

DRAFT SECOND READING SPEECH
HON ROGER JAENSCH MP

*COVID-19 Disease Emergency (Miscellaneous Provisions) Amendment
(Quarantine Debt Recovery) Bill 2020*

check Hansard for delivery

Madam Speaker, I move that the Bill now be read a second time.

The Tasmanian Government has introduced tough border restrictions and mandatory hotel quarantine to manage the risk of importing COVID-19 into Tasmania. These measures have been crucial to containing the spread of this virus, and to protecting the lives of Tasmanians.

In March 2020, the Premier introduced the *COVID-19 Disease Emergency (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2020* which set out measures to reduce the risks to the State, and the risk to, or hardship suffered by our community, as a result of the spread of COVID-19 in Tasmania.

As we continue to rebuild a stronger Tasmania, we must continue to ensure that safeguards are in place to limit the spread of COVID-19 into Tasmania. Mandatory hotel quarantine remains one of the most effective measures to prevent the importation of COVID-19.

In July 2020, National Cabinet agreed to work toward a uniform model for charging for hotel quarantine across the country. Since that meeting, a model for charging for hotel quarantine is being progressively implemented by other states and territories.

Subsequent to national discussions, the Premier announced that the Tasmanian Government would start charging for hotel quarantine effective from 31 July 2020, except in certain circumstances. By limiting unnecessary and discretionary travel by introducing these fees, it is our hope that we can limit the spread of COVID-19 into Tasmania from affected regions.

Anyone coming into Tasmania, entering into government quarantine, will no longer have the State pay their hotel expenses, but will be required to pay for their quarantine. Currently, the requirement to quarantine in government designated accommodation applies to Tasmanians travelling from affected regions (such as Victoria) and other non-Essential travellers.

Madam Speaker, the *COVID-19 Disease Emergency (Miscellaneous Provisions) Amendment (Quarantine Debt Recovery) Bill 2020* (the Bill) outlines the parameters for charging for hotel quarantine.

The new Part 6A of the Bill sets out the mechanism for charging a person or family and the process through which the issuing of invoices and granting of any exemptions will occur.

The Secretary of the Department of Police, Fire and Emergency Management will be responsible for the decision-making within the Tasmanian Hotel Quarantine Payment Scheme. This will enable the Scheme to run in accordance with the emergency management response.

Section 25B sets up the requirement to pay for hotel quarantine. It provides for the Secretary to issue a Quarantine Debt Order to declare that a person or class of people to pay an amount of money for their quarantine.

The Secretary (or delegate) will also be responsible for making decisions with respect to issuing invoices to people and granting waivers or extensions to payment in certain circumstances.

Under the Scheme, a person will be asked to pay an invoice which will outline the payment amount and due date (which is to be a minimum 30 day period).

As announced, the following fortnightly rates will apply:

- \$2,800 for a single person
- \$1,000 for an additional person
- \$500 for an additional child

There will be no charge for children under 3 years of age, and accommodation charges will be capped at \$4,800.

The Bill provides for pro-rata payment, and therefore these figures are reflected as daily rates. This approach is intended to allow for circumstances where a person or family may not be required to quarantine for the full 14 day period.

The daily rates set out in the Bill are as follows:

- \$200 for a single person
- \$71.40 for an additional person
- \$35.70 for an additional child

These payment amounts may be adjusted by the Secretary, which is permitted by issuing an order under Section 25C. This is designed to provide flexibility to adjust the fee for a range of circumstances including increases or decreases in the associated costs to Government.

The charges do not reflect the entire cost for hotel accommodation and associated services.

Our Government recognises that there needs to be some exemptions to these fees in certain circumstances. We understand that people may need to undertake interstate travel for medical care or for compassionate reasons, and that others may be experiencing financial hardship or other exceptional circumstances.

This Bill sets out two mechanisms for waiving and reducing the fees and seeking an alteration to the payment deadline. Firstly, Section 25D provides for a person may apply for a certificate of exemption to seek an exemption to the fees (full or in part) prior to their travel. Secondly, on receipt of an invoice a person may apply for a waiver of all or part of the fees in an invoice or to alter the payment date specified in an invoice. Applications will be assessed on a case-by-case basis by the Secretary (or delegate).

Section 25J provides for the delegation of certain decisions to Deputy Commissioner or Assistant Commissioner under the *Police Service Act 2003*. This delegation is limited to the administrative decisions of the Scheme pertaining to issuing invoices and granting waivers or extensions to people or families. This will enable a timely response to applicants. The authority to make orders under this legislation will be retained by the Secretary.

This Bill will commence on Royal Assent, and apply to people quarantined from 31 July 2020.

Madam Speaker, as we move from response to recovery it is crucial that we continue to prevent the importation of COVID-19 into Tasmania particularly from high-risk areas.

By introducing charging for hotel quarantine, the Tasmanian Government aims to discourage people from undertaking discretionary or non-time-sensitive travel from affected areas. This is vital to ensuring people travelling from restricted areas will either have a genuine need to travel, or be aware of their obligation to pay a fee toward their quarantine.

Madam Speaker, I commend the Bill to the House.