values and the places and the protected areas that make Tasmania the beautiful place that it is.

Just this morning, we had the Premier talking about adult literacy. I said to Vica Bayley, the Greens member for Clark, I don't understand what the Premier is spinning here because what his government has done is to defund adult literacy. I don't know how he's got the gall to stand up and talk about our literacy when I know that the people at the Geeveston Community Centre are absolutely desperate about the fact that they are losing the 26Ten funding for the few days a week of worker who they have who does incredible outreach for older people, people with disabilities, people with reading difficulties; just keeping them in touch with society, being able to function and being able to take advantage of services, being able to live in the community, giving joy and hope through simply engaging with the gift of learning to read and the gift of being able to communicate.

This state has a desperately low level of functional literacy, as many other states in Australia do, and that's why it's such an important and precious resource, that community organisations around Tasmania, all of the good people who do the literacy education of adults in particular, that work will now come to an end. I don't know how the Liberals can make a choice to continue to fund a stadium which we know is going to cost, at latest estimate, $1.7 billion to 2.5 billion - all money that could be redirected towards much more critical housing and a new Royal Hobart Hospital infrastructure and, of course, going to maintaining the public service jobs which they are cutting that provide essential services that Tasmania needs.

It was a pretty depressing process not getting straight answers from ministers at the Estimates table. There were a few exceptions. Mr O'Byrne, the member for Franklin, I think, has proposed that there be a better approach to Estimates. I don't think it's fair to blame the

members of the Greens and independents and Labor Party for scrutinising and wanting to use every opportunity we can to get honest answers out of this government.

We will use every mechanism available, and it has only been through the relentless questioning, over years, of ministers, that we now have two ministers who've resigned. Fundamentally, from right back in the beginning, this is a story that has not and will one day be properly told, a story that goes right back to the 2021 election and to the pork-barrelling announcements by this government. That's a long tale to where we are today, but this is the work of the opposition, of the crossbench, the Greens, to hold the government to account, because the work of government is about making decisions about people's lives, and we have to be able to trust the people who are given that responsibility by Tasmanians.

[3.48 p.m.]

Prof RAZAY (Bass) - Honourable Chair, I rise to speak about my experience in the Estimates processes. They came at a time of a great need in the state and in northern Tasmania in particular, so it was interesting to hear the government's pressure points and its plans. While still counting the cost of the loss of Hawthorn, we now have the imminent closure of the historic James Boag's Brewery with the loss of 42 direct jobs and 145 years of an old icon. Meanwhile, the 200-strong Liberty Bell Bay workforce is still locked in an anxious limbo as the embattled manganese smelter searches for a buyer.

We are at a crossroads in northern Tasmania. During Estimates, I raised the need for a dedicated, long-term strategy to attract regular major events to the region, particularly in the leaner winter months. I believe a highly structured, collaborative and well-supported community and government-based response holds the key to the future. In northern Tasmania, a major event fund would provide strategic investment to attract, develop and grow events that deliver measurable economic and social benefits.

We want to see Launceston as a gateway to the west Tamar and east Tamar, to Dorset and Flinders Island and all the entire region has to offer. While having a large-scale event such as the Foo Fighters will always be welcome, we need to nurture homegrown ideas and talent, regularly showcasing it to the state, nation and the world. I point to the grassroot initiatives that have now become staples such as the Launceston Festivale, BeerFest and Junction Arts Festival and, as we heard in Estimates, you have helped fund this, with $3.5 million for Festivale and the Junction Arts Festival to 2027 and $150,000 for the Launceston BeerFest to 2026. Thank you.

Now, let's look beyond 2027. What's next? That was the very question asked at the Launceston Chamber of Commerce event I attended last Tuesday. The 175-year-old institution was seeking ideas from business people, local councillors and state and federal government representatives all invested in the north's future as to what can be potentially created at the Boags site and well beyond. I have also been contacted by several local business people about the possibility of a northern Tasmania beer trail. People have ideas. We are not waiting for the government to save us.

I acknowledge the statewide Tasmanian Government Events Strategy and applaud the work of Events Tasmania, Stadiums Tasmania, Tourism Tasmania, Visit Northern Tasmania and the City of Launceston. All these bodies are doing great work and have an important role to play, but the community wants to be master of its own destiny and is looking to this House for support.

Many people will call me a dreamer, but I will continue to push for Hawthorn AFL games in Launceston beyond 2027 and especially after 2031, when the Devils games are reduced from six to four. Four Devils games and two Hawks games at UTAS Stadium post-2031 would be an amazing outcome for the north. I will continue to push for it because it's what the community wants and it's what the northern economy needs. The more games contained at the revamped UTAS Stadium, the better.

During Estimates, I also posed the question for at least one Hawthorn home game to stay between 2028 and 2030. Imagine if it's a Hawthorn-Devils derby? It would be amazing and it would only help the Devils as the team looks to establish and expand. There is enough room for the two teams. I know the AFL pulls the rostering strings, but it's not an unreasonable request from a footy-loving state that's investing so much money into the new Hobart stadium to meet the AFL team for a team of our own. The fact is that there is no strategy in place on how to replicate a $20 million to $30 million economic boost delivered by the Hawks games to the northern economy. I have no doubt the north will embrace the Devils, but the economic impact remains unknown. We need assurances that the government will step up and seek out a new contest for UTAS Stadium to complement the Devils.

I was pleased to hear during Estimates from Stadiums Tasmania chief executive James Avery that the vision for UTAS Stadium, currently undergoing a $130 million redevelopment, is for it to be a truly multipurpose venue. The challenge now is how we attract major events, which leads us back to dedicated funding and the development of a long-term events strategy for the north.

Health, as the largest Tasmanian government portfolio, has great challenges. At Estimates I again raised the need to find an immediate solution to the bed-blocking crisis that the elderly and those waiting for NDIS-related care require. We heard how elderly people suffer and begin to do poorly when they are constrained to a hospital bed instead of a nursing home or other appropriate accommodation. In March 2026, Tasmania still had 103 people in acute care beds, 94 waiting for nursing home care and the remainder waiting for NDIS care and support. Yes, the federal government is responsible for aged care funding and service delivery. No, Tasmania can't wait for the government to act. We will need to continue to develop our own strategy. The use of subacute beds in district hospitals to accommodate these patients has been very helpful, with the occupancy rates in district hospitals increasing from 58 per cent eight months ago to 65.8 per cent this year. There is still room for improvement.

Of course prevention is better than cure, and the 20-Year Preventative Health Strategy, with $20 million over the next four years, shifts the dial from reactive to preventive. Recognising the importance of a job, a home, an education, transport, a secure food supply and community connection all heavily influence good health rather than just clinical care. This is a fundamental shift in approach and most welcome. It will go a long way to reversing the poor mental and physical health outcomes we currently experience. It's imperative that we get Tasmanians thinking about positive health.

The development of a neurodegenerative disease strategy and virtual reality training to support the de-escalation of behaviour issues among dementia sufferers is also welcome news. A dedicated clinical service plan is proposed and the focus on early diagnosis and stronger support for people living with dementia and their carers is welcome. The community-based assessment, monitoring and support in collaboration with federally-funded aged care and dementia care is also commendable.

Change comes when we take initiatives and the people with us. This includes our seniors. In Estimates I asked what we are doing to change seniors' perceptions that they feel neglected and marginalised, a burden rather than valuable members of our society. It's encouraging to hear that $3 million has gone into combating ageism over the past three years as part of Lifelong Respect: Tasmania's Strategy to end the abuse of older people 2023-2029. This includes recognising and fostering their skillset in the workforce. A focus on upskilling and reskilling mature-aged workers through TasTAFE will assist with this.

I note the 2024 figures showcasing that 22.3 per cent of learners were aged between 30 to 39; 13.7 per cent between 40 and 49; and 9 per cent between 50 and 59. Honourable Chair, 60 is the new 40. What are we doing to retain this cohort? We need to encourage more seniors to remain actively engaged in the workforce and subsequently their communities. Keeping experience in the workforce maintains a much-needed balance. They are groups who were previously looked up to and learned from as we went through growth in our own careers. They have the wisdom and knowledge, while the youth of today have the energy and passion.

'Locumisation' of part-time workers affects both seniors and the newly graduated workforce. I asked the Health minister what steps are in play to encourage people back into the workforce, particularly in this portfolio? It was encouraging to hear the government is exploring many avenues, including virtual clinics, fly-in fly-out and clinics patterned to meet workforce needs. Of course the priority is meeting the needs of patients, but we have to ask why people don't want to work full-time. We must address the root causes and improve workplace environments.

That brings me to workers compensation, which is a also significant issue for the community and a growing one for the government. I'll share the Health estimate that, according to 2024-25 figures, claims cost the whole of government $373 million. If you look at the reported figures over the past three years, there has been a significant increase in the number of claims, especially psychological claims, which increased from 22.4 per cent in 2023-24 to 30.1 per cent in the current year. These psychological claims, some or the majority, might be preventable, so it's important to identify the risk factors causing them. No-one should become sick from going to work.

Education remains one of Tasmania's biggest challenges and, in my opinion, failures. In Estimates I spoke of the latest NAPLAN results showing that almost four in ten Tasmanian students are behind in literacy and numeracy. Since 2008 our standards have dropped. We have spent $16.7 million to improve this since our last Estimates with Lifting Literacy and what are the results? The Progressive Achievement Test (PAT) shows in 2021 the number of children achieving the year level expected standard was 79.3 per cent, and in 2025 it was 82.9 per cent, a 3 per cent improvement in four years. The percentage of students in years 2 to 6 went from 79 per cent to 80 per cent, only a 1 per cent improvement, and worse, because this is when our children should be excelling or at least coping, in years 7 to 10 the PAT reading went from 74.9 per cent to 75.1 per cent. Not only is there less than a 1 per cent improvement, but 25 per cent of our children are still below the expected standard when they reach those critical years of 7 to 10.

Tasmanian years 11 to 12 retention and attainment are some of the lowest in the country. Only 55 per cent are getting their Tasmanian Certificate of Education and only 31 per cent of our students are attaining an ATAR. There is research showing that people aged 20 to 29 leaving Tasmania, compared to those who stay, are more likely to have a higher level of

education, be employed in higher skilled jobs and be better utilised in the labour market. This comes as there is an expectation that by 2050, 80 per cent of all jobs will require university or TAFE qualification. The response to this is that there are many other ways of measuring success other than a Tasmanian Certificate of Education or an ATAR score, and there is work being done around defining educational success. Our children are failing at every stage and as I pointed out in Estimates, only 53.7 per cent of year 1 to year 10 students at our state schools have an attendance of 90 per cent or higher, compared with closer to 70 per cent in 2019. We are still working through what success in education looks like. We need to do much better.

Quite rightly, a great deal of time was devoted to the salmon industry and the use of florfenicol antibiotics in Estimates. My questions centred around the public's main concern: how can we ensure salmon on sale is healthy and free of antibiotics? As we know, antibiotic resistance is a major global concern, with gene mutation speeding up the spread of resistance. I received assurances that our salmon remains safe to eat. We also learn that the Australian National Strategic Plan for Aquatic Animal Health will for the first time this year publish Australia's use of antimicrobials based on the registered purchase of antimicrobials. The Australian Antimicrobial Microbial Resistance Strategy 2023-28, a national surveillance plan, will then be rolled out. Let's keep a close eye on this. We are all concerned about the impact on the environment, but our number-one priority must be products that are safe to eat.

In my electorate of Bass there are two wind farm projects being pursued in the north-east region and both are causing great community angst. ACEN, Australia's Northeast Wind Farm project, is one of the largest wind farms proposed in Tasmania. This $4 billion 1260 megawatt operation will be powered by 210 turbines standing at 270 metres. The coastal community of Tomahawk is feeling threatened by the scale of the project, citing concern around things like environmental and cultural heritage impact, loss of visual amenity and the effect on local property prices.

A second project in the region involves renewable energy investor equity, with a plan to build a 224 megawatt wind farm with 28 wind turbines also up to 270 metres tall between Bellbuoy Beach and the Beechford. This community is not anti-renewables; they support renewable energy but done in the right way. They have reason to be concerned as well about the deadly threat to wildlife and there have long been reports of illness from wind farm exposure. A court in France in March this year recognised for the first time that wind turbines can affect people's mental health, even when located further away from houses than required by law. Let's ensure that we are properly consulting with locals and are fully informed as a government about the health issues, and let's not subject our people to this if there is the slightest hint of health impact.

Likewise, there are issues surrounding Firmus looking to develop a mega data centre in suburban St Leonards. Are we truly across the impact of AI factories? I asked a question around low-frequency humming, ongoing sound, heat and water usage to both the Minister for Energy and Renewables and the minister for Environment. Neither could give me assurances that the necessary work had been done, just the expectation that it had by someone possibly cancelled. We are also yet to fully understand the amount of power and water that will be required by Firmus and any future AI factories here. We need better than this. People living in the surrounding area of Firmus and any future development need surety. Let's hasten slowly on this project and make sure that all the I's have been dotted and the T's crossed. Our community is relying on us to do this.

All of these bring me to my favourite topic, prevention. The government's 20-year strategy with $20 million set aside in this year's Budget is welcome news, as is the falls prevention in the home, frailty reduction and oral care programs. So too is the $24 million, 12-month extension of the free statewide bus program. The incidental exercise associated with this is very healthy. Let's ensure we keep people on the buses with the relevant infrastructure required. People using public transport reduces our reliance on cars and the air pollution and congestion that go with them. What a difference governments can make at all levels by just providing the necessary pathways, parks and gardens for all of us to get out and enjoy nature and nurture our minds and bodies. A three-kilometre walk can reduce the chance of dementia by a quarter. Eating well, exercising your body and your brain are all tied to your quality of life at any age. The impact on the individual is immediate and can save them misery down the track. The effect on various government bottom lines is obvious.

That is a bit like music and dance. During Estimates I spoke of the profound medical benefits of music, singing in a choir, learning instruments and dancing. Engaging regularly lowers the risk of dementia and improves memory and mental and physical wellbeing. I am encouraged that the government is open to hearing from organisations that work with adults and seniors in the area of music and dance. For any of you who saw the Treasurer's Facebook post last week it's quite obvious that music and dance brings joy and laughter. Let's lean into life and laughter.

Overall, this year's Estimates provided a great insight into government thinking behind issues that deeply touch the lives of so many Tasmanians. It's important to consider achievements as well as perceived shortfalls. Having a healthier, happier community depends on it.

[4.11 p.m.]

Mr WINTER (Franklin) - Chair, I rise to speak about Estimates as I found them over the course of the week. Firstly, I acknowledge the chairs of the committees. I was a bit frustrated last year during Estimates. I found it a bit rigid, particularly with a huge crossbench, often we lost our flow of questions and it really sort of deteriorated or detracted from the ability to ask questions, but I thought the chairs all did a fantastic job, at least the ones - well, I'm sure they all did actually, but certainly the ones I engaged with.

They allowed some flow of questions. Yes, sometimes members got a few extra questions and sometimes they got a few less, but overall it was pretty fair and equal I think and that allowed particular lines of questioning to be taken and for us to extract more information. For that reason, I thought this year's Estimates were very good, particularly from my perspective within those Estimates that I was able to participate in, contribute to, such as Treasury, Macquarie Point Development Corporation, sat in on Sport with minister Duigan and Racing, of course, as well. I was very pleased with the amount of information that I was able to extract, getting a better understanding of some of the policies and positions that the government's been taking.

When it comes to Treasury - and let's face it, that's what this is all about, it is about the Budget itself - this is a budget which has taken a drastic change in approach from a government that's been prepared to really not do anything about the budget for the previous five years since the 2021 fiscal outlook came out from Treasury, where the long term plan was outlined that, if corrective action wasn't taken at that point in time, then things would just get worse and the corrective action would need to be larger. Effectively, having done absolutely nothing for those

five years, it has got to the point this year where we saw a budget which, I must admit, I did not expect the approach that's been taken.

It is so completely different to what we've seen from the government, but then again, I think about it and I think well, that's Eric Abetz, isn't it? That is this treasurer. The Premier, Jeremy Rockliff, has put Eric Abetz in charge of this budget and we shouldn't really be surprised about the budget that we've seen. This is highlighted in the last page of budget paper 4, that there's $1.5 billion worth of cuts to be found in the budget over the next four years, $700 million of those will come from Health. That is a fact. It is written in the Budget. It can't be disputed, though it is, I think, by the minister for Health, who's claimed that there are no cuts and the Premier and his office have continued to claim quite happily that there are no cuts. There is literally a page full of cuts in this budget and they will have real impact.

The rhetoric from government is that there are no new taxes and they're very proud of no new taxes but then, of course, you look at the short-stay levy which is now going to be in place, which is a new tax. It hypothecates funding for first-home buyers but, of course, the government's own statements about the bill hypothecate a larger amount of revenue will come in on the short-stay levy than will go out in support for first-home owner grants, which is the very definition of a tax. Therefore, on the one hand they're saying there are no new taxes, except there is, and on the other hand they're saying there are no cuts, except there definitely are. It's an interesting and confused position that the government's taken on this budget but one that I think's pretty transparent and I'm pleased that, throughout Estimates and the budget period, we were able to let Tasmanians understand exactly what the government is doing and why they are taking this approach to the Budget; well, because it's been wrecked.

The Tasmanian budget, when this government came into office in 2014, had over $200 million worth of net cash and investments in the bank and they decided to take a direct decision made by then-treasurer Peter Gutwein, who stood in this place and said that it was time to make the balance sheet work a little harder. It was time to take on some debt: this was pre-COVID, and since then, that's what they've done. They've accelerated spending to a level that we haven't seen before. We're now in a position where Tasmanians are going to spend more money paying interest on the debt that the Liberals have racked up than they do on our entire emergency departments and ambulance system combined.

Every year, that is where the starting point is: instead of receiving cash from our investments that we used to - we actually used to be net positive for our budget - now, we spend hundreds of millions of dollars and we'll continue to spend hundreds of millions more just paying interest on the debt. That's the situation that the Budget is in, the government had to take some action and they've decided to make massive cuts that are well and truly outside of what was recommended in the Treasury's long-term plan. Accelerate, and then the question is: will they really be able to do it? I think over the course of the next financial year, the question from parliamentarians, the question from the public sector workers who have to live this and from the public who rely on those services, is going to be: what are they actually going to do? What are they actually going to cut? It's one thing in the budget papers to say you're going to make $700 million worth of cuts to Health, but it's another thing to actually do it. The sort of services that are under threat here are pretty important.

The question that I have, particularly having seen some of those cuts in my electorate - I'd like to acknowledge at this point, Kerrie Duggan down at Cygnet Medical Centre, who, unfortunately, had her funding cut for her really important work down in the Huon Valley in

providing after-hours care to people in the Huon Valley. I was really lucky to go and see her about 10 days ago and talk about it. I'm very pleased that the government reversed its position on this. It's the sort of service that, I believe, bureaucrats and perhaps treasurers think is a good idea to make cuts like that, but actually it'll cost Tasmanians more. Taking money from those primary healthcare services that keep people out of hospitals will actually cost the state more. It's an example, along with the services that were proposed to be cut out of the Derwent Valley that I don't think our state can simply afford in terms of Tasmanian healthcare, but also in terms of the financial outcome that I simply do not believe will be well served.

This Budget also included - and I asked the Treasurer about this - a page full of election commitments, but it's not a completed list of election commitments because it doesn't include some of the really important election commitments that were made. The next stage of the North West Regional health plan was proposed to be funded and announced with much fanfare. It's simply not funded in this budget. It's an election commitment that isn't listed, but it was an election commitment, it's still on the Liberal Party's website, and that includes cancer services to patients on the north-west coast. I know Dr Broad will be speaking about this as part of his contribution but you've got the Premier prepared to stand next to cancer patients and announce the policy, but when it comes to his budget, simply not fund a core promise that was made to Tasmanians less than a year ago. It's pretty extraordinary.

Then there was the proposed seven-storey Northern Health Hub that actually formed the very basis of the Liberal's campaign launch. A seven-storey Launceston Health Hub that is completely unfunded in this budget; it's supposed to be $240 million within the Budget and not there - a core promise.

The Premier stood there only a couple of weeks ago and said, 'You had no commitments to Health infrastructure'. This guy makes the commitments and then doesn't follow through and actually deliver anything. He was saved by the federal government only two budgets ago on the Northern Heart Centre, when the federal government came in and supported the entire project after he had promised and not funded it. Yet here we have two more major health infrastructure projects that simply aren't there and, without cash, simply can't be delivered.

Of course, we have the minister for Health who claimed, within her Budget Estimates, that - and get this - the budget papers were wrong. They were incorrect, she said. That the mental health hub funding - the funding wasn't there and they are going to deliver the project by 2028. I haven't heard that one before, where a minister gets up and says that the budget papers are wrong, but that's what she said and told the committee that the papers were wrong and they were really going to deliver the project. I hope they really are going to deliver the project, but it makes you wonder about the entire budget if you've got ministers prepared to say that the budget numbers are incorrect, as she said at the time.

This is a budget which is, as I said, a massive departure from where the government's been going for five years, with five years of, effectively, disregarding any form of fiscal restraint simply driving up debt. Now it takes an axe to public services. It's something I should have expected from Eric Abetz. It's something all Tasmanians are going to see. The impact is not going to be in these budget pages; it's going to be what we see over the course of the next 12 months, with over $100 million of cuts to Health, then, as it continues to get worse. I think all of us are concerned about that.

There are also some pretty heroic economic forecasts within this Budget. When I say 'heroic', I mean forecasts that outline 8 per cent in real growth in the economy. This contrasts with what we're seeing from the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS). On 3 June, the ABS released its latest state final demand, which showed that for the March quarter it fell by 0.7 per cent - worse than any other state or territory. The Tasmanian economy is shrinking. This is on top of the latest employment data that came out only a couple of weeks before, which showed that 6600 jobs have been lost since this government was given confidence on the floor in August last year.

This has been driven by a decline in private sector investment, particularly after the Premier sold out industries. Racing, salmon and forestry were all given the flick by the Liberals as they chose themselves over the industries they promised they would represent. That's a shame and it has detracted from public confidence, particularly from those industries that want to invest.

You can argue all you like about whatever you want on the surface, but the simple fact is that this is real. This job data pre-dates the war in Iran and the massive increase in fuel costs. It pre-dates the issues at Liberty Bell Bay, which we certainly hope don't contribute any further to job losses. I thank both governments for continuing to support that important employer, and also those unions that have been flying the flag and fighting to keep them going.

You have businesses like Boag's that have now gone to the wall, Liberty Bell Bay that's under a lot of stress, Boyer and Rio Tinto and have outlined the stress they're under when it comes to their ability to get energy contracts going. You have major economic stress throughout the economy Yet in the Budget you have this heroic economic forecast that doesn't seem to be matched by any data that I'm seeing nor any of the real-world investments that we would like to see.

Aquaculture was spoken about a lot. Business confidence was also spoken about a lot. I was pleased last week to be able to go and visit some salmon workers. Dr Broad was there on the west coast with me at Strahan. I was also up at Devonport talking to them with the federal member for Braddon, Anne Urquhart. I was sad and surprised to not see a single member of the Liberal party at any of those events. It's almost as though they've sold that industry out as well and they don't want to be seen anywhere near it. Not brave enough to go and speak to the workers, not brave enough to show their faces.

I'm told the Premier was given a really nice serve late last year by the workers on the west coast, who told him exactly what they thought of his behaviour when it comes to the sell-out, of the letter he signed, the promise he made to them to not use them as a political pawn to form government, and yet that's exactly what he did. That goes to business confidence, it goes to public confidence. The truth matters, keeping your word matters, whether it's telling the truth about your court case and legal fees, or whether it's telling the truth to industries like racing and salmon. When you put your name and sign a letter, you should keep your promises. We haven't seen that from the Premier.

In terms of the Racing portfolio, there is a huge problem here for the government and, more importantly, for the industry. We currently have a racing industry which does not have any certainty over the future of its deed. Its public commentary is that there is a single racing deed. There's not. There's three. One of them expires in 2027.

We outlined during Estimates something that hadn't been publicly outlined before: that in recent times, Treasury has decided that because former attorney-general Elise Archer didn't formally sign a document back in 2018, I think it was, they've decided that they don't need to index the funding for the racing industry any more. That breaks the 2018 Liberal party election policy. That has been driving the industry to have less revenue than they were promised and that's having real impacts. Next year's racing season for both harness and thoroughbred racing will have, according to the draft, less racing, which means less funding and support for the industry and its regulation. It means that there's less support for economic activity within this industry itself. This is, effectively, what happened when they froze and decreased prize money under former minister for racing Jeremy Rockliff only a few years ago, and this is going to have really big impact.

Interestingly enough, they're not touching the race meets for greyhound racing, even though that was the proposed plan as part of the shutdown. Could it be around the legal advice that the government wouldn't even admit that they have? I asked the former minister for racing on goodness knows how many occasions - five, six or seven occasions - to outline what the government's defund racing policy means. Either she didn't understand what it means or she was unwilling to say what it means but here's the problem. The Premier's new position on greyhound racing 1.17 is that he's now not going to bring the bill on in the Legislative Council until he knows he has the numbers. One member who spoke in the committee said, 'Well, I don't say how I vote before I get to a second reading speech. I listen to all the debate'. Under his own new 1.17 policy, the bill will just never come on, which means this policy is in gridlock, which means this policy doesn't really exist.

The bill is stuck in the Legislative Council and the uncertainty through the deed impacts everyone, not just greyhound racing but harness and thoroughbred. That has a real-world impact on people who did not ask for this, who, in fact, received a promise that it wouldn't.

The government needs to explain what 'defund' actually means because if it means that come 2029, they will simply stop regulating greyhound racing, which I think it does, that is contrary to the law. The legislation brought in by the former racing minister, Ms Howlett, and supported by Mr Rockliff in 2024 outlines that the government has a role and responsibility in regulating this industry. They cannot simply do it without a bill. The whole purpose of the bill that went through this House was to say that it didn't need to. That's what the amendment says. It takes out the word 'greyhound' and just says they're going to do harness and thoroughbred racing.

The government's new position appears to be contrary to the law, if you take it at face value. The government's new position is to breach its own law, to defund the industry and wait until at least August before we see any sign of a new deed. This is a racing industry that is in serious distress. We had a minister who couldn't answer simple questions about it. It was not good enough. Regardless of everything else - the legal fees, the issues around the text messages and the breach of caretaker conventions, on a competence issue, Ms Howlett simply could not answer questions in that committee hearing. I think the right decision has been made for the industry.

I understand we have a job to do here this week. It's important that we get through the Budget and make sure the House deals with all the business it wants to get to this week. With that, I'll end my contribution.

[4.29 p.m.]

Mr BAYLEY (Clark) - Chair, I rise to give my contribution in response to the Estimates process and echo thanks to the chairs, to departmental staff who worked long and hard to prepare answers, whether they were or weren't given. I know that there's a power of work that goes into preparing for Estimates.

I am disappointed that we are apparently adjourning at 6 p.m. tonight. There was a clear commitment given by the Leader of the House last night to the rest of the House in the preparatory meeting that because we lost three hours of our time this morning, absolutely appropriately, for Father Tate's funeral, we sit through till 9 pm so that we could make good progress on these Estimates speeches. It seems that commitment is no longer going to be honoured. That's really disappointing because we are all absolutely committed to dealing with this supply bill. We all understand our responsibilities when it comes to the Supply Bill, and it would be good to be able to take our full quota of time to discuss the Estimates process, but because we may yet lose three hours as part of that debate, despite the commitment from the Leader of the House, I know others are making sure that their contributions are curtailed but just to put on the record, that commitment, it appears, is not going to be honoured. We may end up sitting late tomorrow night and Thursday night to get the business done, but that was the commitment to at least make up some of the time from today, tonight.

I want to start where I finished my Estimates contribution. I want to offer an acknowledgement to Tasmania's Aboriginal people and pay my respects and also acknowledge that they still have ancestral remains being held in the Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery (TMAG) - ancestral remains that they clearly would like to get back and clearly need to be returned to Country. I asked the question of the director and work is apparently progressing in that space, but clearly not quick enough because I asked the same question six months ago and effectively got the same answer. I'll start with an urging of the new Arts minister, whoever that may be, to work as hard as possible with TMAG and with the Aboriginal community to make sure that, not only ancestral remains, but appropriate cultural objects are returned to Aboriginal ownership and Country. I've put on the record, again, support for land returns through this parliament, a Heritage act that actually protects Aboriginal heritage and, of course, we Greens will stand in solidarity with Aboriginal people for truth and treaty.

Estimates was defined, really, by questions of integrity and stonewalling: the questions in relation to court matters, legal fees and what was known by who, which Cabinet minister knew what and when decisions were made. Absolutely appropriate questions to make. One lowlight - highlight - I'm not sure what sort of light you want to call it - but was a pause in the Sports minister's hearing where there was a dissent by myself in the ruling of the Chair, who closed down questions about these matters; closed down a question in relation to what that Cabinet minister knew about Cabinet decisions in relation to minister Ogilvie's fees. We stopped for 20 minutes or so and we got a ruling from the Speaker: the Speaker ruled the Chair in order and didn't allow the question. I accepted that and we moved on.

It was really interesting to note that the very next day the Chair actually came in and, for the rest of the week, the government or the chairs were actually permitting those questions, actually acknowledged that the questions were effectively in order and, as Cabinet ministers, they did have a responsibility - or they did have a responsibility to at least take questions when it came to their role as Cabinet ministers. Whether they answered or not was a matter for them and most of them didn't, but at least it was ruled in order in those subsequent days.

The Budget is clearly an exercise in priorities and choices and in this Budget it's really defined by cuts instead of revenue. We've got blank line items in the out years, which help get us to a false surplus in two years: $192 million in 2027-28, and $622 million 2029-30. Really, nothing in the Estimates process actually gave me any confidence that some of these figures were real. A reduction in spending from year to year simply never happens, and yet we've got one in a couple of years' time between next year and the following year. It never happens and yet this government has got one baked in. I think we, as a parliament, are already expecting supplementary appropriation bills before the end of the next financial year.

We know out there - we've had now a few weeks since the Budget was handed down - Tasmanians are scared and furious. They're really concerned about the reduction in already diminished services - whether it be in Health, whether it be in Housing, whether it be in Education or whether it be in environmental protection. Tasmanians are really afraid because they know that we're not getting those services already. Despite question after question, particularly in the Treasury portfolio, it's really clear again that this government and this Treasurer is absolutely not willing to look at new revenue-raising measures, despite the fact that it was Treasury, it was Saul Eslake, just about every expert who has given advice in this space has said you have to pull all levers. You've got to reduce spending, operational spending, you have to reduce infrastructure spending, and you have to raise revenue. That's the quickest, most effective and most prudent way to actually get the budget back on track, but again, the Treasurer completely ruled that out.

One of the things in the Treasury portfolio that I thought was incredibly telling and alarming was the funding for the Auditor-General. Funding for the Auditor-General was committed as something in the lead up to the stadium vote last year to the former member for Huon, Dean Harriss, funding for six significant audits by the Auditor-General's office.

The Auditor-General came in and actually said we've got funding enough for three. We've got funding enough for three and that's it. The Treasurer's response to that was effectively 'Well, of course they're going say that. They're always going want more money. We think they can do the six for the price of three.' Clearly, this is a significant problem when we've got an Auditor-General doing such good work in relation to auditing our state-owned entities and other processes that are being run by this government and indeed belling the cat significantly on some of those processes, then we clearly need to be funding them much better.

The Macquarie Point Urban Renewal Output was incredibly important. We know that there's significant amounts of money already in this budget. We know that the Macquarie Point Development Corporation is going to have to borrow almost $500 million more and we're going be paying $30 million year on year simply to service the debt.

One of the things that was most alarming is the slow-moving train wreck that this stadium is, was the government's abandonment of its former commitment to a district energy scheme inside the site where it had contracted Veolia to actually deliver this private scheme, this private electricity network inside the development. Veolia have made some really positive statements about this. Under questioning, it seems that that commitment has been torn up, that Macquarie Point Development Corporation no longer expects to have that district energy infrastructure scheme within the site. That's going to cost us over $2 million. We end up needing to pay Veolia out up to - the question has been returned with an answer on notice. The reimbursement amount is capped at $1.8 million to Veolia not to build something at Macquarie Point. Indeed

there's over $500,000 or more of contract support that went into some of that arrangement with Veolia.

If ever we needed evidence that this stadium is absolutely kind of off the rails, that it's well beyond this government at Macquarie Point Development Corporation to be able to deliver, it's the fact that we're already having to pay money not to deliver contracts and term sheets that have been agreed in the past.

Energy was a significant portfolio, and we know that Hydro's water inflows are reducing and yet the Budget still has some heroic dividend assumptions when it comes to Hydro going forward. There's were a lot of questions regarding Marinus Link, regarding the concessional financing, even though it's public money, public projects completely owned by the governments, Australian, Victorian and Tasmanian governments, the concessional financing terms are absolutely clouded and cloaked in secrecy. Of course, Firmus and data centres and data power use came to the fore during the Estimates process, and there are alarm bells ringing left, right and centre when it comes to data centres and the fact that they are absolutely powering ahead and outstripping our capacity to fully understand their requirements and to fully be able to regulate their demands. I'm sure Ms Badger will talk a little bit more about that later on.

I also wanted to really understand the government's intention in relation to the Hampshire to Burnie transmission line. Of course, the Budget has a line in it that says it could be underwritten to the tune of $50 million, even though that is a transmission line that benefits a single major renewable energy generator, ACEN, and its Robbins Island and Jim's Plain wind farms. Why are we proposing to underwrite the construction of transmission lines that benefit a single private entity?

On the Environment portfolio, even though the Deputy Premier talked up and waxed lyrical about the 50 per cent of Tasmania that's protected, the government consistently rejected the need to do any more when it came to protecting public land, and instead pointed at the private land conservation funding and announced the whole range of federal government funding that's going to fund that program in the absence of any money in the budget here in Tasmania. Here is another opportunity for the government with another ministerial and cabinet reshuffle: we really do need a minister with clear, standalone responsibility for climate change. It's really clear that this is the opportunity for the government to get there and to do that.

Through Sport and Events, and Communities and Multicultural Affairs, I think when it came to Sport and Events, the issue that we spent some time on was head injuries and concussion, noting that Lily from the 7 News network was asking some serious questions and looking really deeply into that issue. There's also an absolute shemozzle when it comes to the debt that's going to be racked up by the Macquarie Point stadium. In one Estimates hearing, we heard that it would be transferred to Stadiums Tasmania; in another we heard that it's still as yet unresolved, so there are so many different questions there.

To finish with Arts and Heritage: the government announced big in the lead up to the budget with a $10 million fund for arts development. We know, and there's now a new report out by Tony Bonney from Inkhorn Projects, measuring the economic contribution of arts and culture to the Tasmanian economy. We know the arts and culture sector delivers so much to Tasmania: not only in economic stimulation, but health and benefits. I asked a constituent question this morning on behalf of Mature Artists Dance Experience (MADE), who are deeply concerned about their funding; and the arts sector, while they've acknowledged there is this

money in the budget, they're asking, how is that going to be spent? How is it going to support grassroots arts and the benefits that come with that, as opposed to being spent on some of the larger, glossier events and productions?

Overall, the Estimates process was both frustrating and revealing from my perspective. It demonstrated, or confirmed to me the government's lack of integrity and commitment to transparency and accountability, sadly, and it also helped to demonstrate the power and the importance of investing in the grassroots of this state because that is where so many Tasmanians dwell and so much energy and benefit is derived from. Unfortunately, sadly, we've got a government that's far too focused on the big end of town, and the cuts and the efficiencies and the other savings are going to cut deeply into the services that already can't keep up with the demands that we have on them.

[4.44 p.m.]

Mr ELLIS (Braddon - Minister for Police, Fire and Emergency Management) - Chair, I'm grateful for the opportunity to provide a contribution on the Budget Estimates for Police, Fire and Emergency Management; Business, Industry and Resources; and Skills and Jobs. I will also be providing somewhat of an update, or a contribution, on Innovation, Science and the Digital Economy portfolio, and looking forward to working with members of the House and the other place to deliver in this important area, which does bring together many significant opportunities for our state. Obviously, this important process of scrutiny ensures that government is delivering on its commitments and acting in the best interests of the community, so I want to acknowledge all of the hard work that goes into making the Estimates process happen, including from parliamentary support staff, departmental officers, ministerial office staff, our beloved chairs of committee and others who make a contribution. I'm very grateful for that. These processes are important for accountability and transparency, and that's reflected in the quality and the volume of work that goes into supporting them.

In Police, Fire and Emergency Management, it's obviously a critical portfolio that touches almost every aspect of our community. Again, I place on record my deep thanks to our extraordinary emergency responders every day, whether they're career or volunteer. They step into the unknown to keep us safe. We're continuing to back in our emergency services and the sacrifices that they make with a $1.37 billion investment into community safety in the 2026-27 Budget.

I want to take that moment to recognise the extraordinary, hard-working dedication, particularly of our volunteers, as the people who drop everything when the community needs them most, because this year, we marked the 50 years of the State Emergency Service (SES) in Tasmania. That's five decades of neighbours helping neighbours, courage under pressure, and a quiet, selfless service that keeps our state safe, for which we're extraordinarily grateful.

This spirit is exactly why we've pushed ahead with reforms, and I'm looking forward to providing a further update to the House in delivering the Tasmanian fire and emergency services legislation. It's obviously built on listening to volunteers, career firefighters, SES crews, unions and experts and that process will be practical, grounded and focused on giving people the systems that they actually need on the ground. Obviously, what we're doing is to bring the Tasmania Fire Service (TFS) and State Emergency Service together under one clear banner, but we also don't want to lose what makes them special. Their identities, culture and the strengths remain; but alongside that, building a stronger backbone, a clear chain of leadership, skills-based commission and a single commissioner to make sure decisions are

made quickly and responsibly when it counts. It's also about cutting through complexity so our responders can focus on the job.

At the end of the day, these are the outcomes that Tasmanians want when something goes wrong, whether it's a fire, it's a flood, it's a storm. People don't necessarily care about the structures behind the chain of command; they care about response speed, coordination, capability. The Tasmania Fire and Emergency Service (TFES) is about making sure help arrives soon and works better and keeps communities safe. To back that in, we're putting real investment into stations, trucks, equipment and training to ensure that every responder, whether they're career or volunteer, has what they need to serve safely and well, now and into the future. Of course, when the Liberal Party came to government in 2014, we inherited a police force of 1120 officers; we now have 1459. That's 339 additional officers on the ground keeping Tasmanians safe. I think it's certainly something that our government is proud of because it shows our commitment to community safety and it's helped to build Australia's most trusted police force.

Reid's Law came into effect last year, and since November 2025, we rolled out hundreds of metal detection wands across the state. More than 8000 searches have been conducted and about 82 weapons seized as a result. What the evidence is showing is that this is a safer and less intrusive approach to the community and for our officers on the ground. It's working, and we will keep at it, and the funding has been important to deliver on that commitment. The government is continuing to roll out new body-worn cameras and protection vests; but of course, it's not just about equipment, it's about giving our officers the confidence to do their jobs and come home safely at the end of every shift. We're also delivering a 12-month taser trial from 1 July that will see up to 50 frontline officers trained and equipped. Other jurisdictions across Australia already have this capability, and it's time that Tasmania does as well. The trial will provide greater safety in high-risk situations and more force options for our police officers on the ground.

On targeted crime fighting, task forces like Artemis and Raven and Scelus are doing critical work, and this budget delivers more than $265.8 million into continuing investigating crime and keeping that work going. It's important, it's necessary, and it's getting results. We're seeing the reporting that's coming through with data that's been made available, reduction in crime, because we've been proactive and looking to get ahead of that, when other jurisdictions around the country are seeing it spiral out of control. So, that investment and that focus on keeping criminals accountable has been key. In 2024-25 alone, Tasmanian Police delivered 468,348 uniform patrol hours, conducted 13,969 sea inspections and 4729 hours of vessel patrols, responded to 6488 family violence incidents, carried out 771 search-and-rescue operations and handled 147,889 calls to service for police.

These figures demonstrate the scale of the work Tasmania Police undertakes everyday to keep Tasmanians safe. It's backed in by our government's continued investment in frontline policing, where the statistics show a clear commitment to protecting our communities, responding when people need help and ensuring Tasmania remains one of the safest places in Australia to live, work and raise a family.

This year, we've seen a community both united and divided by the horror of the Bondi shooting; united in our grief and desire to make sure that our communities are safer but, sadly, divided on how best to do that. The government has consulted with the Tasmanian community, we've listened and a suite of firearms reforms will make this community safe in a way that no

single arbitrary cap could hope to achieve. An arbitrary cap on firearms sounds simple, but it doesn't actually tackle the real problem. What does is cracking down on illegal guns, strengthening laws, backing our police to go after criminals and ensuring, particularly from what we've seen from the royal commission, better information sharing. That's why Tasmania's leading the rollout of the National Firearms Register, along with a handful of other states.

That's exactly why our government's delivering a tough, targeted suite of reforms that will focus on risk. We're increasing penalties for illegal possession, theft and trafficking, tightening licensing and boosting intelligence sharing. This is a smart, practical reform aimed squarely at the wrong people because, ultimately, it's not the number of firearms, it's the hands that they're in. We don't want to be focusing on hard-working Tasmanians who do the right thing. We need to be focused on people doing the wrong thing. Our farmers, our sporting shooters and communities right across Tasmania have told us they want safety, fairness and common sense, not arbitrary caps. That's what we've heard from them this week. The first of these reforms will be introduced for consultation because keeping Tasmanians safe demands action that works.

In terms of Business, Industry and Resources, I had the opportunity to discuss the broader challenges and opportunities facing Tasmania's economy. From what I hear from business and industry, the focus of no new taxes in this Budget has been greatly appreciated. This is particularly when you see the strong reaction against the federal government's massive suite of broken promises that are impacting businesses and families right across our country and will have an impact here in Tasmania.

At a time when economies around the world are dealing with global uncertainty, supply chain disruption, rising geopolitical tensions and increasingly intense international competition, Tasmania cannot afford to stand still. Our economy depends on businesses that are prepared to invest, employ Tasmanians and take risks. Whether it's a family-owned business on the north-west coast, a manufacturer in the Tamar Valley, a mining company on the west coast or a major industrial operation here in the south, every job created and every dollar invested helps to strengthen our state's future. That's why the government remains focused on creating the conditions for economic growth. We want Tasmania to be the best place in Australia to start a business, grow a business and invest in the future.

During Estimates, we spoke about the important work of the Office of the Coordinator-General, which continues to support a substantial pipeline of investment opportunities across Tasmania. The fact that investors continue to look to Tasmania, despite some of the broader global uncertainty, demonstrates the confidence people have in our state, our workforce and our future. Our approach is not to simply attract investment. It's about ensuring the investment delivers long-term benefits for Tasmania through local jobs, local procurement, regional development and greater economic resilience. That's why we continue to support economic diversification and the growth of industries that will underpin Tasmania's future prosperity. Advanced manufacturing, defence industries, critical minerals, renewable energy, food production, technology and value-added processing all present significant opportunities for the state.

We're also focused on reducing unnecessary barriers to growth. Businesses tell us that they want government to be easier to deal with, approvals to be more efficient and regulation to be proportionate and practical. Through our red tape reduction agenda and broader economic reforms, we're working to create a more productive and competitive business environment.

Tasmania's future prosperity will not be built on government alone; it will be built by entrepreneurs, workers, innovators and investors who choose to back our state. Our role is to create the environment that gives them the confidence to do so.

During Estimates, considerable discussion focused on Tasmania's major industrial employers and the challenges they face in an increasingly uncertain global environment. These businesses support thousands of direct and indirect jobs, underpin regional communities and make a significant contribution to the Tasmanian economy. Our government's approach is straightforward: we expect businesses to be commercially sustainable but where there is a strong strategic case to support jobs, sovereign capability and Tasmania's long-term economic interest, we'll work constructively with industry and our state and federal counterparts. Our focus remains on securing the best outcome for workers, communities and taxpayers while ensuring Tasmania remains a competitive place to invest, manufacture and do business.

On Resources, I was pleased to highlight that Tasmania's mining sector continues to deliver strong returns to the community, with royalty revenues tracking towards a record outcome this year, estimated at around $93 million in 2025-26. It's a cause for celebration. It shows what can happen when you support the industry to grow. These revenues directly fund essential services for Tasmanians and demonstrate the importance of maintaining a strong and responsible mining industry.

We highlighted the critical role of exploration in securing the future of the sector as well. Sustained mineral exploration underpins the pipeline of new projects, jobs and investment, ensuring mining remains the cornerstone of Tasmania's economic prosperity. Through programs like the Exploration Drilling Grants Initiative (EDGI), we're driving new discoveries and attracting investment, leveraging almost $14 million in industry spending from just over $3.3 million in government funding. It's a three-to-one return on investment. Programs such as EDGI ensure that Tasmania remains globally competitive by developing our critical mineral resource base to create a sovereign supply of the critical minerals needed for defence, medical applications, advanced technologies, batteries, energy and advanced manufacturing.

Also mentioned was that there was a record total exploration expenditure of $49.7 million in 2025, which is an unmistakable vote of confidence in Tasmania as a globally competitive mining investment destination. The Fraser Institute positioning clearly backs that up. This level of investment reflects our state's strong geology, of course, our stable policy settings and the clear commitment to backing the resources sector. It's driving more drilling, more discoveries and building the next generation of mining projects that will underpin jobs, regional development and economic growth for years to come.

In forestry, we updated the committee on progress with the Commonwealth on *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act* (EPBC) reforms, including the Australian Government's commitment to enter into a bilateral agreement with Tasmania, which has now, pleasingly, been gazetted. We welcome this commitment. We're working constructively to secure a practical agreement ahead of the 1 July 2027 deadline, one that provides certainty for industry, supports jobs and investment, and maintains Tasmania's strong environmental standards.

We're working to secure the bilateral agreement that accredits Tasmania's existing forest management system as the basis for a landscape-scale approval pathway. This is critical to ensure that operations can continue to be assessed at a system level, rather than through

individual project approvals that would introduce delay and uncertainty. The Australian Government is supportive of this approach and recently announced that it will provide $8.5 million to support the progression of the bilateral approval pathway for forestry operations. We look forward to achieving this outcome with the Australian Government and ensuring an ongoing and sustainable future for both native and plantation forestry in Tasmania.

In both mining and forestry, we're focused on ensuring more value is created here in Tasmania. Our policy settings support on-island processing, encourage greater value-adding, stronger regional economies and more local jobs, rather than simply exporting raw materials. This approach complements our support for Tasmania's renewable and sustainable forestry sector, ensuring it can continue to deliver economic value while meeting high environmental standards.

We also had the opportunity to highlight the importance of private forestry in Tasmania, constituting approximately 843,000 hectares of native forest and 247,000 hectares of plantation, with more than 427,000 hectares formally managed as a private timber reserve. In 2024-25 alone, private forests supplied around 2.8 million tonnes of logs - more than 68 per cent of Tasmania's total timber production, supporting thousands of jobs and delivering significant value to regional communities. Just as importantly, it underpins our economic future. That scale of supply sustains local processing and value-adding industries, ensuring more jobs and investment stay in Tasmania.

With strong and growing demand for sustainable timber products, private forestry has real capacity to drive further economic growth, strengthen regional economies and continue its vital role in our renewable and sustainable resource base. In this context, private forestry is not just a significant part of our resource base; it's a key pillar of Tasmania's economic future. This government will continue to work closely with growers to unlock its full potential.

Tasmania's industries are built on responsible resource development backed by strong environmental safeguards, and our focus remains on delivering certainty for investment, supporting our regional communities and securing long-term prosperity for the state.

When it comes to skills and jobs, obviously, I know what it means to learn a trade and, from that, developed practical skills and built a career through vocational education. It's one of the reasons why we're so passionate about this portfolio, obviously, in plumbing skills and training and not just a policy area, but there's something that I've personally lived and experienced and these opportunities come from gaining skills and confidence that comes from learning and trade and the pride that comes from building a career and contributing to your community.

Skills and training more broadly changes lives, they create opportunities for individuals, provide businesses with the workforce they need and help to build a stronger economy for Tasmania. Whether it's an apprentice starting on the first day of the tools or a mature-age worker retraining for a new career, a young person finding a pathway after school, or someone gaining qualifications later in life, this portfolio is about creating opportunity. At the heart of the approach, it's a simple principle; it's putting the learner at the centre. Every Tasmanian's journey is different, there is no single pathway to success and there should never be a one-size-fits-all approach to skills and training.

It's also why we place such importance on industry partnerships. Some of our most successful initiatives have been those where government has backed the industry to lead, because the industry understands its workforce needs better than anyone. Through initiatives like the hi-vis army, our early years workforce development scholarships with Early Childhood Australia, and the Tasmania Hospitality and Tourism Academy, we're creating practical pathways into employment, promoting careers into the next generation of workers, and ensuring training is directly connected to the skills our economy needs.

Of course, training on its own is not enough. We need to ensure that Tasmanians can then see a pathway into employment and receive the support they need to take the next steps. That's why the government established Jobs Tasmania and our regional Jobs hub network. The Jobs Hubs are practical, place-based and focused on outcomes. They connect local people with local opportunities and bring together employers, training providers and community organisations to help people overcome barriers to participating in work and training.

Importantly, they recognise that workforce challenges look different in different communities. What works in Burnie may not work in Sorell or on the west coast. The Jobs Hubs have the flexibility to respond to local needs and create local solutions. We know the model is working; independent evaluation has found that regional Jobs Hubs - that approach is a nation leading approach in helping to address gaps in the employment services and workforce participation structure.

Equally, we know that if we are serious about Tasmania's long-term prosperity, we need to be equally serious about supporting our young people. That's why we launched Tasmania's first Youth Jobs Strategy. The strategy is built on a simple proposition; every young Tasmanian should be able to see a pathway into employment, further education or training and receive the right support at the right time to pursue it.

For too long, too many young people have found themselves navigating a complex system of school, training providers, employers and support services. The Youth Jobs Strategy is about bringing those pieces together and creating clearer pathways and better connections. It's about ensuring that young people do not fall through the cracks as they transition from school into adulthood. It's about strengthening career guidance, improving connections between education and industry, and ensuring that employers are ready to create opportunities for young Tasmanians, because every young person who successfully transitions into work, training or further education is not only changing the trajectory of their own life, but they're helping to build Tasmania's future workforce and strengthening our communities and economies.

That's why Tasmania is fortunate to have a diverse and connected training system. TasTAFE plays a critical role as our public training provider alongside a strong network of private, industry-led and group training organisations. Together, they deliver the breadth of training needed to support our learners, our businesses and our economy. Our role is to ensure that every Tasmanian can access the right training from the right provider at the right time and in a way that meets their circumstances and aspirations.

The portfolio, of course, sits at the intersection of economic development and social opportunity because buildings don't get built, hospitals don't operate, businesses don't grow, and major projects do not proceed without skilled people. Every qualification that's gained, every apprenticeship completed, and every person connected to employment represents

a stronger future for the state. Ultimately, when we invest in skills and training, we're investing in people and we're investing in aspiration, confidence, opportunity. We're investing in the businesses and industries that drive our economy and we're investing in communities right across Tasmania.

Of course, recently, I was sworn in as the Minister for Innovation, Science and the Digital Economy. I want to acknowledge and thank Madeleine Ogilvie for the strong leadership that she delivered in this portfolio. Her advocacy for Tasmania's technology sector will make a lasting contribution and we're grateful for her service.

There are some extraordinary opportunities ahead for Tasmania. Our technology sector is growing rapidly. It's creating opportunities for jobs, investment and innovation across our state. We'll be working to ensure that Tasmania is a place where innovation and entrepreneurship are not only encouraged but celebrated, where great ideas are given the opportunity to grow and succeed, and if appropriate, make a global impact. Through working closely with industry, we'll continue to attract high-skilled jobs and support further investment to ensure that Tasmania remains an attractive place to invest and it's competitive and forward-looking as an economy, that's ultimately driven by productivity. We want to give Tasmanians and especially our young people the opportunity to be part of this dynamic sector by building rewarding careers at home.

With that, I appreciate the opportunity to make a contribution on the Estimates reply and look forward to listening to further contributions.

[5.06 p.m.]

Dr BROAD (Braddon) - Chair, I'd like to give my reply to the Estimates that we had last week. I could stand here and beat up the government, maybe I'll do that a little bit, but one of the things that I get asked is: 'what would you do?' I believe in my budget reply, I did highlight a couple of areas where the government could improve what is a pretty bad budget. We are heading into debt and deficit levels that we've never seen before, and what I highlighted in my budget reply was the areas that the government could look at. First of all, it is managing projects better; stop wasting money with these massive project blowouts, and also invest in the systems that help our public servants do their jobs.

One thing that I got out of Estimates are more examples of where the systems are actually failing the workforce, and that is somewhere where I think this government should be investing and delivering, because that would be a win/win. It would help workers be able to do their jobs more effectively. It would help the people they are serving, and in the long-term, it would also save money. I'll go through a couple of these highlights, I suppose, through the Estimates process.

The first one I'd like to talk about is - and also this is the boring stuff - how do you make things more efficient? The boring stuff of government, is improving systems. To do that, we've got to highlight some poor systems. I sat in the Police estimates with my colleague Ms Butler, the member for Lyons, and Ms Badger, the Greens member for Lyons, asked a question regarding family violence offences involving a firearm and how that had risen from 69 to 140 over the last four years. Then she asked quite a good question: of the 140 domestic violence cases in recent years, how many individuals involved were licensed firearm owners? That that should be a fairly simple question for the police to answer. Well, Commissioner Adams said:

> Thank you for the question. It's a difficult one to answer. There's a couple of parts to, obviously, what you've asked today. The first was around those that were involved in a family violence incident, whether they were a registered licence holder or not. And yesterday we weren't able to provide that information.

Obviously that question had been asked in the Legislative Council and they couldn't answer it. 'We don't have the data set that captures that', was the response. Then there were further questions, and then Assistant Commissioner Oosterloo responded in more detail:

> As the Commissioner said, the way we capture that data, it doesn't allow for an easy extraction of whether the person charged with a firearms offence, we can't easily extract from our systems whether or not they're a licence holder or not. They're in different systems. So, our firearms database management system has licence holders, it manages licence holders. And we use that to manage whether they're suspended or cancelled or under review because of offences that have been reported in from another system. So that system also doesn't tell us whether the person being cancelled or suspended as a result of offences, or as a result of a health issue. It's in the free text field, but it's not a field that we can pull statistics out easily. Same with the other system. We can tell you how many people have been charged with storage offences, with holding a firearm without a licence, with other types of firearm offences, but our system doesn't, in a way that's able to be extracted, give us whether that person is a current licence holder or not. It's in the free-text fields or in the narrative, but not in a way that can be easily extracted.

As the commissioner said, 'that's something we will look at to improve. We have systems enhancement projects going on at the moment, including the national firearms register; it's something we will look at to improve that system'.

What's actually going on here? The police can't track, they can't link domestic violence and firearms ownership. Now, you would think that this would be something that the Police minister, who's just spoken previously, Felix Ellis, hearing that, should have raised a massive alarm bell with him. Minister Ellis, hearing that, has to take action. We've got a minister who can run the lines, he can read his brief, he can have potshots and talk about his favourite things like getting the lines that he loves to deliver, getting firearms out of offenders' hands, and the like; but when he hears that the police struggle to link domestic violence with firearm ownership - so, if someone's under arrest or so on for a domestic violence situation, they can't readily check if they are a firearms owner.

That makes the police's job very difficult. I really wonder if this Police minister is actually going to do something about it. Hearing that, I was just absolutely gobsmacked; but this is not an isolated case. It's the boring systems of government, but this could actually make a real difference to people's lives and the government needs to fix it. Another example was the PlanBuild project. PlanBuild was supposed to be a project that started almost 10 years ago and it was first announced - I asked the question about how long before PlanBuild was fully functional, stable and fit for purpose. PlanBuild was supposed to be a red tape reduction project, so that when you did a development application, or you went through council to get something built, that it was all online, it was easy to track it, it was just going to make life so much easier. Well, when I asked minister Barnett in the hearing that I was in, he said:

> I'm aware of concerns regarding functionality at PlanBuild and I think it's implied, at least, in your question. I've asked my department to work with the City of Hobart as a high priority to correct some of the bugs in the system.

PlanBuild was rolled out in Hobart and it's still not really functional. Ms Pearce in the hearing said:

> The PlanBuild project originally had a budget of $9.7 million for the implementation and delivery of the portal, which was funded by both state and Commonwealth contributions. That included Commonwealth Small Business Regulatory Reform Agenda: of $6.4 million; from the Tasmanian Budget $1.9 million; and from retained revenues within Consumer, Building And Occupational Services of $1.4 million. Of the $6.4 million Commonwealth Small Business Regulatory Reform Agenda funding allocation, only $3 million was received, with the final $3.4 million withheld due to the expiry of the grant.

What's actually happened there is the rollout of the project has been so bad that the federal government did not allocate the final payment of $3.4 million. This is a project that's supposed to streamline planning and construction, and we've heard, 'red tape reduction'; well, this is another failure and it's a systems failure. This is the boring stuff of government that this government needs to get better at doing. Ms Pearce went on to say:

> The delays to the implementation of the further councils, because the intention was it would move to a subscription basis from councils - has impacted on the project's funding, and on that basis is where the additional funding from appropriation of $1 million in the next two financial years. That will go to work to address a number of issues.

So, we've got a system so bad that they've changed to a subscription model, so the councils are supposed to pay a subscription; why would you do it when the system is so buggy and the rollout has been so terrible? There's another example of systems that this government could get done, do it properly and it would make the life of those using the systems a lot better. I've spoken in the past about the human resources system roll out that was in the Health department, and what a failure that has been. They've spent on this HRIS project, Human Resources Information System, $47 million without delivering any modules, and that was the report that the Auditor-General put out just before Estimates hearings. Basically, it highlighted as well that there wasn't enough staff, and there are still 40-odd systems, and so on, and it makes it really, really hard for public servants to do their jobs. Reading from the Auditor-General's report, it talks about how there are more than 40 systems in use to manage the workforce, just in the Health system:

> There are financial and other costs associated with not undertaking reforms. Many internal and external reports note that the current TSS HR systems are expensive to maintain and no longer fit for purpose. Decentralised and disparate systems and processes have also led to serious gaps in information as well as performance, efficiency and consistency issues.

> These include issues with: tracking employee misconduct relevant to the Commission of Inquiry into the Tasmanian Government's Responses to Child Sexual Abuse in Institutional Settings.

Again, the minister, hearing this, should be aghast and should be making it a priority to fix. Imagine having an HR system so bad that you can't track employee misconduct in relation to the Commission of Inquiry into child sex abuse in institutional settings. I mean, are there alarm bells anytime in Cabinet? When these things get discussed, is it just brushed under the carpet, much in the same way as police not being able to track whether somebody who may or may not be involved in domestic violence has a firearm licence? These are just extraordinary.

Also it was highlighted during the COVID outbreak that contact-tracing employees during the COVID-19 outbreak in the North West Regional Hospital was problematic. I think these problems still remain because the modules haven't been rolled out. There's a nice figure in this, which is key limitations and impacts of current HR systems. So, there's poor data visibility for decision making - again, alarm bells. Poor data visibility for wellbeing, and that's the misconduct tracking hampered. Credentialing at Health not effectively monitored and managed: does that ring an alarm bell? Credentialing at Health not effectively monitored and managed: does that mean it's really hard to track the qualifications of health professionals to see whether they're actually qualified for doing their job?

I find it absolutely extraordinary that again, there's not a big alarm bell being rung when Cabinet meets. Manual, outdated, inefficient processes: there are 30 full-time equivalents in 2020 to manage payroll at Health alone. 30 FTEs to manage payroll: there are workflow inefficiencies in payroll and HR, increased risk of payment errors, again. The next item was ageing systems. There have been payroll system outages at Health since 2020, increasing risk of missed payments. There are 30 to 40 hours to run automated payroll at Health. Isn't that incredible? It basically takes a week to run the automated payroll at Health. That is not a really efficient automated system if it takes a week to do payroll. Imagine if health professionals are getting paid every fortnight; it takes a full week to do payroll.

Approximately 100,000 hours of manual work across the Total Support Services (TSS), escalating costs of existing systems: Department of Premier and Cabinet (DPAC) estimates a centralised system that resolves these issues could save the TSS almost $300 million in 14 years. If you want something to work on, work on that. Work on that. Get this done. This is the boring stuff of government. This is a government that has been in for 12 years, and you read these sorts of things. This is the Auditor-General's report. Maybe it's just an opinion, but this is the boring stuff that the government has to get right.

Also in this report it talks about how it's really hard to track awards and so on. I've raised this with the minister, and I've spoken in parliament about it. I get people come in and tell me about a problem; the problem I've had is nurses talking about how they're underpaid. If they're doing the same job as a social worker, for example, then they're supposed to be paid the same as a social worker, and they're not. They have to go to the Tasmanian Industrial Commission to get a ruling and then it doesn't automatically flow through to everyone else. That's very understandable when you hear that the systems that they're using, there are 30 or 40 systems, hundreds and thousands of hours of manual work and so on, and they can't track awards. It's no wonder this sort of stuff's happening.

These problems within these systems have an impact in real life. It's not just me making stuff up, it's not just constituents coming into my office and having a whinge; they're absolutely highlighting real problems in the system and these are the things that the government needs to fix.

There's the issue of digital patient records, too. I hope that the Health minister might give me an update on this. Digital patient records fully rolled out so that they can coordinate with GPs, allied health professionals and the ambulance system would just make the whole hospital system flow much better. The project seems like it's delayed, so I'd really like an update on where that one's at.

This is the boring stuff that governments, if they get it right, can save money and can make the life of public servants much better, they can be more efficient and they can get more done for the same spend. In the end, that will help save hundreds of millions of dollars.

I also have to raise issues that I've been talking about for a while, and they're to do with Consumer Building and Occupational Services (CBOS) and the way that dodgy builders attract. I'm very pleased that I worked with a few ministers and, finally, minister Barnett, as Attorney-General, who delivered the anti-phoenixing laws earlier this year, and I'm very pleased to have been part of that. But my questioning of CBOS, and in particular the way that Golden Homes, who've done some extraordinary things, they became insolvent, they have houses unfinished or the quality being so poor that the house is more than likely going to have to be bulldozed, and then hearing that nobody involved in one particular project will be prosecuted because it's outside the statute of limitations.

The question I asked was about staff turnover. My understanding is, is that there's been a lot of staff turnover in CBOS, just the section that handles these sorts of policing of dodgy builders. Indeed, there has. The response was that there has been high staff turnover. There have been at least 16 changes in the last five years in what is a very small team. They also provided the response that, in at least one case, there was insufficient monitoring that allowed prosecutions to not go ahead because of statute of limitations, and another case fell through the cracks due to staff turnover.

These are people who should be held to account for doing defective work, for running a building company that was insolvent. If you have a read of the insolvency report, they were insolvent pretty much from the start of that company - and this was a company that was a phoenix; they just weren't kept track of. I just find it extraordinary, these sorts of things - but CBOS did say in its response, too, that they did a review of the database to get these answers.

I have in my mind the question of: is everything entered into the database, or is this database a problem too? I know that databases are a problem across government departments. Other examples that I've heard are people who are now working in NRE find it really difficult to find previous reports because the system, the database system, is just so hard to interrogate. It's so hard to find old reports, and I'm wondering, the people involved with Golden Homes were certainly well-known for their behaviour and yet, it seems like issues weren't flagged. I don't know whether those issues weren't flagged because there was high staff turnover or because staff weren't entered into the database, but when they've gone back and had a review, there's a number of things that weren't flagged and I think, for me, that is a red flag.

Another issue that I'd really like to talk about is the election promise of extra cancer treatment and an additional cancer centre at the North West Regional Hospital. There was an election promise. It didn't appear in the Budget at all, and it seemed like the minister and the Premier were largely caught off guard when we started asking questions about this particular project. Just to remind everybody, during the election campaign there was a commitment for a new cancer centre. All this money was going to be available and the Premier stood with Grant Howe.

Grant Howe at that stage was undergoing cancer treatment. He had throat cancer. He was being fed through a nasogastric tube and the guy looked sick as a dog. He was at the end of a pretty hard road where he had to get his cancer treatment in Melbourne. For eight weeks he was away from his family and really struggling physically, and he was there at that media event where the Liberals promised these new cancer treatment options. He was very pleased. He talks about this; I did a podcast with Grant and put it up online on Friday. Grant talks about his journey and how he was grateful he had the financial ability to go to Melbourne for this period of time, to be away from home, to put himself in a hospital 100 or 200 metres away from the cancer treatment centre in Melbourne. He could actually do this. When he was standing there with the Liberals during the election campaign, what he was doing there was, he didn't want people to have to do what he had to do. He understood that not everybody has the means to do what he did and thought, 'wouldn't it be great if more cancer treatment options were available in the north-west'. No doubt, Grant looking so ill - and Grant's quite a well-known guy, too - it would have made good pictures and it certainly looked good on the news. The only thing is that the Liberals haven't followed through.

I know that Mrs Archer gave him a phone call and said, 'I'm not exactly sure what the minister told you', but he was of the view that it would be in next year's Budget.

When I explained that the Budget actually runs for four years, so there's no money in the Budget for the next four years, then he was very disappointed. I think that the minister may want to reflect on that. I'm not sure of the comments that she made, but this is something that I'll definitely be keeping an eye on. If this isn't in the Budget next year, then you'll be held to account. You can't just fob people off. This is something that the north-west coast needs.

We have, unfortunately, high rates of cancer. That's why we fought long and hard to get an MRI and extra cancer treatment and radiation therapy on the north-west coast. Unfortunately, the incidence of cancer is that high that we actually justified a second MRI and a second machine. When the government promises things like this, they actually have to deliver because they will be held to account.

I will talk about one more thing. There are a number of problems that are just not being addressed. I've talked about systems, I've talked about failure to manage projects, but there are things that, when problems aren't addressed, all they end up doing is costing more money.

Police rostering is an example. The police roster that is currently in place puts a lot of stress on police and there are a lot of police now out on workers compensation. By not fixing the rostering system, because it'll cost a little bit more, they're actually costing more money because of the number of police who are out on workers compensation.

We heard in the Budget as well about psychological injury. Compensation claims for people with stress-related issues are running away from the government. It is becoming a big

line item costing hundreds of millions of dollars. Yet, instead of thinking about how we can reduce the stress on the workforce, such as having a better rostering system for police, we're talking about changing the law so that maybe they don't have to pay these people who are on stress leave. I find that extraordinary.

We can also talk about locums and the like, about the way Homes Tasmania has been blown up and now Building Tasmania is going to be put in place, and so on but the government has to get better at actually fixing things. If they could do two things today - managing projects better and doing the boring stuff of government by fixing some of these systems that sit behind what public servants do, maybe they don't have to sack as many public servants. Maybe public servants will have a better work-life balance and enjoy their jobs more. I would also argue that, in the end, it would save the state money. Better service for the same money and a happier workforce. That is absolutely a win-win and the government should get on with it.

[5.31 p.m.]

Ms JOHNSTON (Clark) - Chair, Estimates have a reputation. It's where ministers come to not answer the questions and where often the only way to get at the truth is to ask the same thing several different ways. I've sat through enough of them to expect that ministers dodge, they take things on notice and they run the clock down. This year was a bit different, though, in a way that should worry every Tasmanian.

Before I come to my concerns, I acknowledge the enormous amount of work Tasmania's public service puts into the preparation for Estimates. Having received Estimates briefs through RTIs on occasion, it's clear the hours of preparation that go into them. Given that each minister has to be prepared to speak to what's prepared, I don't see why those briefs cannot be routinely provided to us, as I believe happens in other jurisdictions but given that getting information of this government is like getting blood out of a stone, I'm not holding my breath for that to happen.

As a point of interest, I RTI'd the briefs from Estimates in November last year. Some departments were quite happy to hand over the information. I'm not talking about the briefs; I'm talking about the very chunky folders we can see sitting directly opposite us on the minister's desk; the information there. Some departments were willing to provide it. Others declined.

I note that I only just received, on 11 June, a determination from the Department of State Growth about my RTI request made on 26 November 2025. It took them over six-and-a-half months to respond to my request and even then, they only provided partial information because apparently it was too much work, too voluminous and too difficult to find the information that I had literally seen across the Estimates table. I suggest that if the government is truly committed to being open and transparent, and reforming the RTI system, this would be a way of showing good faith.

In my budget reply, I acknowledged some positives in the Budget. I won't repeat them here. In the short time I have, I will focus on the issues that jumped out to me most during the Estimates process.

The problem this year was not just that the government would not answer the questions. It was that on the most important questions, it could not - not because the questions were unfair but because the government does not know the answers, it would seem. To its credit, the

government did not pretend it had every detail settled. It was upfront that much of this remains uncertain, to be worked through in future budget processes. I understand that budgets are built on forward Estimates and that not everything can be locked in until the years ahead but there's a difference between ordinary uncertainty and not knowing the basic shape of your own central policy. When the uncertainty is about people's jobs and the services Tasmanians rely on, 'We will work it out later' is simply not good enough.

Let me be specific. This Budget is built on cutting the public sector by around 1700 jobs over the next four years and $1.5 billion in savings over the same period. That is what the path to surplus rests on. I and others asked the obvious questions: which jobs, which positions in which departments delivering which service? The Premier could not say. In his own words, this was not about having a hit list of jobs and he would not be asking for a list of names. The scope of every redundancy program would be left to each department secretary to determine.

The government has set the numbers, but it cannot say what the numbers mean. Which services go, to find $1.5 billion in savings? The same answer: the savings are locked into the forward Estimates. The decisions about what gets cut to reach them has not been made yet. What do the redundancies cost? Redundancies are not free. Paying people out is expensive when it falls in a single year, yet there is no money in the Budget for it. The head of the State Service confirmed that each secretary must find the payouts from their own existing agency budget. So the cost of cutting jobs to save money will itself be met by cutting further into the same budgets, and the size of that cut is nowhere in the papers.

What does all of this do to Tasmanians? That was the question no-one could answer. Treasury confirmed it had not analysed the impact of withdrawing program funding; the advice was at a macro level, however much spending has to come down, not what happens to people when it does. The fact the number of jobs to be lost has bounced around is instructive. Over a matter of months, the figure has been 2500, then 2800, then 1700, and by the end of the Premier's own session, it was 1800. Four different numbers for the same policy, and the explanations do not match each other. The original figure was a population ratio, public servants as a proportion of the population; the current one, the department confirmed, is built from the average cost of salaries across each agency.

The Premier framed the cuts as delivering services more efficiently. The department secretary called it a fiscal strategy. The government cannot tell you whether it's about better services or about the bottom line, because the honest answer is that the services were never the starting point. Both figures are worked backwards from a fiscal target, from salaries and ratios in an attempt to balance the budget, not from a clear assessment of what Tasmanians need to ensure they are housed, they are safe and they are well. The Treasurer characterises this as a tough budget, but what Estimates revealed is it is also a reckless one. It's reckless because the path to surplus, the forecast of peak debt, the entire claim to sustainability, almost all of it, rests on these cuts landing exactly as planned, and the restraint the Budget assumes is, on the evidence, not credible. The Treasury secretary himself called the forward Estimates 'very ambitious'.

The Budget funds wage growth at 2.5 per cent when the agreements already signed are at 3 per cent. So before a single new saving is found, agencies are already behind. The Budget indexes agency running costs at 2 per cent, while its own economic chapter forecasts inflation at 4.5 per cent. Redundancy payouts are not the only thing missing from the papers. When the

gaps were laid out, unfunded salary increases and non-salary costs that are not budgeted for, the Treasurer's response was this:

> It is a task for the various agencies and ministers who have to live within their means.

He clearly has no plans for what happens if the savings fall short, and on this government's own record, they will. So all we can assume is that further cuts will be required. Well, the government tried to dodge questions about the impact under questioning; we started to get a picture of what the cuts mean in practice. Take the gap in indexation for government agencies. The Treasury secretary was asked what that means in practice and he was honest: agencies will have to achieve savings in the quantity of items that they're buying. In a hospital, that was put to him directly, fewer dressings, fewer needles. That's what operational efficiencies mean by the time it reaches the bedside. Take accountability: when asked what actually forces an agency to deliver those savings, the Treasurer said he rattles a cage from time to time, but he could not point to any consequences, nothing that makes them happen which means when they don't, the pressure will land where it always lands: on jobs and on services.

Another area of impact is community services. Funding for these services, things like Neighbourhood Houses, food relief, family and community support, falls by more than half over the forward Estimates. When asked which programs, which organisations, which communities would bear the brunt, the answer was that future funding is subject to future budget processes. In plain terms, the money runs out and nothing is locked in to replace it. There is one more thing the hearings made clear, and it matters as much as any other cuts: a budget is not only about what you spend, it's about what you raise and from whom. This government has decided to try to balance its books primarily using one lever. The Treasurer was asked plainly whether the government would consider new revenue measures, and he ruled them out: no new taxes, full stop. The repair job will come almost entirely from cutting spending; none of it from asking those most able to contribute to pay a fairer share.

While the community sector is told to do more with less, the government will not even look at the obvious places revenue could come from. It was asked whether it would increase the levy that funds gambling harm minimisation, a levy paid out of the profits of casinos, clubs and hotels. The answer was, 'not at this stage', so the organisations that pick up the human cost of gambling are squeezed, while the industry that profits from that harm is left exactly where it is.

That is a choice, Chair, and there are others available. Independent advice on this state's finances has set out credible options for years: a fair tax on the profits of the salmon companies that use our public waterways, not just the lease fees they pay now; a broader payroll tax base, as the Treasurer's own independent reviewer has recommended; and a fair return on the minerals extracted from public land. None of these are radical. None of them fall on Tasmanians that this Budget puts at risk. The government did not weigh them and reject them; it refused to put them on the table at all, so when the government says there is no alternative to these cuts, that is simply not true. There was an alternative. It chose not to consider it.

Chair, so far I've talked about the cuts the government cannot explain and revenue it will not raise. There is one cut it understands perfectly well: the government promised the former member for Huon that the Auditor-General, the independent officer whose entire job is to hold

this government to account for how it spends public money, will be funded to carry out six performance audits a year; but the Auditor-General told us plainly that the funding he received was only enough for three. A government serious about its budget would want those audits. Performance audits are exactly the tool you reach for when money is tight. They show you where spending is wasted and where it is working and worth protecting. That is useful to any government and especially to one in this position.

So, it's fair to ask why this government chose not to fund them properly. The most generous reading is that it did not see the value. The more troubling one is that a government cutting this hard, on numbers this shaky, would rather not have an independent officer examining whether cuts are the right ones. Let me conclude by saying this: Estimates is meant to be where accountability is tested. This year it revealed a problem worse than the usual evasion. It revealed a budget whose central plan, cut the jobs; find the $1.5 billion; reach surplus has not been thought through past the headline numbers.

The government does not know which jobs. It does not know which services. It has not budgeted the cost of the cuts. It has not analysed the impact on Tasmanians. It has no plan for the likely event the savings fall short, except to cut deeper into the same frontline. Every one of those gaps is a choice, and every one of those choices lands on the same people: Tasmanians who rely on the jobs and the services this Budget has put on the chopping block. Budgets always contain a tension between funding services and programs now without accruing unmanageable debt. What Estimates revealed was a government that has failed on both fronts. There is no credible path to budget sustainability and no credible assurances that Tasmanians can rely on the central services that they depend upon.

[5.44 p.m.]

Mrs ARCHER (Bass - Minister for Health, Mental Health and Wellbeing) - Chair, I rise to speak following my appearance before both Estimates committees, but before I commence, I would like to take a moment to address some of the comments made by the member for Braddon, Dr Broad, here before, and whilst I appreciate that we operate in a political environment and much of the commentary that he made I'm happy to wear, I don't think it is acceptable to be verballed by Dr Broad in relation to the conversation that I had with Mr Howe. I did call Mr Howe to reassure him that we remain committed to the North West Regional Hospital commitment that we made to him and I restate that commitment here today. I don't appreciate being verballed or taken out of context in this place.

It was a pleasure to speak about the government's investment and commitments in the Budget in relation to my portfolios of Health, Mental Health and Wellbeing, Ageing and Aboriginal Affairs.

As I said at the Estimates table, the 2026-27 Budget continues our government's plan to deliver better health care for Tasmanians, with record investment of more than $15 billion into our health system across the forward Estimates. That's more than $10 million every day invested into the health system, with Health now making up 35 per cent of the state Budget. When compared to the year-on-year spend in the interim budget, total expenditure on Health will increase by $583.6 million across the forward Estimates. That includes $1.2 billion for emergency departments, supporting timely, high-quality emergency care for Tasmanians and strengthening the front line of the hospital system.

We're also backing Ambulance Tasmania through increased funding and resourcing to recruit more paramedics and build more ambulance stations. The Budget invests $776.6 million for ambulance services. I was pleased to advise the committee that a further 15 graduate paramedics have just joined Ambulance Tasmania,12 of them completing their studies at the University of Tasmania and three relocating from interstate. The graduates are currently undertaking a six-week induction program designed to provide practical training, clinical preparation and mentorship. Once completed next month, they will be deployed across the state to join frontline crews. Eight of the graduates will be based in the south, three in the north and four in the north west. I commend all our newest paramedics for choosing a career dedicated to the health of Tasmanians and I wish them well as they begin their professional journey with Ambulance Tasmania.

We're delivering important infrastructure upgrades, with more than $844 million to deliver new and existing projects across the state, including a significant program of works across our major hospitals and community-based health facilities.

In the south, this investment will deliver upgrades and redevelopment at the Royal Hobart Hospital, including the expanded emergency department, the pharmacy redevelopment and refurbishment works to house a new cardiology angiography machine. We're also progressing the St Johns Park health and wellbeing precinct, including an older person's mental health facility, 12-bed child and adolescent mental health inpatient unit and day facility, and a 15-bed adult mental health centre which will also provide a safe haven, integration hub and co-located 12-bed eating disorder treatment centre. Funding is also allocated for the $15 million Huon Valley health precinct and mental health hub and stage 2 of the Kingston Health Centre redevelopment.

In the north, there is funding across the forward Estimates towards our 10-year Launceston General Hospital masterplan, including the new mental health precinct, multi-storey car park, expanded emergency department and Northern Health Complex.

In the north-west, funding is allocated towards the first stage of the North West Regional Hospital masterplan, including the new mental health precinct and upgrade to expand the emergency department and ambulance drop-off area at the North West Regional Hospital. Funding is also provided for the Devonport mental health hub over two years. This facility will offer a safe haven, recovery college and integration hub.

Also in the infrastructure space, I was pleased to advise the committee that major upgrades of the heating, ventilation and air conditioning system in older sections of the Launceston General Hospital have reached another important milestone, with installation of the new HVAC systems to all 20 patient rooms in the obstetrics ward, 4O, now complete. Works continue in D Block where new HVAC upgrades were completed on Ward 16 in February this year, and Ward 5D was finished earlier this month. The remaining two floors in D Block will then be upgraded progressively throughout 2026. We're fixing these longstanding heating and cooling issues to ensure patients have a safe and comfortable experience when they're in hospital, with each floor's new system being commissioned as works are completed, delivering immediate benefits to those areas.

We're also investing $16 million for our TassieDoc initiative, which will improve access to primary care, ease pressure on our hospitals and provide tens of thousands of free GP services in areas of community need in each region. I was pleased to announce that

important milestones have been reached in plans to deliver two more bulk-billing TassieDoc clinics and expand access to affordable primary health care for communities who need it most.

A TassieDoc clinic will be located in Bridport, which was identified as an area with demonstrated community need for primary health services during the initial expressions of interest process and evaluation phase. A request for tender process will commence to identify the most suitable provider to deliver more bulk-billed appointments in Bridport after multiple bids were received in the region, with the tender to be advertised later this month.

Negotiations are underway to establish a second bulk-billing TassieDoc clinic in southern Tasmania, with details now being finalised before the location and operator is announced.

The 2026 Budget outlines $15 million to deliver a new health precinct in the Huon Valley, which will benefit the entire region. The Huon Valley was the first TassieDoc location identified during the 2025 election and our government remains committed to it. I've met with the Huon Valley Council and other key stakeholders, and we're continuing to have constructive discussions, working closely to deliver the right solution with the greatest benefit for the whole community. We know how important it is for people in the Huon Valley to access care close to home. Listening to the community is critical to getting this significant project right. A staged approach will ensure services are sustainable and tailored to local needs. I advised the committee that further information on consultation sessions, including dates, locations and how to participate will be released ahead of the consultation period.

The Budget includes funding for a new meningococcal B vaccine program which will commence next month, new CT scanners on the east and west coasts, and a significant $20 million investment to commence delivery of our 20-year preventive health strategy, The Health Revolution, which has now been launched. The strategy places prevention at the heart of our health system and demonstrates the future we want for Tasmanians now and for generations to come, where more Tasmanians can live well, stay well and have the support they need to live life to the fullest. The Health Revolution is intended to guide coordinated action across government services, communities and partner organisations, everyone who shapes the conditions people live in to improve health and wellbeing outcomes over time. The strategy's first action plan will start next month, setting out the initial work to build the foundations and start the transformation.

The Budget also increases access to life-saving breast screening across Tasmania, with a major $30.8 million funding boost, including the delivery and operation of the new Tasmanian Breast Care Centre and four new permanent breast-screening clinics. The first of these new clinics is now open and accepting public appointments in Devonport, improving access to free, life-saving breast screening services for communities across the north-west coast.

Located on level 1 of the Devonport Community and Health Services Centre, the purpose-built clinic is the north-west's first fixed public breast-screening site. The facility provides a centrally located and modern service designed to support access to and more participation in breast screening for residents in surrounding areas. The clinic includes a dedicated mammography screening room, patient amenities and state-of-the-art equipment. I take this opportunity to encourage all eligible Tasmanians in the north-west to check when they are due for screening and book in with the new clinic.

Along with breast screening, we also spoke about women's health more broadly during the hearings, including the 2026-27 Budget investment of $5 million over two years for the IVF and Fertility Support Initiative, which will commence next month. The initiative will assist around 2500 Tasmanian women with out-of-pocket costs associated with IVF, other assisted reproductive treatments or fertility preservation services. To help ease the burden, we're providing a rebate of up to $2000 to support women on their journey to motherhood and to ensure more equitable access.

I tabled the guidelines for the rebate for the committee, which is intended to complement existing Medicare rebates and private health insurance claims. The rebate is for Tasmanian residents accessing services provided in Tasmania by TasIVF or Fertility Tasmania. Applications for the rebate can be submitted online through the SmartyGrants portal administered by the Department of State Growth, or by visiting and lodging an application face to face in a Service Tasmania office, for fertility services received on or after 1 July.

I also advised the committee that the consultation approach for the development of a dedicated Tasmanian women's health strategy is currently being considered. A dedicated strategy would identify women and girls having equal opportunities for good health and wellbeing as a key outcome, and could have focus areas such as family, domestic and sexual violence, sexual and reproductive health, healthy ageing and health disparities. I look forward to having more to say on that in due course.

This record investment into Health in this year's Budget is proof that our government is investing in the services and infrastructure needed to meet growing demand and continue delivering the essential services Tasmanians expect and deserve but we are also committed to delivering a sustainable health system for the future. Of course, we expect the Health department to focus on delivery of frontline services and ensure every single dollar of taxpayer money is used wisely, and this was discussed at length during Estimates hearings. We are completely upfront and open about wanting the department to be more efficient, and I welcome Dr Broad's recognition that there are efficiencies to be gained. I've again welcomed the comments of the AMA, which agrees that there are efficiencies that must be made and the hard questions must be asked about what can be done better. We'll continue to work with the union around their ideas on how we can achieve this, with a strong focus on improving efficiency and productivity while ensuring that key essential services are delivered. We're already working on simple ways to do this, such as the introduction of technology and, importantly, this is already happening as we transition to digital processes right across our health services.

There will be an increased focus on decreasing locum and agency costs. We'll be looking at boosting cost recovery, particularly regarding what we can claim in Medicare rebates, for example, and a revised executive structure and other structural changes, including a reduction in the number of deputy secretaries.

We're looking at shared services across governments, streamlined back-office functions and getting rid of duplication. This work will build on initiatives already underway including consolidating corporate and policy functions, including reduced leadership roles, reducing consultancies, improving procurement and contract management, including through whole-of-agency contracts, consolidating leased office accommodation and reducing operational costs in supplies and consumables, communications, postage and freight, vehicle expenses and staff travel.

As per the information that was tabled in parliament recently, it is pleasing that the Department of Health has achieved a significant saving already through these measures. We will ensure that every taxpayer dollar is directed to where it matters most, and I'd like to take the opportunity to sincerely thank all the doctors, nurses, paramedics, allied health professionals, and countless support staff for their dedication and hard work in caring for their fellow Tasmanians every day.

In relation to ageing, it was pleasing to speak about the Tasmanian government's commitment to older Tasmanians who are immensely important in our community. In January 2025 we launched A Respectful, Age-Friendly Island: Older Tasmanians' Action Plan 2025-2029, which details our vision for a respectful age-friendly island where older Tasmanians are valued, connected and supported.

The plan seeks to enable an environment that supports the wellbeing, potential and value of older Tasmanians and address the unique challenges associated with ageing in Tasmania, along with incorporating actions to progress Lifelong Respect: Tasmania's Strategy to End the Abuse of Older People 2023-2029. A key priority of the action plan is the establishment of the Older Tasmanians Ministerial Advisory Council to provide oversight of the plan's implementation and advise on issues affecting older Tasmanians.

I was pleased to advise the committee that council members have now been selected following an expression of interest process with the first meeting in the coming months. I'm looking forward to working with all council members to achieve our vision of a respectful, age-friendly island where older Tasmanians are valued, connected and supported.

The Budget also includes $400,000 for the Council of the Ageing to continue key programs such as Seniors Month and digital inclusion, and a further $100,000 for elder abuse awareness activities.

In relation to Aboriginal affairs, I was pleased to reaffirm our commitment to work in genuine partnership with Aboriginal people and communities to improve outcomes and deliver on our commitments under the National Agreement on Closing the Gap. We know that lasting change cannot be delivered by government alone, and we continue to work closely with our Coalition of Peaks Partner, the Tasmanian Aboriginal Centre, alongside other Aboriginal organisations across the state.

We also continue to invest in initiatives that strengthen Aboriginal leadership, community capacity and self-determination. This includes supporting our Coalition of Peaks partner in its extensive national and state Closing the Gap work, as well as other organisations such as the Tasmanian Regional Aboriginal Communities Alliance, the Elders Council of Tasmania, the Aboriginal Land Council of Tasmania and Reconciliation Tasmania. We're investing in economic participation and community strength with funding for the Palawa Business Hub to support Aboriginal small business and create greater economic opportunities for Tasmanian Aboriginal people. We also continue to support important initiatives, including the implementation of stage 2 -

Debate adjourned.

Progress reported; Committee to sit again.

ADJOURNMENT

Response to Motion No. 108 - Ministerial Diary Disclosure Scheme

[6.00 p.m.]

Mr ABETZ (Franklin - Leader of the House) - Speaker, the member for Braddon, Mr Garland, requested the government to table information in the House by 16 June in regard to the government's formal response to its review on ministerial diaries and any improvements and proposed timelines for improved processes, as well as advice regarding improving the Ministerial Gift Disclosure process.

Honourable members will be aware that the government implemented a Ministerial Diary Disclosure process in place since April 2023 with the introduction of quarterly reporting of ministerial diaries.

The Premier advises that following the review, the government has now updated the Ministerial Diary Disclosure Scheme to strengthen transparency and improve the consistency, timeliness and accessibility of information released to the public.

The improvements followed a public consultation process in which 12 submissions were received. The key themes that the government heard through that process was that the public wanted more frequent disclosures, greater searchability of disclosures, clear standards and definitions about what should and should not be included in the disclosures, and that the scheme should be extended to all members of the Tasmanian parliament.

The government recognises that public confidence in decision-making is strengthened when Tasmanians can see in a clear and practical way how ministers engage with stakeholders while carrying out their official duties. The government has commenced disclosing diaries on a monthly basis, with the April disclosures now available on DPAC's website.

We are also working towards providing better accessibility and searchable formats for diary disclosures and we have published guidance which clearly defines and outlines what details are and are not required to be included in the diary disclosures.

Under the updated guidance, ministers will disclose meetings and events attended as part of their official duties as a minister or member of parliament. This includes: meeting with external stakeholders, including organisations and lobbyists where official government businesses are discussed; meetings with departmental staff; events attended in a ministerial capacity; meetings and events attended in a capacity as a member of parliament. For each meeting, the disclosure will include the date, information about the primary attendees, including their organisation and role where applicable, and the purpose of the meeting. It is also to be clear about appropriate boundaries. The guidance recognises that ministers are not required to disclose matters that do not relate to their official business as a minister or member of parliament, and that ministers are not required to disclose official business meetings that are subject to confidentiality requirements.

The scheme also excludes specific categories including cabinet and cabinet committee meetings, personal appointments, political party meetings, meetings with staff relating to staff management or office administration and social functions attended in a personal capacity.

The Premier has written to all members of parliament outlining the new ministerial diary process and requesting their participation to meet community expectations and increase transparency for all members of parliament.

Mr Garland's motion called for the release of the public consultation on a best practice mandatory disclosure model, and I am tabling a summary of this feedback now. The motion also referred to the need to explore the Ministerial Code of Conduct as it relates to the Ministerial Gifts, Benefits and Hospitality Policy.

Papers tabled.

The Premier has asked his department to undertake a jurisdictional analysis of all ministerial gift policies, and the Premier will report back to the House as soon as possible.

Comprehensive Palliative Care in Aged Care Program

[6.05 p.m.]

Ms ROSOL (Bass) - Honourable Speaker, before I start speaking about the topic I want to speak about tonight, I just want to talk about the length of the debate today because we commenced at 1 p.m. instead of the usual 10 a.m., and that was agreed as a parliament for a state funeral that was happening today. There was an understanding that the debate would continue longer as a result of that further into the evening, so that we had the usual length of time for debate today. Yet here we are at 6 p.m., we've gone to Adjournment and it's not something that we agreed to as a party. For a government that say they want transparency, they've cut debate short today; it's a sly move and it shows that they're not interested in debate, they're not interested in allowing us to speak for the full length of time that we should have been today.

I rise to speak this evening about the Comprehensive Palliative Care in Aged Care program (CPCiAC) that was provided by Commonwealth funding and state funding for specialist palliative care in-reach into aged care facilities to support older Australians nearing the end of their life. That funding from the federal government was matched by the state government and has been in place since 2018-19. The services that were provided included palliative care, clinical nurse consultants in each region of the state and a registrar, and 17 aged-care facilities benefited from those clinical nurse specialists and registrars around the state coming in and providing regular rounds in their facilities.

Over 1300 residents in the last 12 months, up until March this year, were positively impacted by the CPCiAC program: there was consultation provided, care planning, support and staff education that allowed for palliative care to be provided in aged-care facilities, and this was a way of avoiding people having to be hospitalised at the end of their life.

Research was conducted in the Australian Capital Territory that showed that the model was effective in reducing hospital admissions and supporting people to die in their preferred place of death, with better quality of life in their last days. As well as providing for better quality of life for people in palliative care and in aged-care facilities, it eased pressure on a health system where people didn't have to go into hospital in order to receive palliative care in their last days. Therefore, it was positive for the health system as a whole.

The Commonwealth Government has chosen to end the funding for the CPCiAC program as at the end of June this year, just in a couple of weeks time, and unfortunately, the state government has decided to also cease funding the program because the federal government has. I say 'unfortunately', because just because the federal government chose not to continue funding this program didn't mean that the state government also had to pull the funding for the program. This has been a really effective service, a really effective program that's made a difference for people. It's eased pressure on the hospital system, which is exactly what we need right now. It's saved money in the health system as well; all the things that are good for people and for the health system. Yet the state government has decided that because the federal government pulled the funding, they would also.

This is an unfortunate situation and it didn't have to be this way. Clinical nurse consultants: the state government could choose to fund a clinical nurse consultant in each area of the state and continue that so that in-reach program can continue into aged-care facilities. The Greens urge the government to review this decision. When I asked about this in Budget Estimates, I asked whether any modelling had been undertaken to look at the impact of the end of this program, and the government had done no modelling to see what the impact of the ending of this funding will do for our health system. What they did say was that the specialist palliative care program would be able to pick up the service, but we know that that service is already under enormous pressure and can't keep up. I had a letter from the ANMF today that said the specialist palliative care service received six referrals in one day. They can't cope with it.

Thus, the Greens urge the government to reconsider the cutting of funding to the CPCiAC program, to fund clinical nurse consultants in palliative care around the state, so that this in-reach service can continue and people who are in their last days can continue to have the support that they need and a good quality of life in the place where they want to be; in their homes or in the aged care facility.

National Corrections Officers' Day

[6.10 p.m.]

Ms BUTLER (Lyons) - Speaker, last month marked National Corrections Officers' Day and I rise today not just to recognise correctional officers, but to reflect on what they are being asked to deal with in this state. This is a job that asks a lot: long shifts, constant pressure, unpredictable environments and the mental and physical toll that comes with it. Despite that, they turn up, back each other in and carry out a role that is essential to keeping our community safe. That effort doesn't always get seen, but it matters and it deserves recognition.

While recognition is easy, the reality facing corrections officers is getting harder. Over the past 12 years, Tasmania's prison population has doubled but the infrastructure hasn't kept up, the planning hasn't kept up, and the support for frontline staff certainly hasn't kept up. That pressure does not sit in reports. It does not sit in offices. It sits with the officers who walk through the gates every day and manage the consequences and, despite all of that, they keep turning up. They show professionalism, they back each other in and when things become unsafe, they speak up.

That's exactly what we saw recently at the Launceston Reception Prison, where union members took action after months of raising serious concerns around overcrowding and safety.

Let's be clear: those concerns were not new, they were not sudden; they were raised repeatedly through the proper channels. Yet what was missing was action because no corrections officer should ever be put in a position where they are managing a facility where people are sleeping on mattresses on the floor. That is not an operational challenge; that is a failure of planning and it is a failure of leadership. This is the pattern we keep seeing.

For more than a decade, governments of this state have acknowledged pressure in the corrections system. Ministers have talked about capacity, talked about reviews, talked about future infrastructure - lots of talk, but surprise, surprise, no action. During that same period, the prison population has continued to grow and the gap between what they say and what is delivered has only widened. We have had minister after minister cycle through this portfolio and yet the same issues remain: overcrowding, infrastructure shortfalls, and frontline staff carrying unacceptable levels of risk. The current minister has been part of this government's leadership group since 2022, during a period where these pressures have only intensified. This is not something that can be passed off as new or unexpected or someone else's responsibility.

What we are seeing now is the result of years of delay, years of deflection, and a failure to act when workers first raise the alarm. Instead, the burden is being pushed back onto the system we already have and onto workers who have no choice but to carry it. Correctional officers are now working in environments that are overstretched, under pressure and increasingly unsafe, while being expected to manage risks that should never have been allowed to escalate this far. When those concerns are raised, too often the response is process delay or shifting responsibility or PR stunts rather than decisive action.

Labor stands with correctional officers and recognises the real hardship they are facing, not just the demands of the job itself, but the added pressure of operating in a system that is being stretched beyond its limits. These are workers who have done their part. They have showed restraint. They have used the proper processes, but they should not have to escalate just to be heard.

Recognition is important, but it is meaningless if it is not matched by action. It means treating safety as non-negotiable. It means investing in the infrastructure that the system actually needs and it means listening to the people on the floor, not just after something goes wrong when they first speak up.

Corrections officers continue to hold this system together. The question is whether this government is prepared to do the same.

Land Justice - Palawa People

[6.14 p.m.]

Mr BAYLEY (Clark) - Honourable Speaker, I rise tonight to talk about land justice and the return of Tasmanian land to its original and rightful owners, the Palawa people of Lutruwita. In 1804 a 100 per cent of Lutruwita - its country, rivers, seas and sky - were owned by the First People of this island. Since time began, the Palawa had lived, laughed, loved and cried on this land. They cared for it, farmed it, celebrated it and were at one with it. 'We are Country and Country is us', says Uncle Jim Everett puralia meenamatta but so many died on it.

During the Black War and beyond, Palawa people were murdered, displaced, exiled and abandoned, facing over 150 subsequent years where their existence was denied through an extinction myth and an assimilation policy that saw Aboriginal people banished to an Aboriginal reserve and the Housing Commission suburbs of Launceston. Today, only 1 per cent of Tasmania has been returned to Aboriginal ownership.

Every single day we come in here and acknowledge and pay respects to the Tasmanian Aboriginal people. We acknowledge them as the 'traditional and original owners and continuing custodians' of the land on which we meet; but they're pretty hollow words. It's over 20 years since this parliament has returned public land to the Aboriginal Land Council of Tasmania (ALCT), the statutory body established under the *Aboriginal Lands Act* to own title on behalf of all Aboriginal people.

In 2005 the balance of Truwana/Cape Barren Island and all of Lungtalanana/Clarke Island, was returned to ALCT in the last major public land return since the act was established.

In 1995 the passage of the lands act by the Groom government returned some of the Furneaux Islands; Putalina/Oyster Cove; Piyur Kitina/Risdon Cove; and some incredibly important remote cave sites in the far south-west.

In April 1999, Wybalena, the spectacular and powerful site of offshore detention on Flinders Island, was returned after a sustained local campaign including Aboriginal occupation and advocacy. A few weeks ago, I spoke of the restoration and interpretation work underway at Wybalena and the palpable power and pride Aboriginal people feel when walking on Aboriginal land. While there's more to be done, Wybalena now serves as an example of truth-telling and what can be achieved with government goodwill and commitment.

Last week I attended a special event on the foothills of Kunanyi. A private freehold landowner, inspired and informed by the Giving Land Back campaign, gifted her private land to the Aboriginal Land Council for perpetual ownership by the Aboriginal community. Giving Land Back was established by the land council a few years ago, frustrated by the lack of progress on public land returned and led by government. Inspired by the unprompted generosity of Jane and Tom Teniswood returning half their little Swanport property in 2019, Giving Land Back was the first ever ask of Aboriginal people to us, the now owners of freehold land, to get land justice in this state. Through direct gifts of title, financial donations and bequests, Giving Land Back offers a tax-deductible pathway for everyday Australians to take action.

Some people have more land than they need, more than they can manage, and some that they no longer require. Since Giving Land Back was established, tens of thousands of dollars and three separate freehold titles have been gifted to Palawa people. On top of the block at Kunanyi, a rainforest block at Loongana and a vacant house site at Mathinna have been gifted back. Bushland offers a chance for connection and management, the Mathinna block a truth-telling opportunity to recognise and remember the girl once kept by the Franklins at Government House before being abandoned when they moved on to bigger things.

The success of Giving Land Back demonstrates the generosity and commitment of private land owners and their belief in justice and redress. Every block shows up this government and this parliament as lacking in ambition, in heart and in commitment to the justice we all espouse. Every donation demonstrates that everyday Tasmanians want a better future for Palawa people and their knowledge that land is a central pillar of that future. Only

government can initiate and progress the return of public land and I believe this parliament stands ready here to progress it. Every day we delay makes a lie out of the acknowledgement we make at the start of every session in this place.

To close, I implore the minister to progress, on our collective behalf, the return of public land to the Palawa people of Tasmania. To do anything less would be letting down the acknowledgement we make every single day. Honourable Speaker, always was, always will be Aboriginal land.

Professor Richard Scolyer AO - Tribute

[6.19 p.m.]

Mr BARNETT (Lyons - Deputy Premier) - Honourable Speaker, tonight I wish to pay a tribute to Prof Richard Scolyer AO.

Members - Hear, hear.

Mr BARNETT - Speaker, I know I speak for other members in this place to pay a tribute to this Launceston boy, this Tasmanian boy, a Riverside boy, in fact, Launceston High school and, of course, who became one of Australia's and the world's leading melanoma researchers and pathologists and who had a love of cycling, like myself and I will share a few remarks about that shortly as I share this tribute. I want to pay sincere sympathies and condolences to Dr Katie Nicoll, his wife, and of course his three children, Emily, Matthew and Lucy, and to his wider family and friends and colleagues and indeed, patients, and I extend my deepest condolences.

Resilience, hope and inspiration come to mind to describe Prof Richard Scolyer. He studied medical science at the University of Tasmania and remained proud of his Tasmanian upbringing throughout his life. Wherever he was, whatever he was doing, he was a proud Tasmanian, and I must say a northern Tasmanian at that, being a northerner myself.

He served as a co-medical director of the Melanoma Institute Australia and helped transform the way melanoma is diagnosed, understood and treated. He worked with Professor Georgina Long AO. He helped pioneer new treatment approaches for advanced melanoma, including immunotherapy before surgery. His research and clinical leadership helped thousands of lives and gave new hope to melanoma patients and their families, particularly in Australia, which has one of the highest melanoma rates in the world. In 2024, Professor Richard Scolyer and Professor Long were named joint Australians of the Year in recognition of their world-leading melanoma work and their service to patients. We all remember that appointment, certainly Tasmanians here in this place and elsewhere; it was a wonderful celebration.

In 2023, Professor Scolyer was diagnosed with aggressive glioblastoma, a serious brain cancer, and he faced that diagnosis with extraordinary courage, openness and determination and then died sadly on Sunday 7 June 2026, aged 59, after his battle with brain cancer. Tributes recognised his courage, his brilliance, his compassion and lasting contribution to medical science. His passing, of course, is a profound loss, but his legacy will continue through the lives he helped to save and the treatments he helped to pioneer, and the hope he gave to patients and families across Australia and around the world.

Before I read the letter that he said was a final goodbye, or at least part of it, I want to say he did have that love of cycling. We were going to have a time together on the bike and there was a last-minute cancellation. He did ride this year on the Tour de Cure in Tasmania, some 500 kilometres over four days. He rode with many of my mates from northern Tasmania and in the Foxes, Hounds and Turtles bike riding group that I am part of in Launceston: I'm one of the turtles, by the way. He did that just this year. I've recently finished reading his book *Brainstorm* and just have the highest regard and it's truly an inspirational book, if anyone's interested to learn more. He was the number one ticket holder for the Bridgenorth Football Club.

His final goodbye message is very profound, and I'd like to just read a couple of extracts because he knew very well that this would be read into the public arena after his death, and it was there designed to provide hope and inspiration. That's what he said in his letter; that we can and should continue to push boundaries to propel the cancer field forward. He said, 'I'm extremely proud of my impact,' and he acknowledged that being world leading in the teamwork that he demonstrated. He said he hoped it would provide a platform for others to build upon to ultimately make a difference for future cancer patients. He talked about his love for his family and that family was everything, and I'm sure people in this place would agree; and he said:

> I have always been driven by the belief that we all have a responsibility to try to change the future for others and leave the world a better place.

Richard Scolyer, congratulations. Thank you for what you've done. Rest in peace.

Sports Funding Priorities

[6.24 p.m.]

Ms BURNET (Clark) - Honourable Speaker, I wish to put on record my concerns about the Tasmanian government Sports funding priorities, the allocation in the recent state Budget, and a growing, concerning disconnect between elite and grassroots community infrastructure priorities. During the Estimates hearing, minister Duigan was questioned on a Budget that was heavily weighted towards multi-million dollar elite-stream focused projects, while grassroots clubs, junior associations and vital public infrastructure are left on life support.

As for weighting between AFL versus other sports infrastructure spending: AFL represents 51.7 per cent of the total infrastructure funding included in output 5.6 Sport and Recreation in the capital investment program from the Sports portfolio in the 2026-27 Budget and across the forward Estimates.

There is a troubling disparity in how this government allocates its sporting investments. Football Tasmania Chief Executive Tony Pignata put it plainly when he revealed that this government invests roughly $540 into every Tasmanian who plays AFL football; $138 into every basketballer; yet for soccer, the investment plummets to just $19. Soccer, a grassroots sport, accessible to children, migrants, women and, indeed, every Tasmanian, receives just 3.5 per cent of the funding that AFL does. In fact, AFL receives over half of state infrastructure funding, according to answers tabled by the Minister for Sport this week.

When pushed to provide a transparent regional breakdown of spending across different sporting codes over the forward Estimates from 2026-27 to 2029-30, as well as a specific

breakdown between men's and women's sports, the minister placed the details on notice. Minister Duigan defended the disparity by calling these large projects 'point-in-time investments' and claiming heavy investment in community sporting infrastructure; but building broad, generalised community sports centres does nothing to fix the immediate structural shortfalls facing individual grassroots clubs that are struggling to justify or maintain secure playing grounds.

Local football associations like the Central Region Junior Football Association, which manages over 4000 young players alone, are telling us loud and clear that they are operating past breaking point. Grassroots competitions are being forced to survive on a mismatched patchwork of school and council ovals, often with degraded, sometimes unsafe, playing surfaces; failing, outdated floodlights; lack of changeroom or toilet facilities; and delayed kick-off times due to a severe shortage of functional facilities. I know this occurs in netball as well. We should be immediately rolling out direct upgrade grants to the local community pitches where thousands of young Tasmanians actually play every single weekend.

Perhaps the most alarming reflection of the government's misplaced priorities is found in our public aquatic spaces. Peak water safety bodies are currently warning of a dangerous nationwide trend: nearly half of all year 6 students can no longer fulfil basic water survival requirements such as swimming 50 metres or treading water for two minutes. Swimming is not just a weekend recreation; it is a critical, life-saving survival skill. Yet given the clear public safety risk, this government steams on to pour a billion dollars into stadium infrastructure, elite sports teams and their facilities.

Why is there no urgent or, indeed, matching boost in funding for school swimming programs and subsidised private lessons to ensure every Tasmanian child learns how to survive in the water? As someone completely invested in ensuring a flourishing community sports scene, what I see is our local community sport networks stretch themselves to the absolute limit. A healthy sport culture is built from the ground up, not from the corporate boxes down. I urge the minister and this government to re-evaluate these priorities and start investing in the safety, accessibility and grassroots infrastructure that Tasmanian kids rely on.

Decision on Extension of Sitting Time

[6.29 p.m.]

Ms HADDAD (Clark) - Honourable Speaker, I will make a short contribution tonight. I'm feeling really frustrated this evening and I'm finding it really difficult to reconcile the language that we heard from the Treasurer and the Premier in here about working collaboratively across this parliament, and the behaviour that we've seen today. There was an agreement made last night between the government, the Labor opposition, the Greens and the entire crossbench who were represented - or almost all of the crossbench - at a regular meeting that occurs on the Monday night before parliament sits, that we would sit late tonight. The reason that we agreed to that, as an entire parliament, was of course to allow members to attend the funeral of Father Tate.

I, for one, put on the record very early that I was very grateful for the government's offer to sit late so that members could attend Father Tate's funeral. He was beloved, not just in the Labor Party, but across the parliament, across the Tasmanian community and was somebody

who gave enormous service to the Tasmanian people, not just in parliament but also through his service to the Catholic Church.

We were very pleased to have that agreement struck last night with the Treasurer, as the leader of government business, that we would sit late to make up that time. We agreed to sit till 9 p.m.; but here we are adjourning at 6 p.m. without a formal agreement to renege on what the Treasurer, the leader of government business, Mr Abetz, promised us last night but I heard the Premier in Question Time appealing to the crossbench about how hard he wants to work with them, how different this parliament is, that he wants to work collaboratively, and yet it seems to me that he only wants to do that when it suits him. He only wants to uphold that standard when it suits him.

This parliament has really serious work to do this week: passing the Budget is arguably the most important week of the year for any parliament. I want to put on the record tonight that the Labor Party was ready to and expecting to sit until 9 p.m. to make up the time that we didn't sit this morning to ensure that the Budget is passed. That's a very important task of this parliament to complete this week, but it can't be only the government who calls the shots in here, and the Budget must be passed as well as the Premier being held to account for his behaviour, and to allow the parliament to have adequate time to scrutinise the behaviour that we've seen from the Premier and from his ministers this week. He makes a big fuss about saying that he wants to get on with the job and he's made a big fuss today of criticising the Labor opposition and the crossbench for holding his ministers to account.

We've seen two ministers resign in two weeks, and that has not been, as I said in the MPI today, as a result of any kind of personal attacks. It's been as a result of keeping ministers of the Crown to account, which people should be able to rely on the Premier to do, but he hasn't; but he talks about wanting to get on with the job, that we've been distracting the parliament and the Tasmanian people from getting on with the job of passing the Budget. I want to put on the record tonight that the Labor Party was ready to sit late until 9 p.m. as agreed last night, and that passing the Budget remains a major priority of this week.

Bushfire Risk

[6.32 p.m.]

Mr Di FALCO (Lyons) - Honourable Speaker, I rise this evening to draw attention of the House to an issue that should concern every Tasmanian, regardless of where they live or their political persuasion: the management of our forests and the growing risks of catastrophic bushfires. Recently, I became aware of a publication titled *Our Mismanaged Forests*, authored by respected forest management expert John Mulligan, and supported by contributions from a range of experienced forestry, land management and fire experts. While the book focuses primarily on Victoria's forests and Crown lands, many of the lessons and warnings it contains are highly relevant to Tasmania.

The book asked some important questions: who is responsible for managing forest fuel loads? Are governments doing enough to reduce bushfire risk? What policies and practices should be adopted to minimise the threat to human life, protect the environment and safeguard the unique wildlife that depends upon healthy forests? These are questions that cannot be ignored. Mr Mulligan, now in his 90s, has spent a lifetime working in and understanding the bush. His publication highlights the importance of science-based forest management:

fuel-reduction burning; cool-season burns; local decision-making; weed and pest control; and proactive land stewardship. One of the central themes of the book is that bushfires are not solely a response issue; they are fundamentally a management issue. The experts featured in the publication argue that when fuel loads are allowed to accumulate over many years, the likelihood of intense, uncontrolled megafires increases significantly.

The Victorian Bushfires Royal Commission reached a similar conclusion following the tragic Black Saturday fires. The commission recommended large-scale fuel reduction burning as a key tool in reducing bushfire intensity and protecting communities. The book also highlights the value of Indigenous cultural burning practices. For thousands of years, Aboriginal Australians managed landscapes through careful, planned, low-intensity burns that reduce fuel loads, improve ecosystem health, and help prevent catastrophic fire events. There is much that modern land managers can learn from this knowledge.

Importantly, the discussion should not be framed as a choice between environmental protection and fuel reduction. Effective bushfire mitigation seeks to achieve both objectives. Catastrophic bushfires can devastate native forests, destroying wildlife habitat, damage water catchment and release enormous amounts of carbon into the atmosphere. Sensible fuel management can help reduce those impacts.

The economic case is also compelling. Research cited in relation to bush fire mitigation indicates that every dollar invested in prevention and risk reduction can save multiple dollars in future firefighting, recovery, and rebuilding costs. More importantly, it can save lives.

Tasmania knows all too well the consequences of severe bushfires. We have seen the destruction of homes, businesses, farms, and valuable environmental assets. We have witnessed the toll that major fire events place on volunteer firefighters, emergency service personnel, and local communities.

As a state with extensive forested landscapes, we must continue to examine whether our current management practices are delivering the best outcomes. Are fuel reduction programs being undertaken at appropriate levels? Are local land managers, firefighters and communities being properly consulted? Are we making full use of both modern science and traditional Indigenous knowledge?

Time expired.

Italian Club - 70 Year Anniversary

[6.37 p.m.]

Mr VERMEY (Clark) - Honourable Speaker, I rise tonight to say *buona fortuna*, good luck, for another 70 years for the Italian Club. What a great night I had there on 23 May, celebrating 70 years since the doors first opened at 77 Federal Street in 1956; a wonderful night, lots of fun, entertainment and celebration and getting people together.

A person who's probably part of that was also Father Michael Tate and I will just go into that quickly. What a great celebration of his life today at St Mary's Cathedral. I knew the Tates, his parents, when I used to deliver the meat to their place, and I had the pleasure of catching

up with Michael in The Hague at residence there and also had Michael celebrating my mother's funeral in January. Good luck to Michael. He is a fantastic guy.

Tony De Cesare, the Australian Italian Club president, gave a speech on that night, and I will read some of this out to give you a bit of what it was all about for these people celebrating and putting together their club.

> Our founders and their families created a place for the migrant community that sort of replaced the piazza of their hometowns, where they could gather with friends and enjoy their culture, language and of course, food.
> There are so many stories about how important the club was to the immigrants who arrived with only a cardboard suitcase and dreams.
>
> The club nurtured a community and grew with much more work, so many more building halls, the kitchen extensions, the bocce hall renovations and more hands-on work by many including our oldest members - Aragino Dietori, who turned 93 on that day.

Who cut an amazing cake which was made by many of the Italian community.

> These days the club has perhaps an even more important role for the many descendants of the migrants as well as new arrivals in connecting the community. It's been a place that's open to all, enjoyed by everyone and used in a way everyone wants it to be used: a touch point for the whole community, keen to maintain a vibrant link to the heritage of Italy and today. Of course, the increasing popularity of the trattoria is open to everyone and anyone and they encourage members to contribute and come along to free weekly fitness classes, lunches on a Wednesday, which are heavily discounted and fantastic.

They've also - when they've had AFL matches being played, the VFL, the Devils, they'll open it up, coming back from the games and embracing other people of the community. The theme for the 70th anniversary celebration was founders, family and future. They honoured and commemorated those who established the club with their hard work and sacrifices, their family and the next generation that follow to take the club into the future with vibrancy and energy.

Some of the people who started all that was Frank Demarte. He was instrumental in getting the Italian festival going, Danilo Fulani, Petro Dubari, Mario Cundari, Alessandro Caccavo, Raphael Paleimo and Paolo Cesa and his wife, which they haven't often mentioned that, but Grazia, who I knew again through my work and the warmth and care that they bestowed on so many, was fantastic. It was a great night. Simon Robostelli, Angelo Fraraccio; there were so many people there supporting the community, embracing what they had and encouraging young Italian people to be part of the community and keep on pushing it for many years to come. A wonderful night and a great part of our community. Thank you.

Men's Health Week

[6.42 p.m.]

Mr FERGUSON (Bass) - Honourable Speaker, this is Men's Health Week and I want to speak about men's mental health and men's physical health. On Sunday, I was really pleased to be joined by about 150-plus people at Riverside, at the Clint Ewington Walk, which was organised by the wonderful people at the Lagana Cricket Club and Lagana Rotary. I'm so grateful to those clubs and organisations for bringing us together and I was so encouraged to see people from all walks of life and ages coming together to support our men.

I particularly want to acknowledge Jamie Campbell and his work through Spoke to a Bloke, along with Jared Wells, Matt Dingen from Run for Change, Chris Demeyer from the Lagana Cricket Club and Claire Rechberger from Lagana Rotary. They, among others, are wonderful people taking action in our local community. The turnout was encouraging but also, it reminded us that we have a lot of work to do.

I want to contribute to our society doing a better job of normalising what I call real conversations about mental health. It's not just about stigma, but there is that. I just want us to be more willing to ask direct questions about the people around us. Real conversations. The statistics tell us why we must. In previous contributions, I've spoken about how our suicide rate in Tasmania compares with road trauma, but we hear so much more about road trauma; we need to hear more about protecting lives from self harm, especially for our men where three quarters of our men - we're over represented in our suicide statistics in Tasmania.

Every day around our country, around five working-aged Australian men are taking their own lives. That's five men yesterday. Five men today, and unfortunately, probably five more men tomorrow. Left behind by every one of those men is a family, a group of friends, work colleagues, people who care about them, and certainly a community left behind, asking whether there was there something more I could have possibly done. We've all experienced that. I have, and over the years I've spoken with many men who have struggled with their mental health. They've battled suicidal thoughts or found themselves in a place of deep hopelessness, and what strikes me is that most actually do not truly want to end their lives. That was reflected in conversations that I had over our 10-kilometre walk on Sunday - real conversations where people were sharing from the heart. What they do want is for the pain to stop; they want the pain to be over.

I also experienced a realisation from my walk with one man and a real conversation that he shared with me. He really shone a light on something that helped me solve one of my unanswered questions, and that is that there is a lie involved. One of the most dangerous lies a man can tell himself is the idea that the people around him would somehow be better off without him, that 'the world might be better off without me. My family, I'm such a burden, they'll be better off without me'. That's the lie, honourable Speaker and colleagues, that's the untruth. It's so false, but I recognise that it's the feeling and the belief that may be held by that man in his hour of darkness, in his time of need. I want to say that families don't recover from that loss entirely, and family and friends will carry that grief for years. Communities are losing people who are needed, who are valued and who are actually, in fact, loved.

Tonight, I want to say something very directly to the men of Tasmania, and that is this: you are loved. Bloke, we need you. Man, the people around you will be worse off without you. Your community is better off with you in it. Your family and loved ones will be stronger with

you staying with us. It's a message that I hope we can all take out of this parliament and continue to promote. We need you, your family needs you, your state needs you but please reach out for help because we know that you're in a difficult place, a dark place. There are people who care enough to want to help you through it, to help you live for tomorrow and know that that would have been, as was shared with me in that real conversation, a bad decision.

Braddon - Potholes
Longford Roundabout
Howth Roundabout

[6.47 p.m.]

Ms DOW (Braddon) - Honourable Speaker, I just wanted to, tonight, draw the attention of the Infrastructure minister to the large potholes that are developing on the road network past Latrobe through to Deloraine. As I drove down the highway on Monday morning, obviously we've had a lot of rain over the last few weeks, and we are seeing the deterioration of the road network again. I call on the minister to see that the maintenance crews can fix this area as a matter of priority because, as we know, it does pose a danger, not only during the day but particularly at night, if people hit those potholes at a high speed. I ask that the minister pays particular attention to that and I look forward to those potholes being filled.

The second issue that I want to raise is at the Longford roundabout, where there is a large amount of dirt, debris and other items that are around the perimeter of that roundabout. I don't know if anyone's ever noticed that as you go around, but there is a lot. Obviously there's the abattoir there close by and it's a heavy traffic load that goes through that area. It does pose a hazard, it's a slippery risk, but it's also a risk for getting a flat tyre or other hazards. I ask that the minister review that particular part of Illawarra Road and the roundabout and make sure that that is in fact maintained to a good standard and that debris is removed.

The third item that I wanted to raise is about the Howth roundabout, which, at times, there have been a number of road accidents over the years. I have a lot of constituents raise with me their concerns about the way in which you navigate that roundabout. I'm seeking from the minister tonight an update on any traffic studies that have been done recently on the roundabout and traffic flow, already future work that is planned for that roundabout. I've actually written to the minister about each of these items as well.

The House adjourned at 6.49 p.m.

Appendix 1

OFFICIAL

QUESTION ON NOTICE

Question No. 9 of 2026

House of Assembly

ASKED BY: Craig Garland MP

ANSWERED BY: Hon Nick Duigan MLC

QUESTION:

With respect to available energy supply for emerging industries:

1. *In the scenario where Marinus Link does not proceed as proposed or at all, but proposed Artificial Intelligence data centres and the e-fuel facilities do proceed to construction:*
   a. *How many gigawatt hours of electricity would need to be supplied to these businesses?*
   b. *What percentage of Tasmania's total energy demand could be supplied by hydroelectric generation?*
   c. *What modelling underpins this assessment?*

ANSWER:

1. A final investment decision on the first stage of the Marinus Link project was taken in 2025. Given this, the Government is not currently planning for any scenarios where Marinus Link does not proceed.

   There are a number of projects currently under development in Tasmania that would represent large new loads in the electricity system, including proposals from Firmus, Bell Bay Powerfuels and HIF Global. In addition, existing industrial customers are exploring proposals to increase their requirement for electricity, such as Grange Resources and the Boyer Mill.

   The annual energy requirements for each of these proposals will depend on final project design and commercial contracting arrangements.

   Currently, Tasmania is broadly balanced across electricity supply and demand, provided typical/average inflows and wind patterns are delivered. The existing hydro-electric system in Tasmania currently yields 8,780 gigawatt hours per year on average, although there is significant variability from year to year. In addition, existing wind generation in Tasmania yields over 1,800 gigawatt hours per year.

The Government's expectation is that new large loads will partner with new renewable generation to meet their energy demands and grow energy capacity within the state. This aligns with the Australian Government's *Expectations of data centres and AI infrastructure developers*[1], including that data centres should:

- secure new and additional clean energy generation and/or storage to offset demand
- cover their share of transmission and distribution infrastructure costs
- minimise their energy demand and emissions by adopting industry-leading efficiency measures and technologies
- improve the overall security and stability of the energy grid, including by enhancing demand flexibility and opportunities for peak-load management and appropriate sharing of consumption data.

At a recent Energy Ministerial Council, my Energy Minister colleagues and I tasked the Australian Energy Market Commission (AEMC) with providing targeted advice on implementation options to support these expectations.

QUESTION:

2. *In relation to company contracts:*
    a. *What contracts, if any, are currently in place with data centres or e-fuel companies?*
    b. *What is the amount of electricity supply guaranteed per contract, itemised for each contract, in gigawatt hours per year for the next ten years?*

ANSWER:

Contracts between proponents and energy providers are commercial matters for those businesses. However, Firmus has publicly confirmed that it has signed a three-year retail agreement with Aurora Energy to supply 104 megawatts of electricity to its St Leonards site.

Aurora Energy has confirmed the agreement does not impact supply to other customers and delivers a strong commercial outcome for Tasmania.

[1] https://www.industry.gov.au/publications/expectations-data-centres-and-ai-infrastructure-developers

APPROVED/~~NOT APPROVED~~



Hon Nick Duigan MLC
Minister for Energy and Renewables

Date: 12th June 2026

Appendix 2

OFFICIAL

QUESTION ON NOTICE

Question No. 10 of 2026

House of Assembly

ASKED BY: Craig Garland MP, Independent Member for Braddon

ANSWERED BY: The Hon. Nick Duigan MLC, Member for Windermere, Minister for Energy and Renewables

QUESTION:

With respect to hydro dam storage, generation improvements, and risk management:

(1) what is the current operational policy range for hydro dam storage levels?

(a) What are the minimum and maximum target storage percentages?

(b) What is the policy rationale for operating within this range?

ANSWER:

Hydro storages are managed at a statewide system level within a seasonal energy security framework. The Energy Security Risk Response Framework (the Framework) was implemented by the Tasmanian Government in 2017 as a rigorous and transparent framework for the management of water storages. The Framework is legislated under the *Energy Co-ordination and Planning Act 1995*.

The relevant benchmarks within the Framework are the Prudent Storage Level (PSL) and High Reliability Level (HRL) profiles. The PSL, and the more conservative HRL, act as triggers to signify additional monitoring by the Director of Energy Planning and the independent Tasmanian Economic Regulator, along with an action plan for more conservative water management by Hydro Tasmania.

The current PSL ranges from 26.9% to 40.8%, while the HRL ranges from 19.0% to 32.5%, depending on the month. These percentages vary by month to reflect seasonal inflows, demand and energy security risk. Monthly figures are publicly available through the *Energy Co-ordination and Planning Order 2021*[1].

[1] https://www.legislation.tas.gov.au/view/html/inforce/current/sr-2021-068#GS4@EN

OFFICIAL

As outlined above, hydro storage is not managed to a single fixed statewide dam level range. Individual storages are managed according to site-specific operating rules, hydrology, forecast inflows, generation requirements, dam safety requirements, environmental obligations, other water users' needs, and energy security considerations.

The rationale is to balance energy security, water management and operational flexibility. Hydro Tasmania maintains sufficient stored energy to manage dry periods, low inflows and supply contingencies, while also preserving capacity to capture inflows and manage spill risk during wetter periods. Operational decisions also consider market conditions, Basslink availability, generation needs, environmental obligations and dam safety requirements.

QUESTION:

With respect to hydro dam storage, generation improvements, and risk management:

(2) What efficiency improvements are presently available for turbine power generation across Hydro Tasmania assets?

ANSWER:

I am advised by Hydro Tasmania that when replacing or refurbishing a turbine and associated equipment, designs are reviewed for increased efficiency (reducing water used for generation).

QUESTION:

With respect to hydro dam storage, generation improvements, and risk management:

(3) What is the estimated additional generation capacity achievable through turbine upgrades alone?

In its submission to the *Joint Select Committee on Energy Matters*, Hydro Tasmania identified West Coast upgrades at Mackintosh, Bastyan and Reece that would support approximately 40 MW of additional flexible capacity. It also identified later works at John Butters and Tribute that could enable up to a further 30 MW, subject to procurement and delivery. In total, this indicates a potential capacity uplift of up to approximately 70 MW across those West Coast assets.

Hydro Tasmania has also identified smaller completed capacity increases at existing stations, including Cluny (+2 MW), Liapootah Unit 3 (+3.6 MW) and Catagunya Unit 1 (+3 MW), with further capacity increases associated with Catagunya Unit 2 and Lake Echo upgrades.

QUESTION:

With respect to hydro dam storage, generation improvements, and risk management:

(4) Has Hydro Tasmania undertaken additional catchment modelling for existing power stations to determine potential increases in generation capacity and if so, what additional capacity (in megawatt and gigawatt-hour per annum) has been identified as feasible?

ANSWER:

I am advised that Hydro Tasmania undertakes ongoing hydrological and catchment modelling across its system to support generation planning, storage management and investment decisions.

Hydro Tasmania has advised that identified opportunities to increase generation capacity relate mainly to targeted asset upgrades, improved turbine efficiency, operational flexibility and life-extension, rather than new catchment yield. Annual generation (GWh) outcomes remain dependent on water availability, inflows, storage levels and operating conditions.

As provided to the *Joint Select Committee on Energy Matters* and outlined in Question 3, Hydro Tasmania identified West Coast upgrades at Mackintosh, Bastyan and Reece that would support approximately 40 MW of additional flexible capacity. It also identified later works at John Butters and Tribute that could enable up to a further 30 MW, subject to procurement and delivery. This indicates a potential capacity uplift of up to approximately 70 MW across those West Coast assets.

Hydro Tasmania has also identified smaller completed capacity increases at existing stations, including Cluny (+2 MW), Liapootah Unit 3 (+3.6 MW) and Catagunya Unit 1 (+3 MW), with further capacity increases associated with Catagunya Unit 2 and Lake Echo upgrades.

Other examples of increases in potential increases in generation capacity include the proposed Tarraleah redevelopment. This station upgrade would increase peak capacity from approximately 90 MW to 190 MW and deliver around 30% more energy from the same water.

Lastly, Hydro Tasmania is currently maintaining high storage levels in Lake Gordon. This increases generation capacity by up to ~100 MW due to the

"head effect" — higher storage levels allow the station to produce more energy from the same amount of water, which can increase annual output by up to 200GWh annually. Actual annual generation (GWh) outcomes remain dependent on water availability, inflows, storage levels and operating conditions.

QUESTION:

With respect to hydro dam storage, generation improvements, and risk management:

(5) *What assessment, if any, has been undertaken regarding the impact of large-scale artificial intelligence data centres on:*

(a) *Grid stability;*

(b) *Voltage fluctuations;*

(c) *Frequency control within the Tasmanian power system; and*

(d) *Will the Minister please make these assessments publicly available?*

ANSWER:

Responsibility for grid stability, frequency control and voltage management sits with the Australian Energy Market Operator (AEMO) and TasNetworks. Regular modelling is conducted on power system security at both a State and National level and published through reports such as AEMO's *Transition Plan for System Security*[2] and TasNetworks' *Annual Planning Report*[3].

The impact of a specific large new load on the electricity system will be considered as part of the assessment of any connection request received by TasNetworks.

I will note that large loads are, in general, beneficial for electricity system stability by providing a predictable source of demand. Large loads may also choose to participate in providing other grid services, such as load tripping and frequency control, both of which can enhance grid stability.

QUESTION:

With respect to hydro dam storage, generation improvements, and risk management:

[2] https://www.aemo.com.au/energy-systems/major-publications/transition-plan-for-system-security-tpss
[3] https://www.tasnetworks.com.au/planning-and-projects/planning-our-network

(6) What impact, if any, will the proposed Marinus Link have on energy grid stability in Tasmania? In relation to potential impacts:

(a) What technical solutions will be the Government, in cooperation with Hydro Tasmania and TasNetworks, put in place to ensure negative impacts are mitigated in the scenario where Marinus Link is constructed?

(b) What risk, if any, is there of the Tasmanian system frequency moving outside acceptable operating ranges?

(c) What specific risks would this present to Hydro Tasmania assets?

(d) What, if any, mitigation measures are in place or able to be put in place to manage these risks?

ANSWER:

The impact of Marinus link on grid stability has been extensively studied and considered as part of the development of the project. The *Marinus Link Project Assessment Conclusions Report*[4], published in 2021 by TasNetworks (the then owner of Marinus Link), concluded the following:

"The operation of Marinus Link does not affect the ability to dispatch the power system in a secure operating state.

Following a credible contingency event affecting either Marinus Link directly, or elsewhere in the Tasmanian or Victorian networks, operation of the power system in a satisfactory operating state is maintained. Power system voltage, frequency and rate of change of frequency can be maintained within required limits.

The present limitation of northwards flow across the Victoria to New South Wales interconnector, due to transient stability following the loss of the Hazelwood to South Morang line, is improved with the addition of Marinus Link.

Damping of inter-area oscillations was not degraded by Marinus Link.

Post-contingent power flows in the Victorian network are within equipment ratings. Post-contingent power flows in the Tasmanian network are either within short-term equipment ratings, and thus can be managed by AEMO generator re-dispatch, or can be accommodated by modifications to existing special protection schemes. The Tasmanian network control special protection scheme will require modification to accommodate the presence of Marinus Link, but the scheme does not need to be extended to protect the new transmission lines which support the connection of Marinus Link as these will be rated appropriately.

[4] https://www.marinuslink.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/Project-Marinus-RIT-T-PACR.pdf

Secure operation of Marinus Link during planned network outage conditions can be accommodated by the use of constraints within AEMO's dispatch process, or – if economic to do so – by extension of special protection schemes to protect against credible contingencies occurring during planned outage conditions."

As outlined in Question 5, regular modelling is conducted on power system security at both a State and National level, with reports publicly available.

QUESTION:

With respect to hydro dam storage, generation improvements, and risk management:

(7) Using the most recent available year-to-date figures, what is:

(a) Tasmania's total electricity consumption (in gigawatt-hours), including detailed internal usage by sector;

(b) The total volume of electricity exported via Basslink (in gigawatt hours);

(c) The projected future Tasmanian electricity consumption under a scenario where Marinus Link Stage 1 is constructed;

(d) The projected export volumes under a Marinus Link stage 1 scenario; and

(e) The projected Tasmanian electricity consumption under a scenario where Marinus Link is not constructed and Basslink is not recommissioned at the end of its operational life?

ANSWER:

Over the last 12-months (May 2025-April 2026), total Tasmanian electricity consumption was approximately 10,325 GWh. This comprised approximately 2,051 GWh from the small customer segment, 2,685 GWh from the medium customer segment, and 5,589 GWh from the large customer segment.

Over the latest available 12-month reporting period (May 2025-April 2026), approximately 287 GWh of electricity was exported from Tasmania to Victoria via Basslink. Both consumption and export data are publicly available at https://explore.openelectricity.org.au/.

Under a Marinus Link Stage 1 scenario, Tasmanian electricity consumption is expected to grow through underlying organic load growth, along with expected additional demand from data centres, existing major customers and hydrogen proponents. The scale and timing of that growth will depend on project economics, connection timing, customer commitments and broader market conditions.

According to AEMO's Step Change scenario in its *2025 Electricity Statement of Opportunity*[5], Tasmanian organic electricity consumption is forecast to reach approximately 12,000 GWh by 2050, accounting for rooftop solar and home battery uptake.

However, this should be treated as a scenario-based outlook, not a fixed forecast.

As with Basslink today, Tasmania would both export and import electricity once Marinus Link is online, with value created by the timing of flows: exporting during periods of high mainland demand, high prices or system need, and importing during periods of high mainland renewable output and lower prices. It is important to note Hydro Tasmania is not pursuing an export-driven strategy, but that the source of value for Hydro Tasmania, and Tasmanians as its owner, is the variability in the Tasmanian/Victorian spot price – both the predictable daily and seasonal variations, and value derived from shortages of renewables driven by sustained weather conditions.

Actual export volumes over the long term will be a function of the future roll-out of new renewable generation in Tasmania (which depend on factors including commerciality, planning and environmental approvals), as well as the evolution of the on island electricity demand (for example, the future of our major industrial customer segment, and potential new large loads, such as hydrogen and e-fuels and data centres).

A final investment decision on the first stage of the Marinus Link project was taken in 2025. Given this, the Government is not currently planning for any scenarios where Marinus Link does not proceed.

APPROVED/~~NOT APPROVED~~



Hon Nick Duigan MLC
Minister for Energy and Renewables

Date: 9th June 2026

[5] https://www.aemo.com.au/energy-systems/electricity/national-electricity-market-nem/nem-forecasting-and-planning/forecasting-and-reliability/nem-electricity-statement-of-opportunities-esoo

Appendix 3

QUESTION ON NOTICE

Question No. 23 of 2026
House of Assembly

ASKED BY: Vica Bayley, Deputy Leader of the Tasmanian Greens and Member for Clark

ANSWERED BY: Hon. Kerry Vincent MLC

QUESTION:

With respect to public housing tenancy terminations and eviction data:

(1) Has the Department of Communities Tasmania recorded the following data for each financial year from 2018–2019 to 2023–2024 and if so, please provide the following data for each year:

a. the total number of public housing tenancies that ended, including:

(i) the number of those tenancies where there were dependent children in the household; and

(ii) the number of those tenancies where the household included an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander person?

b. the number of tenancies ended under each category, descriptor, or code used by the Department to record the reason or manner in which a tenancy ends;

c. the number of tenancies terminated specifically due to a breach of tenancy (including rent arrears, property damage, or antisocial behaviour);

d. the number of tenancies that ended at the expiry of a fixed-term tenancy agreement, and whether the Department currently uses fixed-term tenancy agreements and, if so, in what circumstances;

e. the number of tenancies that ended following a termination notice being issued, where the tenancy concluded before or without a court or tribunal order being made;

f. the number of occasions a bailiff or sheriff was engaged to carry out a physical eviction from public housing; and

g. the number of tenancies that ended due to:

(i) the sale or redevelopment of the property; and

(ii) the transfer of the tenancy or property to a Community Housing Provider?

(2) If some of this data is not currently collected, can the Minister explain:

a. which specific data items are not collected;

b. why that data is not collected; and

c. what data, if any, is collected that would allow the relevant information to be derived or estimated?

(3) If the Department does not record tenancy terminations at the notice stage as a distinct category, what steps, if any, are planned to remedy this gap, and by when? (26 March 2026)

ANSWER:

(1) a. Total number of Homes Tasmania managed public housing tenancies terminated from 1 July 2018 to 30 June 2024 (inclusive) by financial year, dependent children and indigenous status.

	2018-2019	2019-2020	2020-2021	2021-2022	2022-2023	2023-2024
Total Terminations	**702**	**601**	**601**	**428**	**415**	**401**
No. Households with Children	174	142	121	98	78	83
No. Indigenous Households	64	55	37	30	46	46

(1) b. Total number of Homes Tasmania managed public housing tenancies terminated from 1 July 2018 to 30 June 2024 (inclusive) by financial year and termination reason.

Tenancy Termination Reason	2018-2019	2019-2020	2020-2021	2021-2022	2022-2023	2023-2024
Accommodation Unsuitable	37	30	23	15	21	11
Antisocial Behaviour (subjected to)	41	31	39	17	20	14
Voluntary Antisocial Behaviour	*<5*	*<5*	*<5*	*<5*	*<5*	*<5*
Neighbour Problem	*23*	*19*	*28*	*7*	*18*	
Level Of Crime	*14*	*11*	*8*	*9*	*10*	
Aged Care	51	51	50	33	38	35
Death In Household	5	10	7	6	<5	<5
Domestic or Family Violence	12	14	9	5	8	14
Relocation for Employment	<5	<5	<5	<5	0	<5
Evictions	39	37	10	12	20	26
Antisocial Behaviour	*<5*	*<5*	*0*	*0*	*<5*	*<5*
Arrears	*14*	*20*	*8*		*7*	*9*
Other	*12*	*8*	*5*	*<5*	*<5*	*<5*
Property Condition	*10*	*6*	*<5*	*<5*	*7*	*9*
Exit to CHP Managed Property	<5	5	<5	<5	<5	<5
Exit To Affordable Housing - CHGP	*<5*	*<5*	*<5*	*<5*	*<5*	*<5*
Exit To Affordable Housing - General	*<5*	*<5*	*<5*	*<5*	*<5*	*0*
Property Fire Damaged	5	7	10	7	11	
Exit to Institutional Care	<5	<5	<5	<5	0	<5
Moved Interstate	55	31	47	35	36	12
Exit due to Medical Reasons	16	21	16	8	12	12
Homes Tas Non-Renewal of Lease	6	<5	0	0	<5	<5
Condition of Property			*<5*			
Other	*5*	*<5*	*0*	*0*	*<5*	*<5*
Organisation Handed Back			<5			
Tenant Purchasing Home	10	<5	10	<5	<5	8
Exit to Private Rental	46	45	33	14	12	20
Homes Tas Property Sold To Tenant	7	<5	6	<5	<5	0
Tenant Abandoned	32	20	17	11	9	14
Tenant Deceased	87	100	83	74	86	63
Tenant In Prison	9	13	11	8	7	7
Transfer to Another Homes Tas Property	108	75	116	98	52	75
No reason supplied	32	29	29	16	17	15
Voluntary Arrears	6	<5	<5	0	0	<5
Voluntary Condition of Property	<5	<5	<5	<5	0	<5
Voluntary Other	86	64	75	56	63	52
Totals	**702**	**601**	**601**	**428**	**415**	**401**

(1) c. Total number of Homes Tasmania managed public housing tenancies terminated from 1 July 2018 to 30 June 2024 (inclusive) specifically due to breach of tenancy.

	2018-2019	2019-2020	2020-2021	2021-2022	2022-2023	2023-2024
Eviction Antisocial Behaviour	17	23	0	0	<5	13
Eviction Arrears			<5	6	7	
Eviction Other	12	8	5	<5	<5	13
Eviction Property Condition	10	6	<5	<5	7	
Total Evictions	**39**	**37**	**10**	**12**	**20**	**26**

(1) d. Total number of Homes Tasmania managed public housing tenancies terminated from 1 July 2018 to 30 June 2024 (inclusive) due to non-renewal of tenancy and whether the Department currently uses fixed-term tenancy agreements and, if so, in what circumstances.

	2018-2019	2019-2020	2020-2021	2021-2022	2022-2023	2023-2024
Condition of Property	6	<5	0	0	<5	<5
Other			0	0		
Total Non-Renewal of Lease	**6**	**<5**	**0**	**0**	**<5**	**<5**

In general, Homes Tasmania does not use fixed term tenancy agreements and has not done so for several years. However, there are a small number of tenancies that are on fixed term tenancy agreements. These leases are where the purpose of the tenancy agreement is for a specific term related to the circumstances of the need eg Direct tenancies with students attending college, Officer Next Door, organisation's holding tenancies. There still remain a small number of tenants who declined to move to non-fixed term tenancies.

(1) e. Total number of Homes Tasmania managed public housing agreements terminated from 1 July 2018 to 30 June 2024 (inclusive) following the issue of a Notice to Vacate (NTV) and not withdrawn but were not under legal action at the time of Termination.

	2018-2019	2019-2020	2020-2021	2021-2022	2022-2023	2023-2024
Active NTV and no legal action	16	15	<5	<5	12	9

(1) f. Total number of Homes Tasmania managed public housing tenancies terminated from 1 July 2018 to 30 June 2024 (inclusive) where a bailiff or sheriff was engaged to carry out a physical eviction.

	2018-2019	2019-2020	2020-2021	2021-2022	2022-2023	2023-2024
No. involving a Physical Eviction	9	<5	<5	0	<5	5

(1) g. Total number of Homes Tasmania managed public housing tenancies terminated from 1 July 2018 to 30 June 2024 (inclusive) that were sold or transferred to Community Housing Partner.

There are no tenancies in this category. Homes Tasmania has only transferred a small number of properties to Community Housing Organisations outside of the major transfers of stock. In each case the property was empty through the choice of the tenant or the tenants transferred with the property.

(2) All the data requested has been provided.

(3) This information is recorded.

Data Assumptions:
The response includes:

- Includes all Homes Tasmania managed public housing agreements terminated between 1 July 2018 and 30 June 2024 (inclusive)
- Excludes Homes Tasmania managed aboriginal housing agreements.
- Dependent children are defined as household members younger than 16 years old at the time of agreement termination.

Data Suppression:
Data is suppressed when it relates to individuals and the actual count is fewer than five, or when it is broken down into sub-categories that would reveal a count below five. This is done to reduce the risk of identifying any individual.

APPROVED

Hon Kerry Vincent MLC
Minister for Housing and Planning

Date: 01 JUN 2026

CA