



**PARLIAMENT OF TASMANIA**

**HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY**

**REPORT OF DEBATES**

**Tuesday 17 November 2020**

**REVISED EDITION**



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

## **QUESTIONS**

### **COVID-19 - South Australian Outbreak - Precautions**

**Ms WHITE question to PREMIER, Mr GUTWEIN**

[10.02 a.m.]

The troubling situation unfolding in South Australia is a stark reminder that COVID-19 remains an ever-present threat. During the past month, Labor has made four separate requests through your office for a briefing from the State Control Centre and Public Health. All these requests have been refused. It is estimated more than 1000 people have arrived in Tasmania from South Australia since the outbreak started. These people have only been sent a text message requesting that they voluntarily self-isolate. Some have been told how long they should isolate; others have been given an unspecified time frame.

We know from experience, both here and in other states, there is a level of non-compliance with voluntary isolation. We also know that not everyone in self-isolation was checked. Will you guarantee everyone in isolation will be checked? Further, will you guarantee any arrivals from South Australia will be tested, as a precautionary measure? Will you finally commit to briefing opposition parties on the safeguards that are in place to track compliance with isolation requests to prevent what happened in South Australia from happening here?

## **ANSWER**

Madam Speaker, I thank the Leader of the Opposition for her question and for her interest in this important matter.

I understand my office has written to you, providing responses to the questions that you asked. Frankly, I believe that is the most appropriate way to deal with you on these matters, because you will simply play politics - as you have demonstrated throughout this period. If you have questions, send them in and we will provide you with information.

A number of questions were asked about South Australia. This is a wake-up call. South Australia has had a long period of time without a positive case. As of this morning, I understand there are around 20 cases and the expectation is that that may increase. Hopefully, South Australia has put sufficient measures in place now, but we will continue to engage and take advice. The Director of Public Health will be part of a national hook-up later this morning, and at lunchtime today I will provide more details on the next steps regarding South Australia.

Our response was to ensure we dealt with those South Australians who were in Tasmania in a similar way to the way they would be dealt with in their own state, and the way public health in South Australia had identified the risk. We asked those who were in the state to self-isolate as we worked through and understood the circumstances. Those who had been in

contact with the Lyell McEwin Hospital between - I am advised - the hours of 3.30 on Friday, 13 November and 4 a.m. on Saturday 14 November, were asked to come forward and be tested. Otherwise they were asked to remain in isolation until we fully understood what was occurring in South Australia. I consider that was a proportionate and reasonable response from public health.

Those people who entered Tasmania last night have been placed into appropriate quarantine - either in government facilities, or in an appropriate residence should that be available for them. I presume for Tasmanians coming home, in the main, that is exactly where they have been quarantined.

Today, when we are fully informed on the South Australian situation, we will announce the steps moving forward. I indicated yesterday there may be a nuanced position. It appears that the outbreak in South Australia is largely contained within the metropolitan area, and regional South Australia remains relatively virus free - in fact, it may be more appropriate to say remains virus free.

Public Health will provide the Government with advice, and later today we will announce and explain that advice to Tasmanians - and to South Australians who are here. I understand that South Australians should have received two text messages in the last 24 hours, asking them to remain in isolation until further advice is provided today.

Turning to the question from the Leader of the Opposition: 'Are we going to test every South Australian who enters the state?' On many occasions in this place I have explained Public Health advice about the testing arrangements at our border. The point that Public Health has made about testing is that, because of the gestation period of this virus, testing somebody at a point in time at the border could simply provide them with a false sense of security as they enter our community. That message seems to have been lost. I doubt any number of briefings providing you with that information from Public Health would change your mind.

**Ms White** - Are you looking at what is happening internationally now, around how they are managing travel? You seem oblivious.

**Madam SPEAKER** - Order please, Ms White.

**Mr GUTWEIN** - Today we will provide a further update during the lunchbreak once Dr Veitch has finished his Australian Health Protection Committee (AHPC) briefing with the CMOs from all the other states and territories, and we will announce what the next steps will be regarding South Australia. I had some direct feedback from someone in South Australia over the weekend, about the way our response in Tasmania has been adopted by many in the hospitality industry and the steps we are taking. To be frank, the point was made that we are light years ahead of what was occurring in South Australia. In South Australia they had relaxed social distancing and very few venues were taking details - which is, as at last Friday, mandatory in Tasmanian cafes, pubs, restaurants.

Interestingly enough, I was in Burnie on Friday afternoon, and I had the opportunity to have a cup of coffee at a small restaurant and was very pleased to walk in and see hand sanitiser, and a QR code to register my details. Spot on. Many of our businesses, prior to it being mandated, had already taken those steps. Now it is mandated, we will work with them with WorkSafe Tasmania to ensure that they comply and keep their staff and their customers safe.

With regard to South Australia, we will provide a further update later today. We will act on Public Health advice as we have done right throughout this; Public Health advice which has ensured that Tasmania has been kept safe and to help us underpin growth in our economy at the same time.

### **COVID-19 - International Arrivals Quarantine Arrangements**

#### **Ms WHITE question to PREMIER, Mr GUTWEIN**

[10.11 a.m.]

Yesterday you deferred your voluntary offer to accept 450 international arrivals into hotel quarantine until next month. You said you have not yet reached an agreement with the Commonwealth over resources to staff quarantine arrangements. Can you detail what you have requested from the Commonwealth and what the state would need to proceed before it accepts international travellers?

#### **ANSWER**

Madam Speaker, I thank the Leader of the Opposition for that question and for her interest in this matter. What we will need before we proceed is advice from Public Health that the arrangements in place are suitable.

It is important that we dot every 'i' and cross every 't', should we go down this path. The national partnership agreement has not yet been finalised and it is part of the arrangements. Border Force, the assistance of the ADF and AUSMAT, are resources that we are looking for to ensure that we can, as I have said, dot every 'i' and cross every 't'. We are working through that and negotiating that NPA with the federal government at the moment. It is prudent to look at what has occurred in the South Australian situation, to ensure that any arrangements that are finalised take into account what has occurred in South Australia and the challenges they have faced. That is exactly what we will do.

We want to ensure that we can do our bit for the country and for Australians wanting to come home. There are members in this place who have been supportive of ensuring we can bring Australians home. That is the key point to make: the repat flights are bringing Australian citizens back; Australian citizens who have found themselves in other countries without support. They may have been working on contract and their contract has finished and there is no access to social security or to other supports. As a state that is part of a federation, we will do our bit but we will do our bit when we are satisfied that the arrangements in place are suitable for the Tasmanian circumstances, and that they are signed off by Public Health and by our state Health commander.

We have not finished those negotiations, so it is appropriate that that be deferred and that we work through those arrangements and get to a point where we are all satisfied with the arrangements that are put in place.

## **Budget 2020-21 - Climate Change**

### **Dr WOODRUFF question to MINISTER for CLIMATE CHANGE, Mr GUTWEIN**

[10.14 a.m.]

The day after you released your first Budget as Premier, Treasurer and Minister for Climate Change, the Bureau of Meteorology and CSIRO released their State of the Climate 2020 report. The science is in; we are already living in a climate emergency.

The extreme drought and temperature records set last year would be normal conditions in an average year when the world warms 1.5 degrees. We will be experiencing longer, more dangerous fire seasons and more frequent extreme weather. Huon Valley residents ravaged by fires in 2019, the apiarists who lost a year's honey and the vineyards that had to bin their vintages have already had experience of that.

This Budget should have tackled the twin crises of COVID-19 and climate together but it failed to do so. While you have adopted some of the Greens' ideas, it does not spend nearly enough on climate adaptation and planning to safeguard communities and wild places. Your Budget also continues to funnel subsidies into the climate-destroying native forest industry. Young Tasmanians expected you as the first Liberal minister of climate change to do everything within your power to protect them from the worsening climate crisis, just as you protected them through the pandemic.

What do you say to vulnerable bush-surrounded communities, to Tasmania's primary producers and, critically, to Tasmania's young people about your climate-failed budget?

### **ANSWER**

Madam Speaker, I thank the member for Franklin for her question. I do not know whether I should wear it as a badge of honour that we have not taken up all your suggestions. As you and your Leader and I have often remarked in this place, many of them are kooky.

Setting that aside, the member forgets that Tasmania is a leader in climate change action. We will continue to be. We have the lowest per capita emissions of all states and territories and are one of the lowest emitters of carbon dioxide on the planet. We have achieved our target of net zero emissions for four years in a row. The most recent data for 2018 shows that emissions are 111 per cent lower, right now, today, than what they were in 1990. You should be cheering that. As we recover from COVID-19 we have focused on growing jobs and our economy and capturing the economic opportunities that climate change presents.

With the Energy minister, renewable energy, hydrogen and electric vehicles, we have taken one of the boldest positions in the country with the government fleet. This will reduce Tasmania's emissions further.

Project Marinus and Battery of the Nation will support billions of dollars in investment, thousands of jobs and will help the mainland. The mainland is in transition as well. In this Budget we are the first government to provide an emissions loan scheme for large businesses, for large emitters, to take steps to reduce their emissions. We have set a target to transition the

government fleet to 100 per cent EVs by 2030. That will underpin a second-hand EV market in the state which does not exist.

There is \$15 million for public housing energy efficiency measures to reduce emissions and energy bills for the people who live in those properties.

We are reviewing the Climate Change (State Action) Act and we are reviewing our target with a view to strengthening our legislation, increasing the ambition of our approach.

One matter raised regarded householders. An important part of the question is ensuring they are ready for the coming bushfire season. Our \$17.6 million package supports Tasmanians and improves their safety from the threat of bushfires. It includes \$8 million for the State Fire Commission, which includes the creation of a new division in the Tasmanian Fire Service to manage the planning and response to bushfires. The Government's \$9.3 million fuel reduction program includes \$300 000 to provide tips and work with the community to assist them to improve their circumstances.

We have put money into the TasALERT emergency system. The member focused on bushfires but we have put \$850 000 towards flood mapping as well.

This Budget takes significant steps forward. I will come back to the nub of the question. It is as simple as this: no matter what we do on this side of the House, unless we shut down the native forest industry you will not be happy. That is the nub of the question. Let me assure you, the damage you did to that industry between 2010 and 2014 will not be forgotten. We have a sustainable native forest industry, one that I am proud of and this side of the House will continue to back.

### **Budget 2020-21 - Jobs, Confidence and Community**

#### **Mr TUCKER question to PREMIER, Mr GUTWEIN**

[10.20 a.m.]

Can you update the House on how the 2020-21 State Budget is supporting jobs, confidence and the Tasmanian community, what others are saying about the Budget, and the question everyone is asking: are you aware of any alternatives?

#### **ANSWER**

Madam Speaker, what a great question from Mr Tucker. I thank the member for Lyons for his interest. This Budget is all about jobs, confidence and the community. We know the pandemic continues to have an impact and provides challenges. Yesterday's news of the coronavirus outbreak in South Australia is a salient and stark reminder of the need to ensure we take precautionary action and step back carefully. Importantly, we need to take proactive and responsible action as well. We are in a good place and have every reason to be cautiously optimistic about our future as we recover and seize the opportunities ahead.

Last week I brought down a budget for our times, \$5 billion worth of infrastructure over the next four years, the largest ever infrastructure program in this state's history. It will support around 25 000 jobs across the state and invest in roads, bridges, hospitals, schools and houses,

right across the board. We will provide Tasmanians with additional support for training and enabling them to pivot and move into those areas where the jobs are as we move forward. Importantly, the significant economic stimulus that we are providing will return the Budget back to the black in two years.

I was asked what others have been saying about this Budget -

**Members** interjecting.

**Madam SPEAKER** - Order.

**Mr GUTWEIN** - Robert Mallett from the Tasmanian Small Business Council said -

Today's Tasmanian budget, whilst forged in the fires of the worlds' worst crisis in a hundred years, provides unprecedented opportunity for the Tasmanian small business sector.

The Master Builders said that the Government is 'committed to building our way out of this economic crisis and today's State Budget makes good on that pledge'.

Stuart Collins from the Housing Industry Association said -

The Government has handed down a budget designed to increase confidence, grow our economy, attract investment, support jobs and rebuild a stronger Tasmania.

I could not have said it better myself.

Our Budget has had a central focus as well on the Tasmanian community. The CEO of TASCOS said -

The Government's welcome shift towards prioritising investment in people's health and wellbeing throughout the COVID-19 recovery is evident in this Budget. [OK]

Pattie Chugg, CEO of Shelter Tasmania, said -

Shelter Tas welcomes the state Government's 2020-21 Budget with increased spending for social housing and homelessness services. Shelter Tas welcomes this clear commitment to increasing much-needed public and community housing in this state.

I could go on; there is a range of very positive comments here. The TFGA said -

The State Budget has once again shown the Government's support for agriculture in this state.

Across the board, industry sectors, the social sector - all supportive of the Budget. Even economist Saul Eslake said -



The Budget has been presented in circumstances which are radically different from those which have confronted any Tasmanian government in living memory. The overall conclusion is that this Budget is an appropriate response to the circumstances which the Government is confronting.

As I have said, this Budget is all about jobs, confidence and the community. It underpins jobs, it rolls out significant and massive investment into our community.

Later today, the Opposition will have an opportunity to bring down their alternative budget and, once again, I wonder whether the shadow treasurer is going to squib that opportunity -

**Opposition members** interjecting.

**Madam SPEAKER** - Order, please.

**Mr GUTWEIN** - I have said in this place on many occasions that the Opposition needs to not only explain to people those things that they want to cheer for, but they need to explain how they are going to pay for it. That is what Tasmanians need to know. What does the Labor Party stand for and, importantly, how are they going to pay for it? That is what we want to see this afternoon.

### **COVID-19 - Access to Information about Vaccines**

**Ms OGILVIE question to PREMIER, Mr GUTWEIN**

[10.26 a.m.]

There is anxiety, disbelief and a jolt of reality as holidaying South Australians are corralled for quarantine in Tasmania. We are in this pandemic, like it or not, and it is a fairly precarious and vexing place to be. We will undoubtedly feel somewhat insecure about the comings and goings of travel until such time as a vaccine arrives on Tasmanian shores. We know there is nothing more important than the health, welfare and safety of our families here on our beautiful island state.

I have winkled some information out of you in question time these past weeks. You have said there is a plan and that people are working on it, but the end game obviously must be universal vaccines. Tasmanians have been writing to me and they want to know more details on the plans for vaccinations. They want to know who will be prioritised, what the time lines are for rollout, and to whom they can write for further information. In the absence of the fire truck Christmas lolly handout, we could do with some good news for families. Will you establish a website with up-to-date information on progress, on the vaccination and processes to make it more transparent?

### **ANSWER**

Madam Speaker, I thank Ms Ogilvie, the Independent member for Clark, for that question and her continuing interest in the rollout of the vaccine program. Today more positive news was reported in this space. Without naming companies, the success rate, if I could use that

term with this vaccine, is higher than the one that was discussed last week; around 94.5 per cent in terms of what I read this morning.

Setting that aside, communication is at the nub of the question the member raised. Through the Public Information Unit we will provide as much detail at the earliest possible opportunity as we can for Tasmanians to understand the rollout of the vaccine program. As I said last week, we are in final stages, but we do not have a vaccine that has been approved for use in Australia as yet. We need to work through that process.

As I understand the key principles and assumptions for the vaccination program, it will be free of charge for all Australian citizens, permanent residents, and the majority of visa holders. We will look at it and if there is a need to provide support in that space, just as we did not hesitate during the COVID-19 crisis when we were dealing with that earlier this year, we will provide additional support in that area as well for visa holders if necessary. It will not be mandatory.

**Ms Ogilvie** - It won't be?

**Mr GUTWEIN** - We cannot force somebody to take an injection, but it will be strongly encouraged. As I indicated last week, as we work through this it will be initially targeted at those high-priority groups. The point I have made on many occasions, both publicly and at National Cabinet, is that Tasmania has one of the most vulnerable and challenged populations in the country. That will play into our part in the roll out of the vaccine.

Coming back to the question, when it is appropriate, and by 'appropriate' I mean when there is something more to say than what has been printed in the national media and we can have some confidence in the delivery of the vaccine to the state, we will roll out a program to ensure that Tasmanians understand what form the vaccination program will take.

I am confident, on the basis that we have a population that is well-versed with vaccination, that we will have the delivery mechanisms that are appropriate. Tasmanians will clearly understand that. I take on board your suggestion of a website. The Public Information Unit is already working on how they would message the delivery of the vaccine.

## **COVID-19 - Contact Tracing Methods**

**Ms WHITE question to PREMIER, Mr GUTWEIN**

[10.31 a.m.]

Labor has previously called on the Government to roll out a standardised system for contact-tracing across tourism, hospitality and other businesses. You have since made it mandatory for venues to keep records of people entering these premises but the system is ad hoc and inconsistent. Some venues are using third party apps while others are using paper-based systems that raise privacy concerns.

Venues and event organisers have joined Labor's calls for the Government to roll out a uniform system. The South Australian outbreak has provided yet another stark reminder of the

importance of fast contact tracing. Victoria is the latest state to move to a standardised app-based system.

Why have you failed to adopt this simple and sensible measure that will help keep the community safe?

## **ANSWER**

Madam Speaker, I thank the Leader of the Opposition for her question and her interest in this matter.

I go back to the first answer I provided this morning. I have had a discussion with someone who was in South Australia over the weekend and had an opportunity firsthand to understand how their industry has engaged with and taken steps in the contact-tracing arrangements. The clear feedback was that there is a gulf of difference between what is occurring in Tasmania compared to South Australia.

**Ms White** - We do not want to be doing better than the worst. We want to be doing better than the best. It is hardly the best example to use.

**Madam SPEAKER** - Order, Ms White.

**Mr GUTWEIN** - There is not a one-size-fits-all solution. Not every Tasmanian or visitor will have a mobile phone. Not everybody will be able to use a QR code. We have put in place a system that provides for a paper-based system, or an electronic option if that is available and if a restaurant wants to use it to enable them to meet their obligations. Their obligations are that they need to collect the name and contact details of those people who come to their premises. If they are in a group at least one person needs to provide those details.

Regarding the paper-based form that many small venues are using, from my experience they are using it very diligently.

Public Health is comfortable with that option. We continue to take advice from Public Health regarding electronic apps. There are a variety being used. Many businesses have already taken up QR codes and are using apps, as was evidenced in that small restaurant I had a coffee in late on Friday afternoon in Burnie. Without naming them, they were doing a great job in contact tracing. We will continue to work with Public Health and be guided by Public Health on this. There is not a one-size-fits-all solution. The Leader of the Opposition understands that. It is important that we continue to use a variety of methods to ensure we can contact trace. If for a small business the best option is to use a paper-based form, based on Public Health advice that is suitable for what Public Health is looking for.

## **Budget 2020-21 - Tasmanian Job Guarantee**

**Dr WOODRUFF question to TREASURER, Mr GUTWEIN**

[10.35 a.m.]

The social and economic crisis caused by coronavirus has been massive and will continue to impact upon our state for years to come. That is why the 2020-21 State Budget was widely

understood as the most important since the Second World War. Like most Tasmanians, we hoped for a budget full of ambition and a positive vision for our state's future. Unfortunately, it was mostly a continuation of the last six years of Liberal policy and it failed to rise to this crucial moment.

There are plenty of big and exciting ideas out there to address unemployment and inequality. In September, this parliament called on your Government to investigate the Tasmanian job guarantee. We have heard nothing since. Should we interpret your silence to mean you are ignoring the will of the House? Why would you not take a look at a policy that would be a game changer for thousands of Tasmanians who are out of work through no fault of their own? Will you commit today, finally, to undertaking this investigation as soon as possible?

## **ANSWER**

Madam Speaker, I thank Dr Woodruff for that question.

What you are asking me is whether I am interested in supporting jobs for Tasmanians. That is what this Budget is all about: jobs, confidence and the community. The point you made regarding the budgets we brought down for the last six years, at the beginning of this year we had the fastest growing economy in the country, with record jobs growth and confidence that was leading the nation. Our business community felt that our policies were the best in the country unlike when you were in government with Labor, back in 2013-14, when two out of three small businesses in this state felt that your policies were working against them -

**Dr Woodruff** - We wrote to you six weeks ago about that and you have not answered. What are you doing? That is what we want to know.

**Madam SPEAKER** - Order, Dr Woodruff.

**Mr GUTWEIN** - What we have done over the last six years is brick by brick, rebuilt the state that you took into recession: rebuilt the state brick by brick over the last six years after Labor and the Greens took it into recession. We went into this pandemic with not only one of the strongest economies in the country -

**Dr WOODRUFF** - Point of order, Madam Speaker. Standing order 45, relevance. The question I asked was not about what the Liberals might be doing. It was about the will of the House and the action that the Premier will be taking to investigate the jobs guarantee.

**Madam SPEAKER** - That is not a point of order, but I ask the Premier to be relevant.

**Mr GUTWEIN** - Thank you, Madam Speaker. It is important to provide context when answering this question. Over six years, Tasmania became the most confident jurisdiction in the country. We had, going into this pandemic, one of the strongest economies in the country and the strongest balance sheet out of all of the states and territories.

I made this point on Friday: you do not manage the finances well for any other reason than to have capacity in your balance sheet when you need it -

**Dr Woodruff** - Are you going to investigate a jobs guarantee or not?

**Mr GUTWEIN** - That is exactly the position we found ourselves in, which is why we were able to roll out the single largest, as a percentage of our economy, economic and support package in the country. The Government is focused on creating jobs and supporting jobs in our economy. That is what this Budget is all about.

Regarding the jobs guarantee, we are about investing and ensuring that we build confidence. If we build confidence then further investment will flow and more jobs will flow.

**Dr Woodruff** interjecting.

**Madam SPEAKER** - Order, Dr Woodruff.

**Mr GUTWEIN** - I have no interest in the policy the member has raised. On this side of the House -

**Dr Woodruff** - Hold on, this is not up to you. This was the will of the House that your Government investigate a jobs guarantee for Tasmanians.

**Madam SPEAKER** - Order.

**Mr GUTWEIN** - I have no interest in that policy. We will continue to ensure that we invest, that we build confidence and as a result of that we will attract further investment and create more jobs.

### **Budget 2020-21 - Energy Initiatives and Renewable Hydrogen Industry**

**Mr STREET question to MINISTER for ENERGY, Mr BARNETT**

[10.41 a.m.]

Can you update the House on the range of energy initiatives announced in the 2020-21 Budget, in particular the Government's plan to develop a job-creating renewable hydrogen industry?

**ANSWER**

Madam Speaker, I thank the member for Franklin for his question and his interest in this matter.

At the commencement of my answer, I welcome to the Chamber a number of special guests in the renewable energy space. From Grange Resources, Ben Maynard and Michael Donschuk, thank you very much for being here. We also have Felicity Underhill from Origin Energy, Michael van Baarle from Abel Energy, and Robert Brand from Fortescue Metals.

Our Government has a plan to rebuild a stronger Tasmania. The Budget says it all and the Premier has been very clear on jobs and confidence in our community and our focus. Our renewable energy future is very much a part of that which will help create jobs and rebuild our economy. We are investing \$3.8 million to progress a range of renewable energy initiatives. We are talking about Project Marinus and Battery of the Nation, which will be progressed under our Government. We are talking about our Renewable Energy Action Plan and our global-

leading 200 per cent renewable energy target which has gone through this Chamber unanimously. I am grateful for the terrific support around this Chamber and across the community for that renewable energy target.

There is also the development of our renewable energy coordination framework and our visionary bioenergy future. The Budget also supported grassroots-level initiatives in a range of areas, including \$10 million in additional support for our hospitality businesses and reimbursement of first quarterly bills for gas and electricity for this financial year, as well as \$15 million for public housing energy efficiency measures. I know the Minister for Housing is delighted with that initiative to help ease cost-of-living pressures.

Further, we are supporting businesses looking to reduce emissions with a \$10 million no-interest loan scheme as the Premier mentioned earlier in the Chamber today for those large Tasmanian greenhouse gas-emitting businesses and industries to trial new and existing technologies that will help deliver on those objectives.

There is more. We are going to supercharge our state. Renewable hydrogen is Tasmania's superpower. We have our Renewable Hydrogen Action Plan and we are delivering on that. We have a cost-competitive advantage being 10 per cent to 15 per cent more cost competitive than our mainland counterparts. It is based on 100 per cent clean, renewable electricity produced and made here in Tasmania, part of our Tasmanian brand. The first round of our \$50 million support package was announced today, thanks to Mr Ferguson and me jointly doing that with those wonderful successful applicants who happen to be here in the Chamber today.

We had 23 applications and now the best of the best has come forward. Those three feasibility studies will receive part of that \$2.6 million funding package announced today. I can advise that Origin Energy - congratulations - is one of those successful applicants to export. This is large-scale renewable hydrogen manufacturing in Tasmania. This is the feasibility study for the export scale of a green hydrogen and ammonia plant, which is expected to be located at Bell Bay, producing around 420 000 tonnes of green ammonia per annum. The study proposes a plant designed to enable flexible operation in an estimated electrical load of 500 megawatts.

Congratulations to Michael van Baarle and the team at Abel Energy for their 100-megawatt green hydrogen and methanol export project, again to be based at Bell Bay. Third, congratulations to Ben and Michael and all at Grange Resources for their 90- to 100-megawatts renewable hydrogen project to provide industrial heating for the pelletising plant at Port Latta on the north-west.

In addition to that, the Government is also pleased to announce that Fortescue Metals has a potential development of a 250-megawatt hydrogen and green ammonia production facility at Bell Bay. That is targeted for investment decision in 2021. Subject to this decision, the project has the potential to create more than 350 construction jobs and 100 operational roles for the initial phase, and in utilising Tasmania's renewable energy resources there is an opportunity for further expansion in the years ahead.

It confirms our competitive advantages. It confirms that Tasmania is leading not just Australia but the globe when it comes to renewable energy and the opportunities. It confirms that the hydrogen hubs we have identified, and in particular the Bell Bay advanced

manufacturing zone, is very much in the box seat. It confirms that Tasmania is in a prime position to bid in 2021 for the Australian Government's \$70 million hydrogen export hub program. It confirms that Tasmania is looking forward to proceeding with a new manufacturing industry here with global export opportunities by 2030.

In addition to that, we are fast-tracking identifying hydrogen opportunities in transport, in commercial applications and agricultural use, which could see hydrogen-powered buses as well as ferries, trucks, harvesters and cars in the not-too-distant future. Only last week the Premier announced that Metro Tasmania will be tasked to trial zero-emission buses in Tasmania, electric or hydrogen, within the next two years and minister Ferguson is hard at work already in progressing that particular objective -

**Dr WOODRUFF** - Point of order, Madam Speaker. The minister has been on his feet for more than five minutes. This sounds like a budget reply speech and he is taking up valuable question time.

**Madam SPEAKER** - It is not a point of order, thank you. Minister, you have gone past five minutes.

**Mr BARNETT** - Madam Speaker, I thought the Greens would be supportive of these very important initiatives that are being announced today and put on the public record.

**Dr Woodruff** - Don't waste parliament's time. This is about scrutinising government.

**Madam SPEAKER** - Dr Woodruff, do you mind?

**Mr BARNETT** - This is very encouraging news and it is delivering jobs in our local communities, particularly regional areas that is driving investment. It is all based on our plan.

What about the other side? Do they have a plan? Where is the alternative budget? We are waiting for it. The only plan David O'Byrne had was an economic development plan and what happened? We ended up in recession. We know about your pledge, Leader of the Opposition, not to work with the Greens, and what happened last time? You worked with the Greens. You cannot be trusted. They are the facts; it is on the record. Labor will do another deal with the Greens.

#### **Ambulance Tasmania - Level 4 Escalation**

**Ms WHITE question to MINISTER for HEALTH, Ms COURTNEY**

[10.49 a.m.]

Last week's Budget repeated your Government's familiar line about delivering record spending in Health, yet the situation in our health system continues to get worse -

**Members** interjecting.

**Ms WHITE** - We cut it? You destroyed the health system.

**Madam SPEAKER** - Order. This is ridiculous. It is the first day of the week. There will be no more provoking. We are going to get on with the business. Thank you.

**Ms WHITE** - Thank you, Madam Speaker, I will start the question again.

Minister, last week's Budget repeated your Government's familiar line about delivering record spending in Health, yet the situation in our health system continues to get worse. Can you confirm that yesterday Ambulance Tasmania was escalated to level 4, the highest level of its escalation plan usually reserved for major events or disasters? Multiple messages went out to staff and off-duty paramedics asking for anyone to fill relief shifts.

What does this say about the capacity of our health system under normal weekday conditions? Given these circumstances, do you maintain Tasmania has adequate resources to cope with a potential second wave of COVID-19?

## **ANSWER**

Madam Speaker, I thank the member for her question.

The Government is very proud of our investment within our health care system. We have seen another record investment in health through this year's Budget; \$9.8 billion in spending over the next four years. This is an unprecedented amount of money being spent in our health care system to ensure we are delivering the services we need, both now and into the future.

This is also underpinned by my recently released paper *Our Health Care Future* which will ensure that, as we invest this record amount of money into the future, it will go to the places to deliver the best care for Tasmanians.

Regarding Ambulance Tasmania, what we saw yesterday was the escalation protocols we have across our system - they are there for a reason. We know that at times we see a system that receives a lot of demand, and this is why we continue to invest in Ambulance Tasmania.

The Tasmanian Budget provides \$134 million towards dedicated Ambulance Tasmania services in this year alone - aero-medical with \$10.1 million, and \$4.8 million for more paramedics in regional areas. I visited George Town at the weekend to and see how our investment in regional facilities - \$24.4 million across the next two years - will be spent to support our paramedics. We know our paramedics do an extraordinary job, and that is why 33 new interns have commenced across the state this year - 15 in May and a further 18 in June. We are seeing continual investment in our staff.

**Ms WHITE** - Point of order, Madam Speaker. It goes to Standing Order 45. I ask you to draw the minister's attention to the question, which was to ask her if she could confirm that yesterday Ambulance Tasmania had to escalate to level 4, which is the highest escalation level?

**Madam SPEAKER** - That is not a point of order. It does go to the frustration of the standing order we are talking about. Could I please have the minister to her feet and I ask her if she could try to be relevant.



**Ms COURTNEY** - Thank you, Madam Speaker. As I said in my answer, we do see escalation protocols across Ambulance Tasmania, as well as our different hospital sites, to ensure that appropriate responses are put in at times of increased demand.

This is why we have continued to invest in Ambulance Tasmania. Since 2014 we have 100 more full time paramedics and dispatch officers. That is an increase of 35 per cent. This Government has a track record of investing. This Government will continue to invest, and I believe the Tasmanian community is wondering what Labor is going to do and if they will bring down an alternative budget.

### **Budget 2020-21 - Unemployment Levels**

**Mr O'BYRNE question to PREMIER, Mr GUTWEIN**

[10.53 a.m.]

Last week's Budget takes Tasmania into record levels of debt but the state will have little to show for it. Your Budget is not a plan for jobs; it is a plan for unemployment. The Budget Papers show unemployment will remain above 8 per cent for at least two years. Under your Government, Treasury is forecasting that thousands of Tasmanians will lose their jobs and many more will simply give up looking for work. How can you claim your Budget will grow the economy when it locks in job losses and two years of recession?

### **ANSWER**

For a moment there, Madam Speaker, my heart jumped. I thought there was a glimmer of hope the member would stand up and table an alternative budget.

**Opposition members** interjecting.

**Mr GUTWEIN** - No, that did not happen. You will be tabling one this afternoon?

**Members** interjecting.

**Madam SPEAKER** - Excuse me, could everyone remember where they are, including you, Dr Broad.

**Mr GUTWEIN** - Once again, the member does his best to talk down the Tasmanian economy. Tasmania is not in a recession. You need to have two consecutive quarters of negative growth, and we will not see the National Accounts for the first quarter of this financial year for a couple of weeks. With regard to the impact of the measures that we took concerning the coronavirus, obviously our economy was going to go backwards in the June quarter -

**Mr O'Byrne** - No doubt about that.

**Mr GUTWEIN** - Would you have done it a different way?

**Mr O'Byrne** - No argument there but we are holding you to account. Your budget is for the forwards, Premier. It is about what you do next.

**Madam SPEAKER** - Order, excuse me.

**Mr GUTWEIN** - The Budget Papers clearly show that in the coming financial year, we bounce back to growth - over 3 per cent. That has obviously been missed by the shadow treasurer. I suggest that he has a look at those Budget Papers and reads them in some detail: more than 3 per cent growth in the next financial year.

Treasury makes the point in the budget that if our economy returns to growth, more than 10 000 jobs will be created over this financial year. Next financial year, with a \$5 billion infrastructure program, we are supporting 25 000 jobs across the Forward Estimates. This is a jobs-rich plan.

I suggest the shadow treasurer stop attempting to talk down the economy. It suits your political aims, but as I have said in this place on many occasions, a cautious optimism is returning in Tasmania. We are the most confident jurisdiction in terms of business conditions, yet what we repeatedly hear from that side of the House is relentless negativity. I say to you, read the Budget Papers. They demonstrate that Treasury is forecasting a bounce-back, a snap-back to above 3 per cent growth in the next financial year.

I will look closely at the member's question, because he needs to be held to account for talking about recession and the economy going backwards when nothing could be further from the truth - as Treasury is forecasting, especially next year.

The budget we have brought down provides for investment and underpins jobs. Jobs, and confidence in the community - this is a jobs-rich budget. What we need to know from the other side later today is not a shopping list of projects. We need to know how they are going to fund those projects -

**Members** interjecting.

**Madam SPEAKER** - Order, Ms O'Byrne.

**Mr GUTWEIN** - What would you do differently in this budget? What would you not do, that we have done? That is what we need to understand. Not a shopping list of projects, not a glossy brochure. What we need to understand from the shadow treasurer is whether he can fund the projects they are going to be talking about. That is his challenge, and we will find out this afternoon.

### **Budget 2020-21 - Infrastructure and Jobs**

**Mr TUCKER question to MINISTER for INFRASTRUCTURE and TRANSPORT, Mr FERGUSON**

[10.59 a.m.]

This budget includes a record \$5 billion investment in generational infrastructure for our community, and importantly for jobs. Can you outline to the House what measures you have established to maximise the delivery of this significant infrastructure program? Are you aware of any other job creating infrastructure plans?

## ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I thank the member for Lyons, Mr Tucker, for his question; it is a vital question. This Budget, as the Premier has outlined, is all about jobs and confidence and the community. We are building those assets and we have been building those assets - roads, bridges, the new Royal, schools, TAFE facilities - infrastructure that Tasmania through its growing years has desperately needed.

**Opposition members** interjecting.

**Madam SPEAKER** - Order, please.

**Mr FERGUSON** - The Budget delivers \$5 billion, and I thank Mr Tucker for repeating it for gravity; he did it well. It is a massive investment into the infrastructure that all of us, our families and our communities, will use. It ought to be welcomed because it is a very good thing for our state. The size of this task is enormous. It is an ambitious \$5 billion infrastructure program but it is what we need, what the economy needs, and it will create jobs.

I understand that there was a passing interest in jobs earlier from the Opposition. We have a real and continuing interest to conservatively support around 25 000 jobs. That is exactly why the Budget takes this agenda forward in the most aggressive and assertive way the state has ever seen. We have tenders out there. I will be announcing tenders later today as well. We have work being delivered, but we also know that we can do more and we want to do more. Across the government, on our side of the parliament, my ministerial colleagues, all of us have an infrastructure agenda within our portfolios to deliver and it is more than ever before.

That is why I am really pleased today to announce that we have enhanced the role and function of Infrastructure Tasmania. It is about supporting the on-time delivery of our ground-breaking infrastructure investment project. ITas will now have an expanded role in the development of strategy, policy and planning of infrastructure right across government, supporting every agency and department -

**Mr O'Byrne** - What have they been doing the last six years?

**Mr FERGUSON** - and supporting every minister with their program. It will also have a substantially expanded role in facilitating priority project delivery, including enhanced capital delivery capacity and monitoring, as well as offering a new service in project assurance.

**Mr O'Byrne** interjecting.

**Madam SPEAKER** - Order, Mr O'Byrne. Would you like an early leave pass?

**Mr O'Byrne** - No, I do not, Madam Speaker.

**Madam SPEAKER** - You do not need coffee?

**Mr O'Byrne** - No.

**Madam SPEAKER** - Then I ask the whole of Labor and the Premier to please be quiet.

**Mr FERGUSON** - It is a fair point that has been made that they had 10 years, in fact 16 years, and they did not even start the Bridgewater bridge. They had money and they spent it on other things. It is what he did; it is his history. That is the record and they are the facts.

Since its inception in 2014, Infrastructure Tasmania has moved from being transport infrastructure and has evolved to include other key projects such as the Derwent Entertainment Centre redevelopment and the NBL team, the Tamar Estuary Management Taskforce, the Bruny Island ferry service, and key elements of the Hobart City Deal. This change for ITas formalises its role in the delivery of those types of projects but ensures it has the appropriate resources to do so.

Over the life of this Budget I am announcing today an extra investment by the Government of \$7.78 million into ITas specifically to rev up these projects and give them the project capacity they need to deliver. There is substantial infrastructure expertise and experience in certain areas of government, including within the Department of State Growth, and we will ensure that expertise is available right across government to our infrastructure projects at every stage.

This structure I am announcing to the House today is based on the successful Infrastructure New South Wales model and will greatly assist every department and every minister in meeting our ambitious project tasks ahead so that our state can benefit and we can deliver the infrastructure for not just this generation but for generations to come. I heard it said that we will have nothing to show for it. We will have \$5 billion worth of infrastructure to show for it, which is the assets our state and future generations will need. That is why I hoped members opposite might be more enthused and more supporting of infrastructure for Tasmanians because it means jobs and more investment.

We know that the best way to get our budget back on track, grow business confidence and to create jobs is to grow our economy. We have done it before. We had to do it after the disastrous Labor-Greens years and we will do it again. Labor has consistently and deliberately fudged the facts about our infrastructure project rollout to suit their misleading claims. Who could forget that Labor has a shameful record of infrastructure delivery? You only have to mention the Bridgewater bridge and the Royal Hobart Hospital that they collapsed. The only plans Mr O'Byrne knows about are about leadership plans, failed infrastructure plans and, to quote Will Hodgman, 'from the rare book section, the failed economic development plan'.

In contrast, it is Mr O'Byrne's day -

**Opposition members** interjecting.

**Madam SPEAKER** - Minister, could you kindly not stir up the Opposition?

**Mr FERGUSON** - Yes, Madam Speaker, I will. Today is his day for Labor's alternative budget but I fear instead that the alternative budget will actually be brought down tomorrow by the Greens.

## **Budget 2020-21 - Infrastructure Program**

### **Dr BROAD question to PREMIER, Mr GUTWEIN**

[11.06 a.m.]

You have argued against all evidence that your Government can deliver its infrastructure program despite your complete inability to get projects out the door. International ratings agency, Moody's said -

Notwithstanding the budgeted increase in debt-funded infrastructure spending, we consider slippage over the forward Estimates period is highly likely. This reflects our view that the scale of infrastructure spending will be difficult to deliver within the projected timeframes.

You are claiming you will spend over \$1 billion on infrastructure this financial year compared to just \$521 million the year before. The 2020-21 financial year is almost half-over already. How much have you spent on infrastructure in the financial year to date?

### **ANSWER**

Madam Speaker, I thank Dr Broad, the member for Braddon, for his question and his interest in this. I will start by making the point that has obviously been missed and sailed past the Opposition that Moody's is a credit rating agency not an infrastructure agency. That is a key point to make.

In terms of last year's efforts regarding infrastructure I make the point that in a year where we lost almost six months through a range of challenges where it was obviously more difficult to conduct any sort of work because of social distancing and the pandemic, we still got more than half a billion dollars out the door. In fact, the year before over \$600 million, 90 per cent of the infrastructure program, was out the door.

I also make the point that in terms of the Opposition's experience and demonstrated lack of capacity in delivering infrastructure, it is a bit rich that they would come into this place and raise the matter of infrastructure. The Royal Hobart Hospital - 10 years and they never laid a brick.

**Opposition members** interjecting.

**Madam SPEAKER** - Order, please.

**Dr BROAD** - Point of order, Madam Speaker. The Premier has well and truly strayed off topic. I ask you to draw his attention to the question, which was: the 2020-21 financial year is almost half-over already; how much have you spent on infrastructure in the financial year to date?

**Madam SPEAKER** - That is not a point of order but it is relevant. I will leave it on *Hansard*. Please proceed.

**Mr GUTWEIN** - Thank you, Madam Speaker. The point I was making was about the other side of the House and larger projects - the Royal Hobart Hospital, 10 years and never laid

a brick. In terms of the Bridgewater bridge, and we will hear more about that from them over time, it is a statement of fact that they had the money and they gave it up. Sixteen years ago they had the money in the budget.

**Mr O'Byrne** - Sixteen years ago you sat on a stump asking to stop old growth logging.

**Madam SPEAKER** - Order, Mr O'Byrne.

**Mr GUTWEIN** - I do not have that number with me. For Tasmania, like many states of this country, infrastructure is seasonal. We do more work in the December and March quarters by virtue of the climate. Through the course of the winter months, in many cases it is too wet to do large roadworks. The other side of the House knows that.

With infrastructure spending and the flow of payments, what you would normally expect is that by the time you reach the end of a financial year you are somewhere between 10 per cent and 35 to 40 per cent of your infrastructure spend; between 10 per cent and 35 to 40 per cent of your infrastructure spend by the end of the December-quarter in most years. The remainder will be dealt with through the March and June quarters. I do not have a number with me, but we will not, on this side of the House -

**Ms O'BYRNE** - Point of order. The Premier says he does not have that figure. Can we seek that he might update the House at a later time, as is the normal practice when you do not have an answer in question time?

**Madam SPEAKER** - That is not a point of order but it is up to the Premier.

**Mr GUTWEIN** - I will explain. The normal progression of payments for infrastructure is seasonal. This side of the House understands it. That side of the House will continue to play politics. Regarding your record, when you look back at when you took us into recession and had one of the lowest infrastructure spends through that four-year period, you should hang your heads in shame. At a time when that side of the House was shutting down industries, they significantly underspent their infrastructure program and they took us into recession.

### **Launceston General Hospital - Commission of Inquiry into Child Abuse Claims**

**Ms O'BYRNE question to MINISTER for HEALTH, Ms COURTNEY**

[11.13 a.m.]

Last week you revealed that despite being aware of James Griffin's shocking offending at the Launceston General Hospital, you did not launch an inquiry for over a year. You have yet to explain why it took you so long to act. You have also steadfastly refused to establish a commission of inquiry despite evidence that Griffin's offending may have occurred across multiple departments and organisations.

Last week we also asked whether staff at the LGH would be granted permission to access counselling and support services outside the services prescribed by the department because they were concerned about trust. Following a meeting between the secretary for Health and staff at the LGH last week, will you now be able to confirm that these support services will be

provided to staff, and whether you have accepted and agreed to the request from staff and families for the establishment of a commission of inquiry?

**ANSWER**

Madam Speaker, I appreciate the member's question for what is a very important matter for everyone in this House as well as the Tasmanian community. As I have stated before, the safety of our children is a priority for this Government and for the THS. With regard to the independent investigation, my advice is that the terms of reference are broad enough to be able to look into the matters that have been raised. These terms were determined with expert advice to ensure they are appropriate.

I reiterate my message to the Tasmanian community, particularly the northern community and those who are associated with the LGH, that it is important that you come forward with your stories. There are mechanisms available for that and appropriate protection. We will ensure that people are supported through either providers that the Government supports or directly through the Department of Health.

Regarding support for staff, and this is important for those staff, the secretary engaged with the staff last week. It is my understanding that the secretary is visiting again today to meet with staff. It is my expectation that the staff will get the support they need. The secretary, in her role, is best placed to be able to engage with staff about ensuring that those are provided.

**Budget 2020-21 - Skills and Training**

**Mr STREET question to MINISTER for EDUCATION and TRAINING,  
Mr ROCKLIFF**

[11.15 a.m.]

Can you advise the House on how the State Budget is supporting skills and training as part of the Government's plan to rebuild a stronger Tasmania?

**ANSWER**

Madam Speaker, I thank the member for his question and his interest in this matter. It is this side of the House that has a plan for skills and training and it is proven that it is working. Pre-COVID-19, our training system was performing well. From March 2019 to 2020, Tasmanian apprentice commencements, bucked a downward national trend increasing by 0.4 per cent while non-trade commencements increased by 8.5 per cent locally.

A recent National Centre for Vocational Research Data release shows Tasmania continues to have the highest completion rates in the country. This means that apprentices and trainees are more likely to complete their training in Tasmania than anywhere else in the country. Despite COVID-19, we are doing everything we can to get back on track and ensure skills and training drives our social and economic recovery. In a number of areas we are already back to pre-COVID-19 levels. In some cases, even better.

The number of training contracts that commenced in September 2020 was 363, which was 23 more than in 2019, so there are positive signs. This year's Budget includes a wide range of targeted and evidence-based skills measures which reflect industry need.

We are overseeing \$43 million to support more trainees, more apprentices and more opportunities for youth and the unemployed. Our \$22.8 million extension of the small business grants and payroll tax programs will encourage more businesses to take on an apprentice or trainee of any age.

The JobTrainer program, with matched funding from the Commonwealth, will offer free training to youth and the unemployed right across Tasmania. JobTrainer has doubled the investment those opposite have suggested should be delivered for skills and support in the next 12 months during the COVID-19 recovery. Their plan also restricts options for students by limiting pre-training to TAFE.

Restricting training options is never an ideal situation for youth or the unemployed, even more so when we are recovering from one of the biggest social and economic challenges we have ever faced.

Kent Wyllie, general manager of Tasmanian Minerals, Manufacturing and Energy Council, stated in a response to JobTrainer -

TMMEC supports initiatives, provides agile and responsive industry-led training, delivered by both public and private training providers. We feel this is integral to ensuring that the training successfully meets both the current and future workforce needs and addresses future job prospects for the Tasmanian industry, employers and learners.

To quote Stuart Collins, the HIA Tasmanian executive director, said -

The JobTrainer Fund is a welcome joint initiative for Tasmanian and Australian governments. School leavers, young people, job seekers now have an incentive to gain the necessary skills to enter our industry as it gears up for current and future demand.

Peter Cornish, the chief executive of Fruit Growers Tasmania, said -

Fruit Growers Tasmania welcomes the Government's budget initiatives in the areas of JobTrainer and TasTAFE. The JobTrainer initiative, which will target school leavers, young people and job seekers, builds on the recent joint efforts between the fruit industry and the Tasmanian Government to promote the job opportunities available to locals in the fruit industry.

Matthew Pollock, executive director of Master Builders Association, has also welcomed JobTrainer -

This is an unprecedented opportunity for our construction-led recovery to be a job generator. We want to see Tasmanians building the infrastructure to accelerate our recovery.



This Budget brings jobs, and it builds confidence for the community. We have a skills plan. It is funded and it is working.

**Time expired.**

### **FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT (FURTHER CONSEQUENTIAL AMENDMENTS) BILL 2020 (No. 16)**

**Bill agreed to by the Legislative Council without amendment.**

### **DANGEROUS CRIMINALS AND HIGH RISK OFFENDERS BILL 2020 (No. 28)**

**Bill agreed to by the Legislative Council with amendment.**

**Mr FERGUSON** (Bass - Leader of Government Business) - Madam Speaker, I move -

That the message be made an order of the day for consideration tomorrow.

**Motion agreed to.**

### **SITTING TIMES**

[11.22 a.m.]

**Mr FERGUSON** (Bass - Leader of Government Business) (by leave) - Madam Speaker, I move -

That for this day's sitting the house should not stand adjourned at 6 o'clock and instead the House continue to sit past 6 o'clock.

The House has previously resolved to provide for a maximum of 16 hours of debate in the Budget bills. We do not usually need that long but in order to make sure we make progress through it this evening I will move this motion today and I will do it again tomorrow. I would expect, based on patterns of previous years patterns, that we should be adjourning the House around 7 p.m. or 7.30 p.m. this evening. We will see how we go and we will discuss it with colleagues across the Chamber as we progress through the day.

[11.23 a.m.]

**Mr O'BYRNE** (Franklin) - Madam Speaker, on that basis we will indicate that we support that appropriate arrangement of time of this House over the next few days. For clarification, adjournments extend into the adjournment debate at 7 p.m.?

**Mr Ferguson** - Yes, depending on how many speakers we get through.

**Mr O'BYRNE** - You will let us know during the day how we travel?

**Mr Ferguson** - Yes.

**Mr O'BYRNE** - Thank you, Madam Speaker. On that basis we will agree.

**Dr WOODRUFF** (Franklin) - Madam Speaker, the Greens support that extension of time to sit this evening. We would like an assurance from the minister that there will be an adjournment debate.

**Mr Ferguson** - Yes.

**Motion agreed to.**

## **MATTER OF PUBLIC IMPORTANCE**

### **Launceston General Hospital**

[11.24 a.m.]

**Ms O'BYRNE** (Bass) - Madam Speaker, I move -

That the house takes note of the following matter: Launceston General Hospital

I rise today to speak on this matter of public importance as a result of the many conversations I have had with people impacted by revelations about James Griffin. The knowledge that for around 20 years, a perpetrator in a role that we trust had hurt children has deeply shocked the Tasmanian community, in particular those of us in the north where he lived, worked, volunteered and preyed upon vulnerable young people. It has devastated many families. Many of us are hearing about it and dealing with it for the first time, and that is confronting and shocking enough. However, others have known for some time, some have wanted to talk and clearly some have wanted to silence them.

That is what I want to talk about today - to explain why we are seeking answers, why we need to understand what actions have, or have not, taken place, and why a commission of inquiry is so important.

I have spoken to people who work on 4K, those who work more broadly in the hospital and to people who encountered James Griffin in other settings. I was minister for health during some of this period. Can I take any comfort that, I understand, there were no reports during that time? No, I cannot. The fact is the damage and the rot that allowed this to go unchecked had set in before my time, extended through my time, and continued beyond it.

Children were harmed, staff were groomed and when reports were made - well, we have heard from the media how far they went, or did not go.

First, I want to say how desperately sorry I am that this happened, and that it was allowed to continue. We have failed families, we have failed children, and we have failed staff. It is important that we do not continue to do so. We need an inquiry to understand not only the hospital and the broader system processes, but to investigate the many areas in which it is clear the scope of these offences reached: our hospitals, our youth detention centre, student residential accommodation, sporting organisations, even our ships.

We need a fully independent inquiry because despite the comfort given by the minister, there is now a huge deficit of trust. Staff made complaints and were ignored. Staff were told they would feel the effects of the State Service Act if they chose to speak out. They were silenced. One staff member said to me, 'They told us to shut up'. One staff member told me that because he had been a patient they would be breaching patient confidentiality.

Staff offered to help identify potential victims so that support could be offered to those families and those individuals. This was accepted, and then denied. Emails sent to staff went to junk folders for some reason and were not received. People were told to go to the police, but when they did so they were told that the perpetrator was dead and so nothing could be done. Staff were offered counselling, but from a system they now deeply distrust. I know the secretary has met with them, and I understand those conversations have been more open than others in the last 12 months. I genuinely hope some of that trust can be rebuilt.

In order to rebuild, as we have heard, the disinfectant of sunlight needs to be applied. A full independent inquiry is needed, with the ability to range across the areas and the power to compel witnesses. It is not enough to say that such an inquiry will be undertaken if the first inquiry asks for it, because that will not achieve what is needed to build trust - and will further traumatise any witnesses and victims.

There are clearly other victims some whom may be aware of what happened and need support; some who may now be recalling events; some who may be too young to know; and some who will present again to 4K. If they are not identified, how can we provide the support that they need. There are also other victims - parents who feel they have failed their children by trusting in our system and families, like mine and I imagine others in this place, who have had children in 4K. There are staff who feel they are responsible because they did not realise what was happening. The benefit and knowledge of hindsight makes them look back and wonder about events that are now obvious, but at the time seemed almost normalised.

Some staff who raised concerns feel they failed because they trusted in the system to respond and feel they are being judged for their failure to act. In particular, some male nurses who love their jobs contacted me because they feel people may not trust them now as male nurses. These are the people who are calling for a full commission of inquiry - staff, families, victims. They deserve to be heard.

The other action that needs to be understood is why the minister chose to do nothing, from the time of Griffin's death when the police investigation ended until the time of the exposure of this issue via a podcast. I accept, as the minister says, that other information may have come to light. However, the minister knew about the allegations, the concerns of staff, and that there were clearly many more victims. Yet no action was taken until it was forced by media exposure.

Trust cannot be rebuilt with more secrecy. Minister, I accept that you were not minister at the time these events took place, and if my own experience is consistent, then previous ministers were not aware of the offences. But this minister is responsible and needs to explain her actions since then, because the traumatic way people are now hearing of this lays at her feet. The trauma of staff who are grieving a friend and then horrified at the truth of what type of person he was and that they had also been groomed and then actively silenced does unfortunately lay at her feet.

A full inquiry would mean a full understanding of the impact and the flaws in our responses, that the learnings cover the whole scope of the community's concerns so the failings are fully understood and we can then act to insure a safe environment for children and the vulnerable people within our health system, a system that I am advised has not yet fully adopted all of the recommendations of the royal commission into institutionalised abuse in care.

The minister has said that she does not respond to this because she does not want to have an ongoing commentary. I understand that line and that the minister thinks that is helpful, but the reality is that there is an ongoing commentary and that leads us to a point of understanding that we need a fully independent process to resolve where we are now.

Staff and families are not asking for an independent inquiry for no reason. They no longer trust the system and they no longer trust our responses. Whilst that is really sad, it is the reality. The only way we are going to give people the confidence they need is to have a full commission of inquiry. Anything less is an insult to those affected.

### **Time expired.**

[11.31 a.m.]

**Ms COURTNEY** (Bass - Minister for Health) - Madam Speaker, I thank the member for this MPI today because it is a very important matter. I agree with many of the comments Ms O'Byrne made around this being deeply shocking and confronting. I know that many members of our community are grappling with this situation from their personal experiences and the experiences of friends and family. I know it has very deeply impacted many who currently work at the hospital as well as many former staff. I ask all those in the community who have been impacted to please ensure they get the support they need. It is very important. As we work through this independent investigation, I am sure that for many in the community there will be things that are triggered, so it is important over this process that people reach out to loved ones and to support services to get the support they need.

I assure the parliament and the Tasmanian community that we are undertaking this independent investigation to ensure this does not happen again. I have been deeply moved by this situation, as I believe many others have been, and the conversations I have had with current and former staff have very acutely highlighted to me the impact that this type of matter can have on people and over such a long period of time.

With regard to the independent investigation, I encourage people to come forward for it. The terms of reference were developed in consultation with the secretary of DPAC and the secretary of Justice and included legal advice and engagement with the investigator. No doubt members would understand that it was done at arm's length from me. It is important to recognise that an independent investigator, Ms Maree Norton, has been stood up and as this investigation is carried out at arm's length from us, the investigator will be empowered to conduct this investigation in whatever manner they see fit.

I assure the Tasmanian community as well as this place that I will ensure the independent investigator has all the appropriate resourcing that she needs, and if there is further action on investigation recommended by the independent investigator that will be taken. I can also assure this parliament of the very strong feeling that I have, the secretary has, and I know the Premier has from my conversations with him around this matter, in ensuring that it is dealt with appropriately.

Ms O'Byrne, I would also like to provide a bit more information with regard to your question during question time. As I said, the secretary has engaged with the staff on many occasions last week and this week. Support that has already been provided includes access to the employee assistance program; engagement of an additional counsellor who attended onsite one-on-one counselling and support with a specific focus on grief counselling; training sessions with respect to self-care, responding to trauma and grief, and responding to parents and patients with difficult behaviour; training sessions with Enterprising Aardvark covering specific topics related to sex offences' and in-service sessions with the executive director of medical services and HR. In addition to that, Ms O'Byrne, the secretary is working with the ANMF to organise additional sessions at Laurel House as well for staff.

As the minister responsible I remain absolutely committed to making sure that we support both current and former staff during this really difficult time. I know the community's focus on this matter makes it very challenging for staff. I ask everybody in the community to support this independent investigation and support Ms Norton in the work she is going to do. I am committed to ensuring that not only do we publicly release the outcomes of this investigation but that we act on them. I want to ensure that as this independent investigation goes forth it is resourced and supported, and people are supported to come forward. I am committed to ensuring that this type of behaviour never happens again. I know that the whole community wants to ensure that as a government and a community we have the systems in place to ensure that that is the case.

Madam Deputy Speaker, I will not go into detail of the last period of time; that is a matter for the investigator. However, I assure the Chamber that an open disclosure process was undertaken by the department. My advice is that that was conducted appropriately. I cannot comment on the police investigation but I know if there are any matters that are brought forward through the investigation that are criminal in nature they will be referred to police for appropriate investigation.

I call on members of the House to ensure - and I feel confident they will - that if members of the community come to them with concerns regarding this that they are supported to make a referral or a statement to either the independent investigator or through the mechanism the secretary of the department has stood up as well. I also ask members of the House, as I am sure they would, to ensure that anyone who comes forward to them with any information or concerns knows where they can get access. It is important that people know they can get access. I mentioned Laurel House and 1800 RESPECT is also available, as is the Sexual Assault Support Service, Relationship Australia and Lifeline. It is important that we support this community in a very difficult time.

**Time expired.**

[11.38 a.m.]

**Ms HOUSTON** (Bass) - Madam Deputy Speaker, when the community learnt that our LGH, and particularly ward 4K, had been a hunting ground for a predator preying on vulnerable children for nearly two decades, they were shocked. When we learnt that Tasmania Police had laid a dozen charges against this perpetrator, who since 2001 had worked on ward 4K, the children's ward at our very own LGH, they were appalled.

I have had a lot of contact from people in the community, and particularly other parents who spent a lot of time at that hospital like I have in the last couple of years, and they were

very distressed. We now know that those charges relate to sexual offences against children, some as young as 11 years of age - abuse which this perpetrator admitted to police when questioned last year. The details of these crimes are so disturbing and vile that they cannot be disclosed here. My heart breaks for the young victims and their families who live with consequences of this abuse. I also feel for those caring, dedicated staff on 4K who must be truly traumatised to learn what was going on around them.

I have six children and I have spent a lot of time in 4K, particularly in 2018 and 2019. The first thing I did was search my memory for any interactions the perpetrator may have had with my child. I am sure many other parents have done the same thing.

As parents and as a community, we want answers. We want to know how this happened. The LGH was not Griffin's only hunting ground. His list of offences spans 28 years, with sex crimes dating back to at least 1987 when he worked as a volunteer ambulance officer for Ambulance Tasmania. His crimes continued through to 2019, at which time he was working at the hospital while also volunteering as a medic with a local children's sports team. The community is horrified by this. I truly hope that every person in this Chamber has taken the time to look at this case and understand how heinous these crimes are and ask themselves how we can prevent this happening again.

The first thing you must do is to shed light on the issue. There are far too many unanswered questions. There were complaints made in 2009 and 2017 but nothing was done. Rather, the predator was allowed to work across departments. The serial child sex offender was abusing children from at least 1987 until he was finally charged in 2019. At this time he was issued with a Working with Vulnerable People's card, so the safeguards do not always work. Our institutions must do better.

We do not know who made the decision to bury previous complaints or why. This must be revealed for anyone and everyone to have faith in the system again. We do not know the full extent of the harm that has been done, nor why it took so long for this predator to be caught, or what we can learn from that that will help prevent another predator from going undetected.

We have not heard the voices of victims and we may not even know how many more victims there really are. There are too many unanswered questions. We owe it to everyone hurt by this predator to seek answers and uncover the truth. We owe it to the victims, to the families and to those who thought they knew him but who were groomed themselves.

There must be a commission of inquiry. The reality is that predators will infiltrate institutions where they can access their victims. It is our job, everyone's job, to stop them. The only way to do this is to expose their behaviour, find the truth about how they operate and how they go undetected and use that to develop strategies to stop them. The only way to achieve this is for all the facts of the case to be made known.

There must also be broad-based training, safeguarding children. In the community service sector, as a worker, I undertook compulsory safeguarding children training. As a general manager at a not-for-profit, I ensured all the staff and board members undertook safeguarding children training. Nothing is more important than protecting our children.

I cannot help but wonder, if everyone who worked with this predator had safeguarding children training, would he have gone undetected for so long? Would those who made the decision not to follow through with investigations had done so? Training is a valuable tool.

Predators are not who most people think they are. They are often charming and friendly. That is how they hide in plain sight. By the time they are found out, they have often been offending for many years and have many victims. Knowing what to look for can be a valuable tool.

Only a commission of inquiry can expose the truth and allow the voices to be heard. Sunlight is the best disinfectant. This matter needs all the sunlight it can get. I do not doubt that all the quiet around this is designed to protect someone, but it is not going to protect the victims, it is not going to protect their families and it is not going to protect the nursing staff and everyone who worked with him, so who?

Only a commission of inquiry will bring out the truth so that all the rot can be cut out. There needs to be a commission of inquiry for many reasons, truth and justice among them, but the main reason to do it, is because it is the right thing to do. Do the right thing.

[11.44 a.m.]

**Dr WOODRUFF** (Franklin) - Madam Deputy Speaker, I want to start by acknowledging the trauma and the real suffering that many current and past staff of the LGH are feeling and the emotional turmoil that victims and their families are also feeling at the moment.

We are just starting to uncover some of the truly heinous things that happened over the 18 years that man, that abuser, was on the children's ward at the Launceston General Hospital. It is a very painful process. I have been approached by past staff and current staff. I understand a lot of detail about the story of one particular victim and that person's family. It is really shocking. It makes it apparent to me that there was not just a system's problem at play here. This has to be investigated thoroughly, but it is hard to believe that there was just a system's problem at play here. There was something rotten in the management processes in the Launceston General Hospital that enabled an abuser to continue to be on the paediatric ward for that period of time after complaints were alleged to have been made, starting, as we understand, in 2009.

Just the whiff of the accusations that were being made in complaints that have been discussed, still to be proved, ought to have been enough to have immediately caused THS management to move that man from that ward. I do not understand. No one I have spoken to understands how it was possible for complaints to have been made and, in the process of investigating those complaints, that man was allowed to continue to work as a nurse with young, sick, vulnerable children. Left alone with young children for years and years. That is why the investigation that has been proposed by the minister, by this Government, is manifestly inadequate.

It will not get to the bottom of the rottenness that enabled this man to stay in that position after complaints were made. Is it not the case that in every school, in every place where there is a working with vulnerable children responsibility, when complaints of extremely heinous child sex abuse are made, then the person against whom a complaint is made is removed during the period an investigation is undertaken? This is what we do not understand. This is what we have to get to the bottom of. That system the THS, the LGH management, something there

enabled this to continue. We do not accept that this inquiry is going to work. You cannot get to the bottom of it.

That abuser also worked at Ashley Youth Detention Centre. That abuser also worked on the *Spirit of Tasmania*, not to mention a number of sporting associations and many other places. This investigation does not enable the stories to be uncovered in those places. It does not enable an appropriate deep, just, fearless and powerful investigation to make sure that not only will this never happen again but that it is not happening now in other paediatric wards in other places under the Government's responsibility. There must be a commission of inquiry because that is the only way witnesses can be compelled to provide evidence, where there is a power to seek a warrant to collect evidence and where there are offences for failing to provide evidence.

We must have a commission of inquiry to enable the other places where that abuser worked to have the same level of investigation as the THS. Surely the minister understands that this is not just about the THS; we must have the minister responsible for child safety involved. The minister responsible for child safety, when the Greens asked the question, did not accept that the Ashley Youth Detention Centre must have this same sunlight but we must or we cannot be confident that this is not happening and will never happen again.

I also thank very much the incredible fearless work of Camille Bianchi. If it were not for that journalist this story would still remain hidden.

**Time expired.**

[11.51 a.m.]

**Mr ELLIS** (Braddon) - Madam Deputy Speaker, child sexual abuse and the impact it has on members of our community is abhorrent. It is terrible for the victims of child sexual abuse and their families. We say that we see you, we hear you and we are with you.

The safety of children in our care is always a priority of the Government and the Tasmanian Health Service and the Government will take any action that is necessary. The charges laid and allegations made against the deceased former nurse are extremely serious and we have acknowledged the community's concerns about these very serious matters.

The Premier announced last month that an independent investigation will be commissioned by the Tasmanian Government into these matters. The Government has finalised and released the terms of reference for that independent investigation and the outcomes will be released to the public. Maree Norton has been appointed to undertake this important work and the Government has confidence that she will undertake this investigation with the highest levels of integrity. As has been outlined, she is experienced across a range of legal areas and the Department of Justice will provide administrative support for the conduct of the investigation. It is at arm's length from Government and she will be empowered to undertake her investigation in any way she sees fit.

The terms of reference are now available on the Department of Justice website and details regarding how members of the public will be able to provide information to this investigation will be outlined shortly. We know this has been a very difficult time for many in our community and we are committed to supporting anybody who comes forward with information.



I will touch more broadly on the child abuse royal commission. On 15 December 2017 the royal commission released its final report containing its recommendations. The final report is 21 volumes including a preface and executive summary and three reports released earlier by the royal commission. The report makes 409 recommendations to improve the prevention, identification and response to institutional child sexual abuse.

On 20 June 2018 the Tasmanian Government tabled its response to the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse, where the Government accepted, in principle, 281 recommendations of the royal commission requiring action by state and territory governments. The Tasmanian Government acknowledges the immense courage it takes for survivors to speak about their experience. The royal commission highlighted the failings of the past and provided institutions with a body of work that will help us protect our most vulnerable communities from the impacts of abuse. The Tasmanian Government remains committed to better protecting our children and the final report released by the royal commission will help shape future reforms to achieve this.

On 15 December 2019 the Tasmanian Government released its second Annual Progress Report and Action Plan 2020 on implementing the royal commission's recommendations. The progress report builds on the foundations of the first Progress Report and Action Plan 2018-19. The second Annual Progress Report and Action Plan 2020 outlines the Tasmanian Government's activities to implement the recommendations of the royal commission for 2020, including the Child Safe Tasmania project creating a legislative framework for child-safe standards and a three-year pilot intermediary project which is about providing communications assistance for children and vulnerable witnesses to promote best evidence in the criminal justice process.

An important part of the royal commission and its outcomes was the National Redress Scheme. On 1 November 2018 the Tasmanian Government commenced participation in the National Redress Scheme for institutionalised child sexual abuse. The Tasmanian Government acknowledges again the immense courage those survivors have to speak about their experience and has always been of the view that it is important to give survivors a choice in terms of how to seek acknowledgement and compensation for past abuse. That is why the Tasmanian Government has committed \$70 million towards its involvement in the National Redress Scheme. Tasmania's participation in the National Redress Scheme acknowledges the wrong that was done to Tasmanian survivors and allows Tasmanian organisations to take responsibility for the child sexual abuse that happened to the children for which they had a duty of care.

The Tasmanian Government has also undertaken a range of legislative reforms to improve access for survivors of child abuse to civil litigation. This has included setting aside the limitation period that previously barred a number of victims from taking action, as well as providing victims the ability to set aside a deed of release where it is in the interests of justice to do so. I am advised that to date 225 Tasmanian survivors have been offered payments of redress under the National Redress Scheme, with 198 offers accepted, resulting in over \$12.6 million in monetary payments for victims of abuse in Tasmanian government institutions.

The Tasmanian Government continues to respond to redress claims as efficiently as possible and I am advised that so far it has responded to 99.5 per cent of information requests within the scheme's statutory time frame.

**Time expired.**

**Matter noted.**

## **APPROPRIATION BILL (No. 1) 2020 (No. 46)**

### **Second Reading**

**Resumed from 12 November 2020 (page 45)**

[11.59 a.m.]

**Ms WHITE** (Lyons - Leader of the Opposition) - Madam Speaker, memories are powerful. I vividly recall the mix of fear and apprehension, frustration and concern in this Chamber in March as the global pandemic approached our little island at the edge of the world. We first watched with concern from afar as China imposed what seemed like unbelievably strict lockdowns to contain a strange and deadly virus in Wuhan. The scale of the emergency and construction of massive hospitals almost overnight were almost impossible to comprehend. Then we saw COVID-19 sweep across Europe, overwhelming hospitals and crippling economies.

We witnessed the consequences of mixed messages from the United States about the importance of social distancing and staying home. We saw the benefits for those countries that acted early and decisively to contain the virus, counted not only in lives saved, but livelihoods protected.

Back in March, none of knew which of these fates lay ahead of us. From fear and confusion, we saw the best of our community and our political system emerge. With the goodwill of bipartisan, Tasmania closed its borders, businesses went into hibernation and we were told to stay home and save lives.

We will not forget the hundreds of health workers on the north west coast who contracted the virus while caring for the sick, or those businesses that were closed during the lock-down. We will never forget the 13 Tasmanians whose lives were lost due to COVID-19. We grieve with the families of those who lost their loved ones, but we also acknowledge that we fared far better than most countries across the world.

Those early decisions undoubtedly saved lives. Border restrictions brought relief for many, but the impact of lock-downs brought a different fear of the unknown. For employers - how could they keep their staff when no money was coming in the door? For workers - what would happen if they lost their job? Again, from that fear, we saw the best emerge from our political system. The introduction of JobKeeper saved jobs and businesses, and very likely saved lives. Similarly, the increase in JobSeeker succeeded in lifting thousands of people out of poverty and proved to be an incredibly potent economic stimulus.

We should never forget what that period felt like and we should never forget what was possible. We need to remember it is possible for governments to move quickly; to challenge old ways of doing; to identify problems and implement creative solutions to make people's lives better. We should not relegate those lessons to history in a rush to return everything to the way it was.

In the early stages of this crisis, the Premier said that no one should be homeless in the middle of a pandemic. We should strive to ensure that no one is homeless after the pandemic either.

It took a global pandemic for this government to reverse its cuts to health. Our reliance on the advice of previously unsung public health officials also exposed the lie that there is such a thing as frontline and backline health workers. Properly funded healthcare should not be reserved for a pandemic.

We should buy local, holiday at home and support local jobs, not only when the borders are closed but because it is good for the economy and helps to build a stronger community. Newstart was not enough to live on before the pandemic and not enough to live on during the pandemic. It will not be enough to live on after the pandemic. These policies work to support our economy and help people, not only because there was a public health emergency but because they work.

Secure jobs work; money in people's pockets works; and access to good quality, well-funded public services works. The lessons from COVID-19 is we all do better when government recognises its responsibility to govern for all. COVID-19 forced us to reflect on the most important things in life - health, family, a secure job and our freedom. It has challenged us to think about how we can use the upheaval of this catastrophic global event as a positive force for change.

I have previously said we should not rush to return to normal after the pandemic. There is a natural instinct to regain what we had and to retreat to what feels familiar. However, for too many, with one in four people living in poverty, normal was not great before this virus.

Since the Liberals came to power in 2014, elective surgery waiting lists have blown out by 49 per cent, outpatient waiting lists by 64 per cent, public housing waiting lists by 55 per cent and the number of school leavers engaged in work, training and further study has dropped by 31 per cent.

Tasmania continues to compare poorly to the rest of Australia on indicators of life expectancy, disposable income, smoking and obesity rates, year 12 completion and good health measures. As the shadow treasurer, David O'Byrne has rightly said, we must commit to improve these statistics because behind every statistic is a Tasmanian who deserves better.

If we think a return to normal is the best we can aspire to upon recovery, then we are selling ourselves short. After bushfires, we do not rebuild houses the same as they were. We seek to understand what made them vulnerable and how to make sure they are more resilient in the future. That is exactly how we need to think about our economy.

Tasmania's biggest challenge prior to COVID-19 was job creation. The pandemic has only compounded the problem. Over 20 000 Tasmanians lost their jobs at the height of this pandemic. For a while it seemed those jobs were returning, but there are worrying signs that Tasmania's jobs recovery has stalled, with 6100 payroll jobs lost over a fortnight in mid-October, a decline of 2 per cent and a bigger loss than the national average of 1.6 per cent.

The state's unemployment rate has now jumped from 6.4 per cent to 7.6 per cent which is particularly shocking considering even Victoria recorded an unemployment rate of 6.7 per

cent after months of lockdown. Tasmania's youth unemployment rate is by far the worst in the country and under-employment continues to wreak havoc for Tasmanian households. There is also bad news for those who continue to hold onto a job, with wages falling 5.4 per cent since March. We cannot forget that many Tasmanian businesses are still relying on JobKeeper to keep their heads above water.

The state Liberal Government should be lobbying the federal government to extend JobKeeper beyond March. For as long as there are Government imposed restrictions on the ability of businesses to trade, there should be some level of Government support. COVID-19 exposed the weaknesses in our economy and over-reliance on certain industries, high rates of casualisation and under-employment. We need to address these issues in recovery or we will remain exposed to repeating the mistakes of the past. Creating jobs and getting more people into secure and stable jobs is Labor's number one priority.

Today I am launching 'Working for Tasmania', Labor's fully costed jobs plan. Our plan builds on the COVID-19 recovery package released in June, which formed the basis of our submission to the Premier's Economic and Social Recovery Advisory Council. A Labor Government will deliver a jobs plan that connects education, skills and training, private sector investment, government spending and infrastructure development to achieve a common goal of getting more Tasmanians into work. Our plan contains four key elements: (1) getting Tasmanians working; (2) putting government spending to work for Tasmania; (3) creating the workforce for Tasmania; and (4) building a better and fairer Tasmania.

Labor's plan will create and support 35 000 jobs - 10 000 more jobs than announced in the Budget. Importantly, it is geared towards creating high quality, secure fulltime jobs. Our plan is fully costed, it includes achievable savings and redirected Government spending and, critically, it will work. We make no apologies for heeding the advice of the IMF, the Reserve Bank and leading economists who use the Government balance sheet to stimulate the economy. Our modest and targeted additional spending is more than offset by the economic benefit it will create. The best thing we can do to strengthen the economy and put the budget on a pathway back to sustainability is to get people back into work.

For Labor, an unemployment rate expected to hit 8.5 per cent next year is unacceptable. Labor understands that creating jobs starts with creating skills. Labor's free TAFE policy seeks to break down one of the key barriers to training cost. I have spoken to people during this pandemic who need to retrain to find work but they simply cannot afford the upfront costs. Labor will fund free TAFE courses in areas of skill shortages including building and construction, tourism and hospitality, aged care and disability and agriculture.

We also know that free TAFE is only one part of the solution. One of the most consistent points of feedback received through Labor's eight industry advisory councils is that our skills and training system is failing both students and employers. It is not giving people the real-world skills they need to get the job. Our economic recovery will be forever constrained without a full overhaul of our skills and training system. A Labor government will rebuild TAFE from the ground up. Tasmania needs a TAFE system that provides Tasmanians with the skills needed for meaningful jobs and matches the needs of employers.

Labor will invest an additional \$22.5 million on TasTAFE over four years to lift quality, improve delivery in regional Tasmania and enhance links with industry. We will increase the TAFE workforce by nearly 20 per cent, drawing new teachers and trainers from private and

public sectors. We will offer annual scholarships to put skilled tradespeople and industry specialists through a Certificate IV in Training and Assessment in order to qualify them to teach in their area of expertise.

Labor will also create an industry secondment fund to provide support for 80 current TAFE teachers to take a three-month full-time secondment with an employer in the trade they teach. This would enable teachers to keep up to date with the latest developments and technology in relevant industry sectors.

TasTAFE needs to provide better training delivery in regional areas where it is not always practical or easy for students to attend a TasTAFE campus. Many of these areas, like Smithton, Deloraine, Scottsdale, George Town, Huon Valley, Sorell, the Tasman Peninsula and the east coast miss out on access to local delivery of TAFE courses. Labor will create a \$1.15 million regional delivery fund to assist TasTAFE to deliver courses in regional areas.

We will also establish a representative taskforce to review the wider skills and training system and there needs to be a root and branch analysis of the governance structure, planning and delivery processes within TasTAFE. These changes are about protecting the TasTAFE brand and ensuring that it is responsive to the needs of students and industry into the future.

In February, federal government statistics showed just 48 per cent of all Tasmanian school leavers were working, training, or studying at university. This was down from approximately 80 per cent when the Liberals were elected in 2014. Terrible statistics such as these are caused not just by a lack of post-school opportunities, but also because school students are not being provided with sufficient guidance and mentoring about the post-school opportunities that are available to them.

Labor will fundamentally reform in-school career education by employing 65 specialist career educators in Tasmanian high schools and colleges. We will embed career education in the curriculum and connect today's learners with tomorrow's jobs. We want to give our young people every opportunity to get a good job here in Tasmania. Labor will make sure that they get that chance.

The SERDA workforce development program, in my patch in Sorell, has been working intensively with local government, local businesses and job seekers to get locals trained for upcoming jobs. The program also works to remove barriers to employment such as a lack of suitable transport. The program has been incredibly successful with over 200 jobs filled since January 2019.

Labor will provide funding for 10 local jobs hubs in regional communities across Tasmania. Local jobs hubs will operate in a similar way to the SERDA program, though the design of each local jobs hub will reflect the needs and existing support structures in each community. Labor will make sure that job seekers across the state get the best chance to get a foot in the door to get a job.

I come from a family of small business operators. I understand the stresses and strains that come with running a business at the best of times, let alone the worst of times that we are currently experiencing. We have seen through the pandemic the importance of government working alongside small business. Labor knows there is no economic recovery without small business recovery. Working through existing business enterprise centres, Labor will provide

more opportunities for small businesses and sole traders to build up skills to support and grow their business. Funding of \$6 million will enable more business owners to access training in areas such as business planning, accounting software, social media and online marketing, and HR skills for managing employees.

Big business decisions often need expert advice. Labor will fund free legal advice for small business owners and sole traders on a range of common issues to support growth and ensure resilience. This will support businesses through periods of change and enable innovation and foster job creation. This support will be especially important for businesses looking to expand, or to take on staff for the first time.

A regional main street revitalisation fund will provide \$5 million for matched investments in maintenance or upgrade projects that improve the appearance or overall amenity of shopping, dining or retail precincts in regional areas. The fund will bring forward maintenance or investments that might have been delayed due to the uncertain operating environment, and will be open to local governments as well as private businesses or property owners.

Labor's jobs plan will also reduce the cost of red tape compliance for small and medium businesses. Trade waste compliance is a matter of particular concern for small to medium businesses in Tasmania and has already forced some to close their doors for good.

Other issues include provision of disability access to premises under the Disability Discrimination Act as well as compliance with the building code. A Labor government would provide matched grants to small and medium businesses to assist with the cost of meeting these obligations.

Tasmanian businesses have a proud history of innovation. We know that innovation creates jobs. Labor will establish a Tasmanian jobs and innovation fund to stimulate business investment. This will be the largest business investment fund ever delivered in Tasmania's history. Every dollar spent will leverage at least \$2 of investment from the private sector. Experience with similar programs in the past have returned close to \$5 of private investment for every public dollar. The fund will drive innovation in new industries as well as allow traditional industries like forestry, mining, aquaculture and manufacturing and agriculture to continue to grow. The fund will stimulate at least \$220 million of business investment and create 1600 jobs.

Industries that primarily employ women have been hard hit by the pandemic. This means that women will be disadvantaged as we recover from the COVID-19 recession. Labor will establish a Treasury-led taskforce to examine the gender barriers in the economy that continue to impact on women. The taskforce will include representatives of government, industry, unions and the community sector and will provide advice on structural reform.

To help parents and families to return to the workforce, increase their hours or enrol in training, Labor will increase the availability of before- and after-school care in government schools. Labor will provide grants of \$75 000 to assist with the set up costs of outside-school-hours care in up to 10 additional schools across the state. We will work in partnership with the local community to make sure services are designed to support children and to meet the needs of families.

As Tasmania's unemployment rate continues to rise during this recession older workers are at increased risk. Without intervention many older people who have lost their jobs may never gain meaningful employment again. Apprentices can give people a chance to build a new career and give them an income while they learn new skills in the workplace. Employers can be reluctant to take on older apprentices because of the higher costs. Labor's second chance career program will provide a \$30 000 apprenticeship guarantee for older workers seeking a fresh career start as an apprentice, removing the financial disincentive for employers to take on a mature aged apprentice. The \$15 million program will provide 500 apprenticeship guarantees for workers aged over 35.

The tourism, hospitality and arts industries are facing the peril of three winters. Many businesses rely on the increased summer trade to get through the lean winter period. With international flights suspended and many major events cancelled, this summer will be a challenge. Labor's plan will protect jobs in tourism, hospitality and the arts to get through to next summer. A \$5 million re-imagined events fund will support events and festivals to adapt to the changed environment brought about by COVID-19. This might mean operating events across multiple smaller sites, running smaller, more premium events or adapting the operation of festivals to ensure social distancing requirements can be adhered to. Labor will give confidence to our events sector from the Symphony Under the Stars to Festivale and Agfest by helping them cover higher insurance costs so these important events can proceed. Business Events Tasmania will be empowered with \$2 million to aggressively market and win conferences for Tasmania, to bring more people to our state and support our accommodation, events and hospitality venues.

At the start of November just over 30 per cent of Make Yourself At Home vouchers had been redeemed. Labor will redirect the funding allocated to unclaimed vouchers to a new round of vouchers for use in restaurants and other food and dining businesses.

Tourist and heritage rail can play an important role in our recovery, creating jobs and offering new attractions for visitors and locals alike. Labor will get tourist rail back on track by working with the Tasmanian Association of Tourist Railways to provide \$500 000 to fund the public liability insurance over four years.

With the closure of visitor information centres around the state it is more important than ever that businesses have a digital offering. Labor will put an additional \$100 000 into the Digital Ready program to help tourism and hospitality businesses build an online presence. Improving infrastructure at our parks and our other natural attractions is essential if Tasmania is to encourage visitors to stay longer, spend more and visit more in our regions. Labor will invest \$20 million in infrastructure upgrades in parks and reserves which will futureproof our natural icons and support up to 200 jobs.

Labor's plan will put government spending to work to create jobs. We will further strengthen the Government's approach to buying locally. The former secretary of Treasury and the current chair of the recovery council, Don Challen, told a recent parliamentary inquiry that governments have been too conservative in their approach to buying locally. Buying locally has to be more than a campaign slogan. It must be the rule and not the exception.

Under the Liberals' policy any company is classified as Tasmanian if they have an office in the state. That means that companies like IBM are listed as Tasmanian. A Labor government would strengthen the definition of a Tasmanian business to ensure it captures truly local

business and we would insure that when interstate and international companies claim for using local content, those claims are independently verified.

We will mandate that on government-funded infrastructure projects one in five workers will be an apprentice or trainee. Public works, civil construction and GBEs will need to comply with this requirement so that when public money is spent we are also training the workforce of the future.

Labor will support job opportunities for Tasmanians living with disability by mandating that government agencies spend 2 per cent of their supplies and consumables budgets with Australian disability enterprises.

The state Government has huge buying power and the ability to help new markets for growth industries such as recycling and IT. Labor will work with our industry advisory councils to identify areas where government procurement requirements are outdated and should be modified to better support innovation and new markets in local industries. For example, the innovative use of recycled materials such as tyres, plastics and glass in road building is possible under spending guidelines in some local Government areas but not in road-building projects overseen by the Department of State Growth.

Labor's number-one priority is creating jobs but it is also important that we create good jobs. This means creating secure full-time employment that provides Tasmanians with sick leave, annual leave and a level of security that enables them to do things such as purchase a home. There are currently fewer Tasmanians employed full time than 15 years ago, despite the fact that Tasmania's population has increased by 40 000 people in that time. There are fewer men employed full time than when the ABS began keeping records in 1978.

Labor will lead by example by identifying opportunities to convert long-term contract positions in the public service to permanent jobs, including full-time positions where appropriate. We will ask the Auditor-General to review areas where overtime is used to cover insufficient staffing levels and where additional permanent employment would create jobs, reduce pressure on staff, help properly staff rosters and ultimately save money. Nowhere is this more important than in Health, which has an overreliance on locums, agency nurses and contract positions. Permanent jobs in Health result in genuine continuity of care and that leads to better health outcomes for all Tasmanians.

The Liberal Party nationally has built its brand on reckless scare campaigns that present climate change action as a choice between jobs and the environment. The truth is that responding to climate change will protect the environment, strengthen communities and create employment. Labor will invest \$15 million in a climate action workforce. The plan will support projects that protect communities from the effects of a changing climate, support the revegetation of landscapes, eradicate weeds, save endangered species and protect valuable native habitats.

The jobs of the future will be different from today and an area where there will be substantial growth is in managing our environment. Labor will make sure that Tasmania is on the front foot to not only support job seekers but to make sure that our community can be proud of our efforts as a global leader in addressing climate change. Labor's climate action workforce will create 200 jobs, predominantly in our regions.



Labor has a proud record of investing in strategic infrastructure that has helped to shape our economy for decades. During our last term in office, Labor unlocked today's high-value agriculture by establishing a statewide network of irrigation schemes. We launched Tasmania as a major tourism destination by purchasing the *Spirit of Tasmania* vessels which also support time-sensitive freight. We delivered ongoing strength in manufacturing and industry through the gas pipeline, especially in northern Tasmania, and established Tasmania as a renewable energy leader through Basslink and wind farms such as Musselroe and Woolnorth. The current Liberal Government has no similar vision for the future of Tasmania's economy. Their approach to infrastructure is piecemeal, haphazard and is driven by election cycles.

As an island state, Tasmania's sea highway is the most important highway we have. It supports our major export businesses in mining, forestry and agriculture and brings high-value driving tourists to Tasmania. A lack of investment in ports and other key infrastructure by the Liberal Government is constraining export businesses and putting a handbrake on growth. Tasmania's island status was central to keeping us safe from COVID-19 and Labor believes it should also be the centrepiece of our economic recovery. Labor's sea highway plan will increase port capacity to allow for growth in key Tasmanian industries, drive down costs for exporters and get the delivery of the *Spirit of Tasmania* replacement ships back on track.

Labor will invest \$80 million to upgrade the Port of Burnie to accommodate larger vessels, improve bulk storage capacity and further improve ship-loading efficiency. This investment will also reduce congestion and delays for competing users of the port and create efficiencies to put downward pressure on the price of exports across Bass Strait.

A total of \$60 million will enhance the port at Devonport with facilities to accommodate the new *Spirit of Tasmania* vessels and the 160 000 additional passengers they will bring to the state each year. Berthing facilities for transport and logistics providers will be expanded, the port's commercial fishing facilities will be enhanced and the opportunity will be created for developments of a marina and facilities for public events. Labor will invest \$10 million in the Bell Bay port to create multiple berths for forestry and mining exports, increase the port's fuel storage capacity, replace old fuel pipelines and establish a new transport and wash-down system for forestry exports.

Critically, Labor will get the \$850 million purchase of two new Bass Strait ferries back on track. There has never been a more important time to add more capacity to Bass Strait. New ships with greater capacity will support the growth of businesses in the tourism sector with associated job creation. An increased capacity will also unlock growth in key industry sectors, such as aquaculture and agriculture.

Last year I announced Labor's Housing Works policy which will fast-track the building of 490 more affordable homes over and above the properties planned under the Government's Affordable Housing Action Plan. The intensive construction program will create 550 more jobs for Tasmanians, including 75 apprenticeships, but building new houses is only part of the picture.

There is currently a \$60 million maintenance backlog in community housing and problems such as rising damp, mould and poor insulation have made some of these houses unliveable. Beginning to address this backlog will not only help to ensure that all Tasmanians are living in safe, healthy and warm homes, but will provide a massive shot in the arm for businesses and workers in our building and construction industries. Labor will immediately

invest \$17.5 million to help clear the maintenance backlog. This will fund \$10 million of general maintenance, the installation of 1000 heat pumps targeted at homes occupied by people aged over 55, and \$2.5 million for energy efficiency upgrades, saving approximately 2000 tenants up to \$400 each year off their power bill.

We cannot fast-forward to the past; we must have our eyes firmly on the future. Labor's jobs plan is grounded in the fundamental belief that creating jobs requires a multidimensional approach delivered in partnership with the private sector. It is ambitious and forward-looking but importantly it is achievable.

Last week's Budget fell short of what is needed in this moment. We saw the Premier attempting to pick up the broken pieces of the economy that existed before the pandemic and hastily sticky-tape them back together. Peter Gutwein had promised to build Tasmania out of recession but his Government has shown it is incapable of building anything. He is doing the same thing he has always done and expecting to get a different result. Infrastructure projects will not create jobs if they never get off the ground. Measuring our recovery based on the numbers of bridges built and roads mended actually misses the point. This Budget should be judged on how well it supports people.

Peter Gutwein is taking Tasmania into record levels of debt that will take generations to pay off, and what do we have to show for it? The Tasmanian Government's Budget is not a plan for jobs. It is a plan for unemployment. Despite record debt, unemployment will remain above 8 per cent for at least the next two years. This Budget locks in two years of recession. Promises made at the last election to open more hospital beds have been pushed past the next election, while a brand-new hospital building in Hobart sits largely empty. Funding for emergency accommodation is needed right now but it will not be delivered until the end of the forward Estimates. The skills and training system is broken and yet the only additional spending in skills runs out after two years. The Premier's latest Budget is based on an old measure of success. It was a model that failed too many people before the pandemic and it will fail people now. We must lift our ambition.

The thing that unites all Tasmanians is our pride in this island. We are proud of our communities and our excellence in agriculture and tourism, of our renewable energy advantage, and of how safe we feel surrounded by that great big moat. The Tasmanian brand has grown and earned a global reputation that is the envy of many. We have a responsibility as stewards of this brand and this place to protect and enhance it. We also have a responsibility to make sure that all Tasmanians gain the benefits of living on this island, whether they are newly arrived to our state or their families have been here for hundreds of generations. Building a strong community and society is advanced when people have economic security and the dignity of a good job. Tasmanians deserve better than the failed Liberal experiment and its singular focus on infrastructure, and Tasmanians deserve better than the opponents of progress, the Greens, and their divisive politics which too frequently leaves people behind, especially working people.

I said at the start of my speech that COVID-19 has forced all of us to reflect on what is truly important. For the Labor Party the pandemic has served as a reminder of why governments exist. They are there to provide essential services, to coordinate emergency responses, to support the most vulnerable in our community and to step in when markets and businesses fail. They are there to not only imagine what a better and fairer state could look like, but to help forge it.

My Labor team is working hard across the state every day. We are all passionate about Tasmania and we are driven to make sure that we use our time in Parliament to make a positive impact. I am optimistic about Tasmania's future but I am also realistic about the magnitude of the challenges that we have ahead of us. Out of the chaos of COVID-19, there is opportunity. We cannot go backwards to reclaim what we had. We must go forward to rebuild something better. Labor has a plan to create 35 000 jobs for Tasmanians. We will stimulate our economy and generate more revenue for our state. Labor's plan will build a better and fairer Tasmania.

I seek leave to table Labor's plan for jobs, Working for Tasmania.

**Leave granted.**

[12.35 p.m.]

**Mr ROCKLIFF** (Braddon - Deputy Premier) - Madam Deputy Speaker, there is no denying that 2020 has been a year like no other. COVID-19 has presented many challenges we have never had to deal with before and we have faced them together.

The 2020-21 Budget is a budget for our times. It is a budget that will rebuild a stronger Tasmania, but what is important is how we do that. This is a budget about jobs, confidence and the community. We will rebuild a stronger Tasmania by supporting Tasmanians. This is a budget that is also built on compassion. Through COVID-19 we have seen some Tasmanians seeking help for their mental health and wellbeing for the very first time and we want all Tasmanians to access support when it is needed. In response to COVID-19 our Government announced \$4 million to support individuals experiencing mental health and alcohol and drug difficulties, including Tasmanian Lifeline. This new helpline also includes a reach-out service which is able to focus in specific regions or areas of need based on inquiries received.

This Budget includes an additional \$16 million investment to deliver integrated mental health and alcohol and other drugs services for the entire community. We recognise that mental health is a critical area of government service delivery and the 2020-21 Budget provides funding for a range of services designed to increase access and ensure no-one falls through any gaps. We are expanding our adult community mental health teams in the north and the north-west because decreasing reliance on acute inpatient services and emergency departments by providing treatment in the community is a key priority. We are also funding permanent lived experience positions, because establishing a peer workforce in Tasmania's public mental health services is a key feature of revised models of care currently being developed and implemented.

We are starting work straightaway to fund and implement phase 1 of the recommendations of the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services review to ensure that young Tasmanians can receive the best possible mental health care. Phase 1 includes a new senior management team to facilitate a single unified CAMHS, a dedicated service for children in out-of-home care, a new youth early intervention service and increasing the capacity of the Perinatal and Infant Mental Health Service to provide coverage to the north and the north-west. These are crucial reforms which will ensure our young people get the support they need when they need it. We have accepted all the recommendations as part of a three-stage response.

Improving the alcohol and other drugs sector to better meet the needs of Tasmanians is a focus area of the Wellbeing aspect of my portfolio. I was very pleased last week to release the reform agenda for the alcohol and other drugs sector in Tasmania. This 10-year framework

that is supported by \$4.9 million over two years will guide the sector to ensure a more integrated and coordinated service.

We recognise that the challenges of COVID-19 have created uncertainty and anxiety and we know that alcohol and other drugs services are seeing a demand. Because of this we have prioritised funding to build on existing investments and develop new approaches that will better help to address these needs in our communities. These include trialling a detox in the home program, a drug and alcohol emergency department intervention team as well as employing 10 additional staff in the Government's Alcohol and Drug Service.

We are also providing funding to the sector's peak body, the Alcohol, Tobacco and Other Drugs Council, to support a staff member. As part of our COVID-19 response, the ATDC will also receive funding for data collection so we can better understand any demand increases being experienced by services as a result of COVID-19. It is important to remember that this is a 10-year reform and the programs and scope of them will evolve as we continue to strive to meet the needs of both the Government and the community sector organisations working in the alcohol and other drugs sector.

The impetus for the reform agenda stems from rising drug concerns in the north-west dating back some years now. That is my electorate and I take these matters very seriously. We know we can do better and we know there is a lot to do.

We know it is also vital to ensure services on the ground can operate. That is why we are providing almost \$2 million for 30 community-based alcohol and drug rehabilitation beds this year.

On top of this is our continued commitment to the Salvation Army's Bridge program at Ulverstone, which will receive \$1.6 million over two years for alcohol and drug rehabilitation beds. The Government also remains committed to our preventative health measures through the Healthy Tasmania five-year strategic plan with ongoing funding of \$1.1 million committed in the forward Estimates.

As part of the plan we have also allocated \$3.4 million for the community grants and another \$1.3 million in the forward Estimates. Work on the next iteration of the plan is underway and we look forward to building on it with what we have learnt over the past five years for the health benefit of all Tasmanians. We will also continue to offer Healthy Tasmania fund grants to communities around the state. It is important to also recognise that preventative health is a priority shared across Government.

We know there is no greater way to develop and support our community than investing in the education of our young people. Every child is extraordinary and deserves a quality education. Our Government is focused on recognising and responding to learners' individual needs so they can reach their full potential. The 2020-21 Budget delivers a record \$7.5 billion over the forward Estimates for education. This funding represents a vital investment in our young people and their future. The wellbeing of our children and young people is critical and we have established a solid foundation to allow for the continuous development of our multifaceted approach to support student mental health and wellbeing.

Unfortunately, there is no one simple solution to this issue. It is complex and requires a range of supports. Our investment of \$14 million to increase support for young people

impacted by trauma, emotional and behavioural challenges will go a long way. Our trauma initiative is an important part of our response to mental health and wellbeing that is complemented by other initiatives such as increased numbers of professional support staff, including school health nurses, student voice through the Student Wellbeing Survey, Safe Homes, Safe Families, Speak up Stay Chatty program, student wellbeing teams in every school and cross-agency support team.

These programs are coordinated by the Child and Student Wellbeing unit to ensure this holistic approach is targeted, meaningful and responsible and responsive. That unit does an exceptional job. There is compelling evidence that investing and learning in the early years sets children up for the brightest possible future. Our Working Together initiative will cater for 120 children next year and is generating excellent outcomes and opportunities for eligible three-year olds to participate in free quality education.

We remain committed to our schools being inclusive and providing quality learning opportunities for all learners. Our investment of \$53 million over the forward Estimates will strengthen and expand the educational adjustments model for students with a disability. This new innovative funding model provides students with disability individualised learning programs that meet their needs. Recognising the importance of children and young people having greater access to material basics to support their learning, the Government is expanding the Student Assistance Scheme which waives the cost of Tasmanian Government levies for eligible students.

This expansion will see upwards of 9000 additional students become eligible for the Student Assistance Scheme. The value of vocational education and training to Tasmania has been highlighted in the PESRAC report. Our schools are committed to improving engagement and participation of students in years 9 to 12 in order to build a job-ready generation. To this end we are allocating \$6.6 million to provide flexible learning pathways to and from years 9 to 12 with a focus on school-based apprenticeships.

We are continuing to employ additional staff in government schools in line with our commitment for 358 more staff by the end of 2024. We fully appreciate the critical role of skilled teachers in achieving student success. To this end we are funding 35 additional quality teaching coaches. We will also provide six new lead coaches for 2021 who will work across schools and support the upcoming release of the numeracy framework. A further 29 coaches in schools will commence in 2022.

This Budget includes \$204 million in capital works for education, including new builds such as Brighton High School and Legana which are on track and our six new Child and Family Learning Centres, four of which have been fast tracked.

Our focus on engagement and wellbeing as a key aspect of the Budget ensures that we are supporting the PESRAC recommendations of accelerating existing strategies to deliver improved educational opportunities that meet individual student needs and provide clear pathways to jobs and support our most vulnerable students across all sectors.

There has never been a more important time to invest in TAFE and in Tasmania's vocational education and training system. I am proud that this Budget includes \$43 million to boost jobs for apprentices, trainees and youth employees in Tasmania. As the Treasurer has indicated, over the forward Estimates we expect the investments we have announced will

support around 25 000 jobs, so ensuring we have the training capacity and the infrastructure to meet these workforce needs is a key priority. The joint federal and state JobTrainer program will deliver \$21 million of no-cost training to school leavers, youth and the unemployed. It is exactly what Tasmania needs and provides easy access to training for those who have been most impacted by COVID-19.

JobTrainer will see up to 7000 no-cost training places made available across the next 12 months in key industry areas such as building and construction, nursing, aged care, disability, aquaculture, tourism, hospitality and manufacturing. JobTrainer does not restrict the free training to TAFE. Private training providers play a vital role in delivering vocational training and they are an integral part of this program. It is a fantastic program. I have some endorsements from those within the construction industry. Julian Proud, the construction manager at Hansen Yuncken, said -

JobTrainer is a great initiative from the state and federal governments to bring new entrants to the building and construction industry. Providing this level of free-training insight into the workplace is very attractive to our sector and we will support the next round of job-ready apprentices and trainees.

As I mentioned this morning, Kent Wyllie, the general manager of Tasmanian Minerals, Manufacturing and Energy Council Tasmania (TMEC), said -

TMEC supports initiatives to provide agile and responsive industry-led training delivered by both public and private training providers. We feel this is integral to ensuring that training successfully meets both current and the future workforce needs and addresses future job prospects for the Tasmanian industry, employers and learners.

Our skills response to COVID-19 has also included \$6 million for the Rapid Response Skills Initiative. The Rapid Response Skills Initiative has provided a safety net for displaced workers, with over 525 Tasmanians already approved for training. In addition, 344 job seekers have registered with the skills matching service that links job seekers with employers.

The Budget also includes an extension of the Targeted Apprentice and Trainee Grants for Small Business. An additional \$10.8 million will support about an additional 2000 places and now includes any small business which employs an apprentice or trainee of any age until the 30 June 2022.

I am equally proud of our support for TasTAFE - a fine institution and fine public training provider. Once again, we are investing 80 per cent of all the training funds in our public provider. We are continuing to invest in more teachers for TAFE, with \$2 million in this Budget for more teachers in aged care, plumbing, electrotechnology and nursing. This builds on our commitment of \$2.9 million from last year's budget. Our teacher investment is evidence-driven, it is consistent and we are investing continually and where it is needed.

We know that TAFE teacher shortages are not driven by lack of funding or investment. All regional TAFEs face the same teacher challenges when the local economy is firing ahead.

We are continuing our strong infrastructure investment in this Budget for TAFE with an additional \$7 million to the Energy, Trades and Water Centre of Excellence in Clarence, to

bring the total investment to a very welcome \$21 million for what will be a fantastic training site for our trainees of the future and that has been very largely endorsed by industry. I welcome industry and the Master Plumbers Association of Tasmania for their work and collaboration over the last few years. We are also investing in TasTAFE's IT infrastructure.

As we deliver significant investment in post-school education, we are very aware of the new learners and the need for support to lift Tasmania's participation rate. I am very pleased that this budget includes \$4.4 million for Tasmania's Adult Learning Strategy. It will help those who are in the very first steps of considering entering or re-entering the workforce and guide their pathway choices.

This is a budget built on compassion and it certainly is. It has a strong focus on our communities and will support Tasmania's need to recover and rebuild. The 2020-21 Budget will provide a helping hand for those in need with an additional \$1.6 million for emergency food relief providers to continue to support Tasmanians impacted by COVID-19. This includes funding for Loaves and Fishes and Foodbank Tasmania to respond to the significant demand for the delivery of produce hampers and ready-to-eat meals.

Madam Speaker, volunteers are the backbone of our communities, as you very well appreciate. Without them, many events, services and supports simply would not be available. The Budget includes an additional \$351 000 for Volunteering Tasmania to support the reengagement of volunteers across Tasmania to ensure that the community programs, services and activities are viable.

I am also pleased we have been able to continue to support migrant communities, with \$780 000 committed in this budget to our multicultural policy and action plan. This funding will support migrants to obtain work and find a pathway to employment through education and training. Ensuring all Tasmanians have the opportunity to lead a full and rewarding life is a key principle that drives so much of what we do.

Our Government is a strong supporter of the NDIS. It is transforming lives by providing funding to eligible people with disability which can provide support tailored to their individual needs. In Tasmania, the NDIS is now supporting more people with disability than ever before, with over 9000 participants and over 250 children receiving support through the ECEI approach. Our Government will continue to advocate strongly on behalf of Tasmanians with disability and the service providers that support them to ensure that the NDIS delivers the best possible outcomes for Tasmanians.

Tasmania has what the world wants and prior to the COVID-19 pandemic our goods were increasingly in demand throughout Asia and further afield, and our reputation for high-quality products continued to grow. We are committed to helping our producers, exporters and manufacturers adjust to the new global business climate and have announced an additional \$2.65 million for trade development and the implementation of the Interim Trade Action Plan that I released in July.

With our Tasmania's international exports of goods and services worth in excess of \$5 billion last financial year, making up nearly 16 per cent of our gross state product and 20 per cent of our total Tasmanian workforce in trade related areas, it is not hard to see the value and the relevance of our trade now and into the future.

While only marginal, Tasmanian goods exports increased by 1.2 per cent in 2019-20 compared with the previous year, a significant achievement given this period included four to five months of the global pandemic. In particular, food and agribusiness exports increased by approximately 25 per cent, as the global demand for Tasmania's premium products increases. Red meat exports increased \$38 million, up 13 per cent; seafood exports increased \$82 million, up 27 per cent; dairy exports increased \$12 million, up 8 per cent; fruit and vegetable exports increased by \$4 million, up 5 per cent; and animal and vegetable-based products were up \$16 million, or 21 per cent, largely based around increased exports of prepared animal fodder. Many of these fine products are produced in my electorate of Bradman, and I am very proud to say that.

The Interim Trade Action Plan includes 41 initiatives that will immediately support exporters and deliver trade outcomes over the coming years, including the development of an Asian marketing engagement plan, the appointment of three international business development managers and a revised accelerating trade grant program. I thank all those people I have engaged with over the last few months across most industry sectors, the ICT sector more recently on Monday in terms of our Interim Trade Action Plan, and listening and working with all individuals and our exporters across Tasmania. That has been a very valuable engagement indeed.

Later this week I will launch the new Advanced Manufacturing Action Plan with an initial budget commitment of \$400 000. In 2016, the first Advanced Manufacturing Action Plan was released and a recent review of the plan demonstrated its success, including \$51 million in increased sales, private investment of \$36.7 million, a return of \$3.81 invested for every dollar of grant funding and the creation of 435 jobs for Tasmanians through directly supported projects and programs.

Following the release of the Tasmanian Defence Industry Strategy 2020-23, the sector has been going from strength to strength, and in June I launched the Tasmanian Defence Industry Directory. The directory features over 30 Tasmanian organisations either participating in the defence sector already or those wishing to pursue those opportunities. I am delighted to say that over half of the businesses in the directory are already supplying to defence contracts either in Australia or overseas, including Delta Hydraulics, Direct Edge and Penguin Composites, all based on the north-west coast, I am very proud to say.

The directory has been further complemented by the release of the Tasmanian Maritime Prospectus in September and a national promotional campaign promoting our world-leading defence and maritime industries. The success of these initiatives has already come to fruition, with several key stakeholders already visiting our state to see firsthand the skill and innovation in the sector. It was through that adversity we experienced, first on the north-west coast as a result of Caterpillar transitioning and centralising their operations to Thailand back in 2015. As a result of that, the Government was very proactive. We set up the Caterpillar Transition Taskforce, of which Ms Dow was a member or participated in for some time, as well as many other key stakeholders. We really highlighted the skills, ingenuity and innovation of our businesses on the north-west coast and right across Tasmania in the advanced manufacturing sector and particularly the skill of the employees themselves, and it is something that we can be very proud of and continue to build on into the future.

There are very exciting opportunities, whether we are producing quality advanced manufactured products for the defence sector, the maritime sector or more broadly, or our



quality cherries, our red meat, our beverages, we can do it in Tasmania, and that premium brand is evident as you travel across Tasmania and witness what people are doing across this wonderful state.

My electorate of Braddon was hard-hit by COVID-19, and while there was naturally a lot of worry and anxiety, and still is in many cases, there was also a strong sense in the community of 'we are all in this together' and rallying to support those most vulnerable, and the north-west coast demonstrated that in spades. This is what we are doing with this State Budget; rallying to support those Tasmanians who need our assistance. The 2020-21 Budget provides jobs and provides confidence that there will be a better tomorrow. It supports our communities and together we can and will build a stronger Tasmania.

**Sitting suspended from 1p.m. to 2.30 p.m.**

## **APPROPRIATION BILL (No. 1) 2020 (No. 46)**

### **Second Reading**

**Resumed from above.**

[2.30 p.m.]

**Mr O'BYRNE** (Franklin) - Madam Speaker, Tasmania faces its biggest economic and social crisis since the Second World War. Across the globe, the COVID-19 pandemic has taken lives, destroyed jobs and pushed health and social protection systems to the limit. While our state has fared better than most parts of Australia and the world, we mourn the 13 Tasmanians who have died and we grieve for their families and friends.

We know the anguish and shock felt by the thousands of Tasmanians who have lost jobs and income, or who have seen their small business and livelihoods destroyed. We know the stress suffered by hundreds of businesses which have lost revenue, customers and confidence.

We must urgently rebuild. Our biggest priority must be jobs and unemployment, and there are two different paths. A Labor vision for an active government that has real partnerships with Tasmanian businesses directly invests in the economy to drive growth and create secure jobs, supports our disadvantaged regions, and leaves no-one behind.

A Labor government with a plan for jobs - or a lazy Liberal Government with a plan for record debt and near record unemployment. A Labor plan with ambition for Tasmania's economy and compassion for Tasmania's disadvantaged regions and people - or a Gutwein plan that believes Tasmania cannot be the equal of the nation on jobs and growth.

In the six years of Liberal Government before COVID-19, Tasmania did have some economic growth, but it was lower than in the early 1990s and the mid-2000s and our per capita GST was 20 per cent lower than the national average. By national standards we had low disposable incomes, low labour force participation, small population growth, fewer year 12 completions and university graduates and low life expectancy. As my colleague, Tasmanian Labor Leader Rebecca White, has already told the House, elective surgery waiting lists had blown out by 48 per cent, outpatient waiting lists by 55 per cent and public housing waiting lists by almost 70 per cent.

We also had an older population with greater dependence on Government benefits than the rest of Australia, and a pattern of long-term social and regional disadvantage. The so-called Gutwein golden age of the pre-COVID era wasted the fruits of growth and left thousands of Tasmanians behind.

On the eve of the COVID-19 crisis the Tasmanian economy was already slowing. Growth rates for exports, business investment and consumption were weak. According to the Australian Bureau of Statistics, total Tasmanian employment fell by over 3500 over 2018-19 and full time employment was only 155 000, a fall of 13 000 from the state's pre-GFC peak. Mainland Australia saw full time employment rise by 17 per cent over the same period, while Tasmania's fell by 7.7 per cent.

Last year's Budget lacked vision and failed to see emerging head winds for Tasmania's economic and employment growth. It left the state ill-prepared for the pandemic with weak growth, poor service delivery, woeful delays in infrastructure projects, an ongoing health crisis and failure to meet social housing targets. Above all, the government showed policy complacency with no efforts to diversify the economy and no appetite to pursue micro-economic reform.

Tasmania has been hit hard by the pandemic, which has cut a swathe through our businesses, disrupted our export and trade exposed industries and thrown thousands out of work. Over the last 12 months the economy shrank by at least 0.5 per cent, the biggest decline in 20 years, confirming we are in an extended recession.

Our 7.6 per cent unemployment rate is the second highest in the nation and our youth unemployment is worse than any other state. We have lost more than 12 500 payroll jobs since the pandemic began in mid-March, a loss of 4.8 per cent compared to a much lower national average of 4.4 per cent. There have been some much bigger losses in some sectors, with 16.6 per cent in agriculture, forestry and fishing, 8.8 per cent in accommodation and food services, 11.1 per cent in mining, and 10.9 per cent in arts and recreation.

Although there has been a gradual recovery from the peak job losses earlier in the year, recent data shows we cannot be complacent. During a fortnight in mid-October, 6100 payroll jobs were lost, a decline of 2 per cent and a much bigger loss than the national average of 1.6 per cent. Wages paid to Tasmanian workers have declined by 4.2 per cent over the last four weeks alone.

Labor does not blame the Gutwein Government for the recession or the current unemployment crisis. We gave bipartisan support to public health and economic measures, designed to save lives and to prevent an even bigger economic calamity. However, we will hold the Government to account on plans to get Tasmania out of recession as the pandemic crisis recedes, because behind every unemployment statistic is a real worker with bills to pay and family to support.

We need to remember that it is easy to fall into recession but hard to find a path to sustain a recovery. This is particularly so for Tasmania. After the recessions of the 1980s, 1990s and the global financial crisis, Tasmania's employment recovery took several years longer than the nation as a whole. The Tasmanian people want and deserve bold action. A crisis unprecedented in living memory requires an unprecedented response.

The Budget before the House does not rise to the challenge facing Tasmania. It is a plan for unemployment and a plan for a jobless recovery. The Premier says he will create and support 25 000 new jobs but the budget has unemployment climbing to 8.5 per cent in the coming year and remaining at 8.25 per cent by the middle of 2022. These are likely to be the highest unemployment rates in Australia and they are much higher than the national forecasts of 7.25 per cent unemployment for the coming year and 6.5 per cent in 2022. Incredibly, this Budget predicts that employment will fall 2.75 per cent over the next two years, a loss of nearly 7000 jobs. While Tasmanian job numbers will be falling, national job numbers are forecast to rise by 2.75 per cent.

The Budget predicts that the labour participation rate will fall from 60.5 per cent in the coming year to 59.5 per cent in the following year. Rather than giving hope and confidence to people wanting jobs, the Government is simply accepting that thousands of people will stop looking for work altogether. Tasmania will have two consecutive years of recession with a forecast reduction in economic growth of 1.5 per cent in 2021 following last year's contraction of 0.5 per cent. While economic growth of 3.75 per cent is forecast for 2021-22 this growth rate remains well below the national forecast of 4.25 per cent.

This Budget lacks ambition. The Premier does not believe that Tasmania can be the equal of the nation on economic growth and unemployment. The Government has so little ambition that it has not bothered to provide forecast for employment and economic growth in the last two years of the Budget Estimates. It will not even try to tell the public when unemployment will come down. What an insult to this parliament and to the Tasmanian people. How can anyone have confidence in the revenue and expenditure projections for 2023 and 2024 when the Government refuses to tell us the underlying economic conditions that it expects in these years? Other governments do not hold back this budget information. Why should we not conclude that at least half of the Budget is built on foundations of sand? Imagine the uproar from the Liberal benches if the roles were reversed and Labor refused to provide these forecasts. After years of lecturing our side of the House about financial rigour, Peter Gutwein has shredded his own budget management credibility.

Labor welcomes the Premier's belated recognition that the economic crisis requires the use of fiscal policy, including a bigger debt and some deficit spending to support businesses and drive unemployment. This is the advice of the AMF and many central banks, including Australia's own Reserve Bank. This is precisely what the state Labor government did during the GFC.

While the Budget's projected net debt of \$4.38 billion by 2023-24 is a record, it is manageable at 14 per cent of GSP. We are sceptical of the projected final surplus of \$17 million. It is not believable because there are no economic forecasts for the final two years of the budget cycle. Despite having no forecasts, we are asked to believe that growth in total budget revenues will be 8.2 per cent in the final two years, or 32 per cent more than in the first two years. We are asked to believe that growth in expenses will only be 3.3 per cent in the final two years, or 35 per cent less than in the first two years.

We also question the wisdom of producing a small cosmetic and probably fictitious surplus at the expense of actively supporting jobs and growth.

Labor supports the budget initiatives for business such as extending temporary payroll tax rebates, the small business grants, and other short-term employment subsidies and

incentives. However, there is a need for more direct business and employment support measures at this time of the crisis, even if this means a small final budget deficit. Mainstream economists support this as a sensible budget policy in current circumstances. Because a small budget deficit is manageable, Labor, like the Government, can rule out new taxes.

Labor believes that a properly designed infrastructure package can create and support 25 000 jobs, but this Government's infrastructure track record is woeful and its package a con. Last year the Government underspent its infrastructure budget by over \$200 million. No-one should believe the Premier when he says the infrastructure package will be delivered on time.

Late last, Moody's rating agency confirmed what we all know - the Gutwein Government will likely fail to meet its infrastructure targets. Of the 82 existing agency infrastructure projects set out in the budget, 44, or more than half, are already delayed with 24 by a year, 17 by two years and three by three years, a combined delay of 67 years. Fourteen of the existing road infrastructure projects are already delayed, with seven by a year, five by two years and two by three years, a combined delay of 23 years.

The Premier proudly highlighted six school infrastructure projects totalling \$138 million in his Budget speech. He forgot to mention that four of them - Brighton, Cosgrove, Sorell and Penguin - are already a year behind schedule. The success of the Budget's \$5 billion infrastructure program rests on the shoulders of Mr Ferguson who previously proved himself singularly incompetent as Health minister, a feat he has reproduced in the Infrastructure portfolio. He cannot deliver. In a case of life imitating art, the minister is straight out of central casting for *Utopia*. Addicted to announcements, re-announcing his announcements, he poses for the media in hard hat and high vis jacket next to vacant lots or crumbling buildings, but nothing actually happens. This is a minister who wasted nearly \$1 million on advice that a cross-city road tunnel was uneconomic, something that a construction worker and an engineering design student could have told him over a couple of beers.

The Budget has put all of its employment eggs in the infrastructure basket. It has no other plans. No plans for older unemployed workers, no plans for business and industry growth and no plan for ongoing skills and training; just record debt producing nearly record unemployment with little or nothing to show for Tasmania's investment.

I am proud to be part of Working for Tasmania, the fully costed Labor job's plan announced earlier today by my friend, Rebecca White, the Tasmanian Labor Leader. We have a plan that will create and support real jobs, a plan for 35 000 jobs, a plan that actually reduces unemployment.

Labor understands the power of an active government. Manageable debt and deficit will drive real growth directly supporting businesses and permanently investing in skills and training. We will directly fund job creation initiatives across all industry sectors with a particular focus on our neglected regions and on workers who are unemployed or disadvantaged in the labour market. Labor's \$55 million jobs and innovation fund will stimulate at least \$220 million of private investment and create 1600 direct jobs across all sectors, including manufacturing, mining, fishing, forestry and agriculture. It can help spur growth and innovation in specialist areas such as advanced manufacturing, IT, premium food, wine and spirits.

Our \$15 million second chance career scheme will give 500 older unemployed workers access to apprenticeships in well paid and respected trades and industry. We will spend \$55.3 million on housing works and maintenance to build 490 more houses than the Government, creating 550 jobs and helping to ease homelessness. Our \$15 million environmental jobs plan will create 200 new jobs focused on climate change, weed management and species protection.

Our tourism hospitality, arts and entertainment industries face an uncertain future and they need an active government to provide hope, confidence and support. Our \$33 million tourism and hospitality package will focus on reimagining and adapting the structure and size of our tourist-attracting events in the post COVID-19 period. It will provide support to see the industry through what it calls the three COVID-19 induced winters. We will help events and tourist businesses to move online and to cover rising insurance premiums.

Labor knows that many small and medium businesses may face insolvency next year when the current but temporary legal regime is withdrawn. Our \$18 million small business package will provide training and legal support to business owners. We will revitalise and upgrade retail and small business precincts in regional areas. Labor will deliver a real infrastructure plan by investing \$4.1 million in upgrading infrastructure design and project management capability in the Department of State Growth, we will stop the endless cycle of consultants' reports and phoney announcements, and we will inject a further \$150 million to upgrade the Devonport, Burnie and Bell Bay ports to help our exports get to market quickly and efficiently.

Our comparative advantage in high-quality agriculture will be boosted by a \$12 million centre of excellence in the north-west.

The Gutwein Budget fails on skills and careers. It provides only 10 temporary TAFE teachers for two years. We have heard what industries and communities need and we have acted. Labor has an ambitious \$98.8 million plan to rebuild and renew TAFE and to deliver career education and placement support. We will employ and train 80 new permanent TAFE teachers drawn directly from industry and retrain 80 existing TAFE teachers by placing them in the workplace under an innovative secondment scheme.

We will provide funding for the delivery of TAFE courses in regional and remote areas and guarantee 20 000 free TAFE places over four years in areas of skills shortages and need. We will underwrite career education in 50 schools across the state and connect regional jobseekers with work through a regional development association model.

Women entering trades and training will be helped with an extension of out-of-school-hours care in an additional 10 schools, and we will fund a task force to advise on barriers to women's employment in public and private employment.

Labor will use public sector procurement to support local businesses, boost the disability business sector and create 300 new jobs and 75 new apprenticeships. We will move to end the excessive use of casual and insecure work in the public sector, particularly in healthcare.

Labor's Working for Tasmania plan will deliver 25 000 infrastructure-driven jobs and a further 10 000 direct and indirect jobs with our targeted initiatives. Our plan rewards

businesses which invest and employ. It supports workers who want employment and new skills and it boosts our disadvantaged regions.

Our plan is fully costed. We will review our estimates and initiatives at the regular formal reporting intervals in the budget cycle and we will progressively release fully costed further initiatives, particularly in Health and Education, in the lead-up to the next election.

We are ready for, and Tasmania desperately needs, a Rebecca White Labor government, a government which turbocharges growth and employment and which leaves no region or individual behind. That is the Labor way. I know this Labor way to be true. My father was a tradie painter in a public hospital. He had a secure job that ensured our family had a roof over our head and food on the table. In his work, my dad always trained an apprentice. Working hand-in-hand with the TAFE system he trained many apprentices, with most of those apprentices moving into the private sector to start small businesses and build a better future for themselves and their families.

Providing public sector job security and using training as a pathway to secure jobs and economic security has always been a proven method to improve people's lives and is based on the strong tradition of Labor. As a former leader of the union that represented thousands of low paid workers, I know the benefit of what a secure job does, and what that does for the lives of those that rely on them.

A Rebecca White Labor team will be a government of ambition and compassion, ambition to make Tasmania the equal of the nation and compassion to make sure all Tasmanians share in the fruits of growth.

Madam Speaker, I commend the Labor alternative to the House.

[2.55 p.m.]

**Ms ARCHER** (Clark - Minister for Justice) - Madam Speaker, I rise today, gratefully. I am not going to respond to people's contributions otherwise I will not get to talk about the initiatives in my portfolio areas and my electorate.

I want to make some observations at the outset that events funding is not Arts funding. I cannot believe that the Opposition has not funded a thing for the Arts when Ms Butler constantly comes in here and has a crack at me. Also, building and construction and training and skills are different portfolios. There is nothing in there from Labor on Heritage or on Justice and Corrections. I cannot believe that of all six of my portfolios, my shadows did not attend the meeting on this or failed to lobby for any funding support, or they just embraced -

**Ms Standen** - What have you done for Heritage?

**Ms ARCHER** - I will get to those points, Ms Standen, because clearly you do not understand the portfolio if you think that I have done nothing in the area of Heritage.

The 2020-21 State Budget is about jobs, confidence and the community. It is about investing in Tasmanians, ensuring the settings are right to get people back into work and businesses thriving post-COVID-19 so we can all enjoy the benefits a thriving economy can provide. This Budget delivers for Tasmania, for Tasmanians, for the people of Clark being my electorate, and for my portfolios of Attorney-General, Justice, Corrections, Building and Constructions, the Arts and Heritage.

It is about how we will recover from the impacts of the global COVID-19 pandemic, reinvigorate our economy and rebuild a stronger Tasmania. As we recover from COVID-19 there will always be uncertainty but with confidence and cautious optimism returning, it is how we will respond that matters. Our Government has rebuilt Tasmania before and we will do it again, as the Premier has said. We must support each other and work together to rebuild our beautiful state. My colleagues on this side of the House certainly embrace that principle.

Turning to the portfolio areas I hold, first in relation to Attorney-General, Justice and Corrections, we are improving access to justice and supporting victims. I have said that on a number of occasions in this House because every single law reform I have brought into this House has had that front and centre. It has been a key focus of mine since taking on these essential portfolios to improve access to justice, to support our victims and, in the case of our Corrections system, rehabilitate and reintegrate our offenders back into our community so that they are no longer a threat to society.

Our Government is committed to delivering a more efficient and effective justice system for all Tasmanians. We are continuing to build on our extensive law reform agenda to ensure all Tasmanians have fair and affordable access to justice.

Given the critical role the legal assistance sector plays in supporting Tasmanians in need, we are providing \$2.6 million over four years to help the sector support more Tasmanians, building on the \$614 000 we provided the sector earlier in the year. This funding will provide much-needed certainty and maintain core service levels under the Australian Government National Legal Assistance Partnership 2020-25.

This year's State Budget also commits \$2.3 million over four years to Tasmanian Legal Aid's - as they are now known - serious cases fund to support its work in reducing the backlog of complex criminal cases before the Supreme Court. I have said before that there is no one silver bullet to our backlog cases or the increase as a result of COVID-19, but there is now a suite of packages to address this, and not least of all the reforms I have taken through this House this year to reduce court backlogs, particularly in the Magistrates Court and Supreme Court.

Our Government is also bolstering the Director of Public Prosecutions' recurrent budget by \$750 000 a year, which is \$3 million over four years. This is in addition to the \$2.7 million we provided to the DPP over four years in the 2019-20 state budget.

I am also pleased to announce that \$1.8 million over two years is being committed for videoconferencing and recording equipment for our courts. This capital funding will provide new or replacement videoconferencing and recording equipment in Tasmania's Magistrates and Supreme Court facilities as well as the Tasmania Prison Service. New fixed videoconferencing equipment will be installed in the Magistrate's Court, and the Supreme Court's existing video-capable courtrooms will be upgraded.

Additional videoconferencing facilities will also be provided at Risdon Prison. Learning from what we were able to achieve during the height of COVID-19, this technology will improve access to justice for Tasmanians and also reduce the need to transport prisoners and remandees to and from court where appropriate, for example, when full hearings are not required. We are getting on with the job of improving access to justice for all Tasmanians, and this is strongly reflected in the significant support being provided in this budget.

The Tasmanian Government has a plan to rebuild a stronger Tasmania with the budget investing more than \$214 million to build modern, inter-generational correctional and court infrastructure facilities to not only service future demand but also provide for successful rehabilitation of our prisoners. The Government is committing \$14 million over four years to meet increasing demand in the Tasmania Prison Service, catering for increased prisoner numbers and costs relating to staffing, hospital and transport requirements. A \$3.5 million per year investment will also support prisoner reintegration activities, education and therapeutic support services that support essential rehabilitation and reintegration programs. Again, a missed opportunity by Labor - no funding mentioned by them.

As part of this Budget, our Government is developing a modern, multi-disciplinary \$15 million court complex that will serve the Burnie community for future generations. As part of our COVID-19 pandemic response, \$5.9 million of that \$15 million investment will be brought forward enabling the project to progress as soon as possible. About 50 000 Tasmanians rely on access to the courts in Burnie each year alone. This project will benefit the judiciary, the staff and all court users by improving accessibility, administration, technology, transport, parking, and more.

This Budget also reinforces our commitment to building the new northern regional prison facility with \$111 million committed to complete stage 1 of the \$270 million project. This vital project for the region will support more than 1000 jobs and deliver an economic boost of \$500 million to the region.

Work is also progressing well at the new Southern Remand Centre, with this Budget committing \$79.9 million to the \$85 million facility which is scheduled to commence operation in late 2021. I am pleased to report that the Southern Remand Centre was able to continue throughout COVID-19, and I thank the builders for their work. It was a phenomenal effort. It will significantly increase the capacity of the prison system, providing more than 150 new beds and generating more than 130 jobs through the construction phase, with a further 50 ongoing jobs set to be created once the facility becomes operational. In addition, we have provided additional support to address the ongoing resourcing needs of the prison.

Shared facilities at the Risdon Prison including an expansion of the gatehouse, medical centre, visitor facility, prisoner processing area, and a new kitchen will be boosted by a \$9.3 million injection to help meet demand. That is in addition to the funding for the centre, with the budget committing \$79.9 million of the \$85 million required for that facility.

There is no doubt that shared facility is proceeding, despite the inaccuracies in one of Ms Haddad's contributions to this House, so I have taken some time to explain it is included in the Budget.

These investments in critical justice and correctional infrastructure will future-proof our facilities for many years to come, delivering on our promises to the Tasmanian community and unprecedented planning for future generations.

The Tasmanian Government is focused on working with all key pressure points in the justice system to ensure our community is a safe and fair one. This work includes investing in more police and correctional officers; investing in our judiciary and the courts; reforming our tribunals; investing in alternative dispute resolutions; and investing in the Director of Public Prosecutions and the legal assistance sector, that does an extraordinary job.



As Minister for Corrections, I am pleased to have outlined here today how the State Budget demonstrates our Government's continued commitment to community safety by investing in the operational capacity and infrastructure of our corrections system.

The funding in this Budget is targeted specifically to strengthen the correction system in Tasmania allowing it to better serve its purpose of redirecting the paths of those in our community who have strayed from the path of law and order that underpins our society. Prison populations across the country are trending upwards and Tasmania is not immune from this trend. Unfortunately, prisons will always be required for certain types of crimes and offenders, as sentenced by the courts. However, they also provide an opportunity to assist people gain skills ready for their release and reduce the likelihood of recidivism.

This Budget responds to this increasing demand by providing more funding for prison operations, as well as significant funding for prison infrastructure which will help to future-proof our corrections system. It will underpin the Tasmania Prison Service's ability to work effectively to ensure offenders are rehabilitated and reintegrated back into the community as productive and law-abiding citizens.

It is part of our long-term comprehensive plan which has an emphasis on community safety programs and rehabilitation. This funding continues to address the risks stemming from poor infrastructure decisions of the past and insufficient operational funding. It will allow the correction system to respond more flexibly to changing demand and will further support the successful implementation of the change program that is already well under way.

Again, I cannot believe Labor has the gall to come into this House and criticise us on corrections when their record is appalling, and there is nothing in their alternative budget.

**Opposition members** interjecting.

**Madam SPEAKER** - Order.

**Ms ARCHER** - There should be no criticism of the amount we have spent on infrastructure or on correctional officers because Labor cannot even muster up an extra dollar.

Turning to the Arts portfolio, arts and events are quite distinct although a lot of arts festivals are funded under events. I notice that Labor's plan has arts in the heading but then delivers nothing by way of new programs.

I am pleased to report that we have invested heavily with new additional funding. Creativity is fundamental to our Tasmanian way of life. The cultural and creative industries are integral to the story of Tasmania. The 2020-21 State Budget confirms our Government's strong support for our cultural and creative industries by providing an additional \$4 million funding for the arts. This is significant additional funding for the arts. It includes \$2.5 million over two years for an Arts and Cultural Support Fund to support artists and arts organisations. This funding is in addition to our Events Package providing support to our events organisers. This fund is specifically for artists, and arts organisations, who have not been able to earn the income they had planned due to cancelled engagements and terminated contracts through the COVID-19 period and to produce new work for new markets.

It also includes \$1 million over two years to support a brand-new program of community arts and cultural development, to deliver long-term improvements in social health and wellbeing through partnerships that address health, disability, justice and education priorities between the arts and community sectors. I could not be prouder of this new fund.

An additional \$500 000 over two years will go into Screen Tasmania's Screen Innovation Fund to continue to drive the production of strategically important film and television projects in Tasmania, by leveraging investment from outside Tasmania. That is in addition to arts funding that Screen Tasmania already receives for all its programs. This is new, additional funding totalling \$4 million.

I understand the importance of Tasmania's vibrant cultural and creative sector, and it was my pleasure on Friday to launch the Cultural and Creative Industries Recovery Strategy 2020 and Beyond. Our Government remains committed to our cultural economy. We recognise that a productive cultural and creative sector provides both economic and social value to the community by enhancing lifestyles and creating opportunities - now more than ever before.

Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic the cultural and creative industries was one of the fastest growing employment sectors in Tasmania. Our Cultural and Creative Industries Recovery Strategy has been in development for some time, with significant consultation for the original strategy initially undertaken throughout 2019 and early 2020, and then necessarily delayed but enhanced due to the impact of COVID-19 and to sufficiently address our recovery. I say 'enhanced' because this will enable creativity, connect people with opportunities and share the stories of the cultural and creative industries as we recover from COVID-19. I am pleased to report it has been extremely well received by the sector.

In my Building and Construction portfolio, it will surprise no-one that there is a lot of investment. I am extremely proud to be in this place and part of a Government talking about the unprecedented boost we are giving our building and construction sector. Continuing our strong support for this sector with our clear plan to rebuild a stronger Tasmania in the State Budget, which includes a landmark \$5 billion infrastructure program and record \$300 million over four years into social and affordable housing projects, this includes initiatives that relate to the building and construction sector such as, but certainly not limited to, the \$10 million for a building project support program through our Government's \$145 million COVID-19 provision aimed at bringing forward community and commercial shovel-ready projects. The program will be delivered through a single competitive grant funding round. It will provide funding of up to 25 per cent of the construction cost of a project for projects over \$2 million up to a maximum grant allocation of \$1 million. I can already think of a few projects worth applying for that grant.

The Government's boost includes \$20 million over two years to provide home builder grants, \$19.4 million over three years for the extension of the First Home Owner Grant, \$22 million to significantly boost jobs for apprentices, trainees and youth employees, including extending the current payroll tax rebate, \$2.5 million over two years to develop a state-wide program to enable and empower more women to participate more broadly across our economy and in non-traditional roles, \$123.8 million for new housing projects, including the debt waiver program and \$100 million to construct up to 1000 new social houses through the Community Housing Growth Program.

There are many more initiatives within our infrastructure program that relate to our building and construction sector. That is just a sample. It will support around 25 000 jobs, build the intergenerational infrastructure our state needs to thrive, and provide the economic stimulus to return our budget to surplus in two years. This will increase confidence, grow our economy, attract investments, support jobs and rebuild a stronger Tasmania.

We were the first government in Australia to legislate protections for residential property owners and tenants through the COVID-19 Disease Emergency (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2020 for an initial 120-day emergency period. These protections prevent rent increases and evictions following a notice to vacate issued by a property owner or their agent. The only exceptions to this is where there is a lease of no fixed period in the event of sale of property, major renovations, or for the owner or a close family member to move into the property. Ben Bartl of the Tenants' Union of Tasmania said -

The state's tenants will be breathing a collective sigh of relief on news the rent moratorium would be extended.

Shelter Tasmania also welcomed the announcement in its September 2020 newsletter.

This has been a really tough time for landlords. It has been a tough time for residential and commercial tenants and landlords. These measures have been essential during this unprecedented time. That is why the Government invested \$1.25 million in 2020-21 to support residential households who rent homes in the private market and have, or are, suffering extreme hardship as a result of COVID-19. This funding provides targeted support of up to \$2000 or four weeks' rent to eligible Tasmanian tenants, and also landlords, through the COVID-19 Rent Relief Fund and the COVID-19 Landlord Support Fund respectively.

Because we extended it we allowed residential tenants to apply to the rent relief fund twice as long as it was not in relation to the same period of arrears on each occasion, and for a landlord to apply through the landlord support fund, meaning a tenancy could receive up to \$6000 without there being duplication. That is a significant amount of relief. It is more relief than any other state or territory and it shows our commitment to both landlords and tenants. I am happy to report that, as of 6 November, Tasmanian tenants and landlords have collectively accessed over \$1.5 million of assistance through the COVID-19 Rent Relief Fund and the COVID-19 Landlord Support Fund.

No government has done as much as we have to ensure individuals and families affected by the pandemic could stay in their homes and not risk eviction or increases in rent and also support landlords by helping to pay rental arrears. Our Government, through the rent relief fund, has paid over \$1.2 million to tenants who had rent in arrears. We have also paid through the landlord support fund over \$293 000 to landlords who had tenants that remained in rent arrears despite the assistance offered through the COVID-19 Rent Relief Fund. These measures have been successful in keeping Tasmanians in their homes through the emergency period and helping address rental arrears.

I am going to run out of time before I get to Heritage. I want to mention real time fuel price monitoring that is in the Budget; capital funding of \$300 000 with an additional \$50 000 provided per annum to cover the operating costs of that scheme to create competition in the market. That is already happening. Our bill has passed both Houses, which will ensure that

we have payment plans in place between tenants and landlords should they wish to settle rent arrears in that manner.

I will quickly move to Heritage because it is such an important sector. Our Government has committed to investing in our world-class heritage assets to ensure they remain a popular attraction for locals and visitors in the future. National award-winning Port Arthur Historic Site is one of our most iconic visitor attractions. Given the significant impacts of COVID-19 on the Port Arthur Historic Site Management Authority, or, PAHSMA, our Government has committed additional financial support to ensure it will have access to sufficient funding during its recovery. We will be providing a total of \$20 million in equity contributions over the next four years to support PAHSMA's recovery from the pandemic.

The Royal Tasmanian Botanical Gardens will receive a funding boost of \$4 million as part of the Budget. This funding is in addition to the \$3.6 million the Government has committed to the gardens in 2018 to see the long-held vision of a new visitor centre and much needed improvements to access points across the gardens become a reality. That brings the total contributions to \$7.6 million, the biggest investment in capital works on the site for 30 years. The much-loved gardens also received \$302 000 as part of our Government Public Buildings Maintenance Fund during COVID-19. It was put to extremely good use around the site in a number of different areas. It resulted in at least 28 local jobs being supported during COVID-19.

We have also committed \$3 million towards the construction of the new history and interpretation centre at the Cascades Female Factory in South Hobart in June this year as part of our record infrastructure package, which will support 15 000 jobs over two years and enhance and rebuild the visitor experience on offer.

Thanks to the actions of our Government in rebuilding Tasmania since 2014, we went into COVID-19 with an economy that was outperforming the rest of the nation. It was our Government that took Tasmania to the top of the leader board and we did it by investing in Tasmanians. We invested in key pressure points in our economy and focused on ensuring as many Tasmanians as possible were either earning or learning and working together to make Tasmania the best place in Australia to live, work and invest.

As we rebuild and recover from COVID-19 we are continuing this work. Through the smart investments in this critical Budget that invest in Tasmanians we will bounce back stronger and more vibrant than ever before. I am excited to be a part of it.

How much time do I have left? Here I am thinking I had to race through it. I am going to return back to fuel price monitoring. Much has been said over the years in relation to costs of living and what is and is not effective. I am pleased to report not only on the capital funding that would provide a real time fuel price monitoring scheme through the code of practice under the Australian Consumer Law, but because of our FuelCheck TAS app and website, which I launched in September of this year, we have seen in the first two weeks of the launch that over 11 000 people had either downloaded the app or visited the FuelCheck TAS website. I have been monitoring these fuel prices. This is anecdotal, and we will need to compile some results, but I can already see in clusters where there are service stations where competition is going on. I have had many people contact me and advise that they have calculated in some areas that it is a lot cheaper to have driven to an area where they are seeing it is cheaper. That is human nature, but if you work out the sums and work out you are going to get a better deal, that is

precisely what real-time fuel price monitoring is all about. If you have not yet downloaded it, it is available through Apple stores and Android and it is FuelCheck TAS. That is all you need to look up and you will find it.

The release of the app was timely because in its report for the June quarter on petrol prices, the ACCC found that the price difference between the three smaller capitals - Hobart, Darwin and Canberra - and the five largest capital cities had increased at that time from 7.6 cents per litre to 10.2 cents per litre because of what was going on around the world. I will be very interested to see the subsequent quarters statistics and beyond as to the impact that has had but I imagine it will be favourable; from my anecdotal evidence so far, it has been very efficient in responding to consumers' needs. That is an important part of the consumer part of my Building and Construction portfolio.

In closing, I want to express the importance of the positive nature of our Budget, but it is for the Opposition to provide how they would do things differently. In my portfolios there is constant criticism in many areas but all Labor is prepared to do is have some funding for events and festivals but no additional funding for arts programs, community arts or anything. There is nothing in Building and Construction except their free TAFE policies, as far as I can see.

The only thing in Justice was free legal advice for small business owners wanting to expand and employ more staff. I am puzzled how you would deliver that and how much money and who would do what, when. Does it cover mergers and acquisitions and legal costs of \$1 million? I do not know how they would fund that at all, or who would carry out that legal work. There would need to be some certainty for the legal profession.

There is nothing in there for Heritage, nothing in there for Corrections and nothing for any facilities like the Northern Regional Prison or the Southern Remand Centre, nothing for the Burnie Court to solve those issues, and nothing for rent or landlord relief which we have funded. There is nothing for the legal assistance sector, nothing for the DPP additionally and nothing that addresses any court backlog issues.

I am staggered that we will see time and time again Labor coming into this House whingeing and when they are given the opportunity to provide their so-called alternative plan or alternative budget, they have attempted some figures at the back of their so-called plan but they have absolutely failed to respond in any way, shape or form to the areas of Attorney-General, Justice, Corrections, Building and Construction, the Arts or Heritage.

[3.24 p.m.]

**Ms O'BYRNE** (Bass) - Madam Speaker, before commencing my contribution I must say if that is the sum total of criticism of our jobs plan it speaks volumes for this Government. A bitter and twisted listing of all the problems within your portfolio does not go a long way to giving confidence that you have addressed some of those challenges.

Labor made it very clear that we have another 18 months of rolling out costed programs and policies that will respond to the shortfalls this Government has identified. In fact, the minister just listed a number in the Attorney-General's area that she obviously feels she did not get enough money for and we will be working through those.

We have addressed an issue that this Government has failed to do. We have a plan for jobs. This Government has a plan for unemployment and if that is all you can do, Attorney-

General, then you need to have a good, hard look at yourself and reassess some of your priorities because, quite frankly, you represent an electorate that will suffer under this Government's decision and bear the brunt of 8.5 per cent of unemployment. If you do not think that matters, that is a reflection upon you.

We respond to this Budget at the most unusual of times. This is a budget in November which reannounces many commitments; a budget which is only months away, perhaps even weeks, from next year's budget being bedded down. It is a budget with huge expectations. Tasmanians were waiting for a bold and visionary piece of work, for a budget that demonstrates the path perhaps not to total prosperity but at least to safety. Tasmanians were waiting for a plan for the economy, a plan for our community, and a plan for jobs but they were left wanting with this Budget, either because the Premier is cynically playing with time to meet some kind of election strategy or, more disturbingly and more likely, because they do not know how to formulate a plan, how to either set or deliver a vision for our future and to transition us out of this crisis.

It is a criticism that has been levelled at this Government in the past - that they are capable of spending the money allocated within the budget, that they are capable of cutting a pie but not reshaping the economy to ensure that the pie is bigger or at least large enough to meet the needs of Tasmanians. There have not been the significant economic reforms that have characterised previous governments, nor have levers been exercised to fundamentally shift what we do. Many commentators have said that this was the most important Tasmanian budget in a generation, the most critical budget since World War II, yet it provided no vision: just a grab bag of reannouncements promising similar measures that they have consistently failed to deliver from a clearly tired and disengaged seven-year-old Government.

The pandemic has cost our state, but it is not the sole reason for the economic woes and our job crisis. That was in place and presided over by this Government well before the pandemic hit. We can blame COVID-19 for much but you cannot blame it for everything. Our baseline before COVID-19 was not great. In February our unemployment rate was the third highest in the country, our participation was down to 61.7 per cent and our underemployment rate, those who cannot get enough work to string together the means to survive, was catastrophic.

They were not the only pressure points presided over by this Government prior to COVID-19. Since the Liberals came to power in 2014, elective surgery waiting lists have blown out by 49 per cent, outpatient waiting lists by 64 per cent, public housing waiting lists by 55 per cent and the number of school leavers engaged in work training and further study has dropped by 31 per cent. So much to be proud of for a Gutwein Government

Tasmania continues to compare poorly to the rest of Australia on indicators of life expectancy, disposable incomes, smoking and obesity rates, year 12 completion and good health measures, and that was before COVID-19. When that pandemic hit, the precarious and insecure nature of many jobs, the unmet demands on our health system and our community sectors was exposed for all to see. As the jobs dried up, businesses went into hibernation and our health system had to stop much of its work. Many people were seen falling through the existing cracks.

At the height of the pandemic, 20 000 people lost their jobs - it is easy when it rolls off the tongue but it is 20 000 people - and 12 400 who lost their jobs during the pandemic have

not yet found alternative employment. The unemployment rate has skyrocketed to over 7.6 per cent and according to the Budget Papers it is going to rise higher. For every job vacancy there are 27 Tasmanians looking for work. What is disturbing is that, instead of acting to change this, the Government has accepted it. When we needed a plan from this Government and this Treasurer, they have sat back and accepted an 8.5 per cent unemployment level. How many families does that impact? How many lives?

This Government, in its lacklustre budget, locks in a participation rate that will decline to 59.5 per cent by 2021-22. They are accepting that thousands of people will stop looking for work altogether.

For a while, it seemed that some of these jobs were returning. The Government actually trumpeted this and was very pleased to announce it. However, there are worrying signs that Tasmania's job recovery has stalled, and the Government is now silent on that. During a fortnight in mid-October, 6100 payroll jobs were lost - a 2 per cent decline. That is much bigger than the national average of 1.6 per cent. Our unemployment rate has jumped from 6.4 per cent to 7.6 per cent, and our youth unemployment rate is something of which we should be very ashamed. Wages have fallen 5.4 per cent since March. Businesses are still heavily relying on JobKeeper to keep their heads above water, and that is an insecure pathway at the moment.

Labor has looked at the Government's response to our jobs crisis in the budget and found it lacking, which is why today we have launched Working for Tasmania and the plan that builds on our COVID-19 Recovery Package, puts government spending to work for Tasmania, creates the workforce of the future, and builds a better and fairer Tasmania. It will create and support 35 000 jobs and it is unashamedly focused on high quality, secure, full-time jobs.

TAFE has been underinvested in by this Government. The minister can say all the nice words that he does - and he does that well - but he must be judged by his actions. Courses have been cancelled because TAFE cannot afford to run them, and because there are not enough teachers. We know that TAFE is failing to meet the need right now. We also know that many families trust TAFE and they want a good TAFE education for their children.

One of the biggest barriers to education training is cost. It is clear that the Liberals do not understand this. We do, which is why we believe in a free TAFE policy - an initiative when assessed has been successful in other jurisdictions. We fund free TAFE courses in those areas of skill shortages including building and construction, tourism and hospitality, and aged and disability care - 20 000 more Tasmanians to be trained. However, we know that free TAFE is only one part of the solution.

In order to save TAFE, we need to rebuild it from the ground up. Tasmania needs a TAFE system that provides Tasmanians with the skills needed for meaningful jobs, and matches the needs of employers. Therefore, our plan is to invest an additional \$22.5 million on TasTAFE over four years to lift quality, improve delivery in regional Tasmania and enhance links with industry and, unlike the Government, we will ask more than their little windfall from COVID-19 from the federal Government.

Our plan increases the TAFE teaching workforce by nearly 20 per cent and draws new teachers and trainers from the private and public sectors. It is a plan that has been arrived at

by talking to people who use TAFE, as well as people who work in TAFE and those people who believe TAFE can be saved.

It provides for annual scholarships to put skilled tradespeople and industry specialists through their Certificate IV in Training and Assessment. It creates an Industry Secondment Fund to provide support for 80 current TAFE teachers for a three-month secondment with an employer in the trade that they teach. It introduces a \$1.15 million Regional Delivery Fund to assist TasTAFE to deliver courses in regional areas. Importantly, it establishes a representative taskforce to review the wider skills and training system because we need to understand not only where we are now with TAFE but also where we need to be, and to plot that pathway across all our other education and training frameworks. Tasmania is uniquely placed to be able to do so because of the way our training and education system works, and because of the acts of parliament that we can use.

We need a root and branch analysis of the government structure, the planning and the delivery processes within TasTAFE so we can back TAFE, and meet the needs of students and industry into the future.

Training and jobs - that is the focus of our response to the Liberal Budget in Labor's plan for jobs. From 80 per cent of all Tasmanian school leavers - people who are working, training or studying at university in 2014 - we are now at a devastatingly low 48 per cent. No-one can hang their hat on that with any pride. We will invest in in-school career education, employing 65 specialist career educators in years 7 to 12. We will embed career education in the curriculum and connect today's learners to tomorrow's jobs.

We will fund 10 local job hubs in regional communities across Tasmania, in a very similar way the SERTA program has worked, and particularly aligning those with the needs and existing support structures in each of those communities - a targeted response to individual communities with a model that we know will work.

We will fund a second chance career program. There are many older workers who have looked at the federal budget and wondered where it takes care of them. There are many older workers who are very frightened about what their new opportunities might be - how they will be able to pay their mortgage, how they will be able to care for their kids? We know they have much to offer in the employment sector. Our second chance career program provides a \$30 000 apprenticeship guarantee for older workers so they can seek that fresh career start as an apprentice, but remove the financial disincentive for employers to take them on. I have spoken to employers who have mature age apprentices and they really value them, but it is a cost and not every business can do that.

We will provide more opportunities for small businesses and sole traders to build up skills to support and grow their businesses with funding of \$6 million which will enable more business owners to access training in areas such as business planning, accounting software, social media, online marketing and HR, and will fund free legal advice for those small businesses and sole traders - because that is something they have asked for.

We are committing \$5 million for a regional main street revitalisation fund to invest in our regional communities. We will address the trade waste compliance issues which we know have already forced businesses to close. We will act to stimulate business investment with a Tasmanian jobs and innovation fund - the largest business investment fund ever delivered in



Tasmania's history. The fund will drive innovation in new industries, as well as allow traditional industries, like forestry, mining, aquaculture, manufacturing and agriculture to continue to grow. It will stimulate at least \$220 million of business investment and create 1600 jobs. We know it will work. We know it will have the spin-off, because it is the type of investment that does.

We need to make sure that jobs are secure, and do not continue to place people in the insecure position of being unable to provide for their families because they cannot piece together enough of a living, or do not have the security of employment that allows them to access home loans. That means creating secure, full-time employment that provides Tasmanians with sick leave, annual leave and a level of security that enables them to do things such as purchase a home.

As our leader, Rebecca White, pointed out, despite a growth in our population, there are currently fewer Tasmanians employed full-time than 15 years ago. There are more people here, but fewer are in full-time jobs. Although we have spoken a lot about the nature of part-time and insecure work for women, in fact there are fewer men employed full-time than when the ABS began keeping their records in 1978. As government we have leverage and capacity to address that, and we should - which is why our plan leads by example by identifying opportunities to convert long-term contract positions in the public service to permanent jobs, including full-time jobs wherever that is appropriate.

We will task the Auditor-General to review those areas where overtime is used to cover insufficient staffing levels, to cover the shortfall, and where additional permanent employment not only could create jobs, but would reduce the pressure on staff and help properly staff rosters, and ultimately save money. It is one of the ways that you invest in order to save.

We will also use government purchasing strength to commit to training again by requiring that one in five workers on government-funded infrastructure projects will be an apprentice or a trainee. We will commit to that. We will not have a goal that is never addressed or assessed. We will not have some kind of target that is never checked against. We will actually commit to it. Public works, civil construction and GBEs will need to comply with this requirement so when public money is spent, we are also training the workforce for the future.

We will also be using our buying power to support job opportunities for Tasmanians living with disability, by mandating government agencies to spend 2 per cent of their supplies and consumables budgets with Australian disability enterprises.

As you would be well aware, women have been hit hard by the pandemic. It has been termed a 'she-session'. Women, many of whom work in precarious or insecure work, lost jobs. They took the brunt of the extra obligation in care responsibilities. They made up the bulk of workers who worked in our essential services and retail in order to protect us, care for us and keep our community safe. Sadly, it is becoming clear they are now less safe in their homes.

The federal government has been roundly criticised for its focus on traditional economic responses which do not account for the impact that the pandemic had on women. There is a fantastic graph that shows where the damage hit and where the spend was, and they are not the same places. However, when this was raised with the Government, not only did they say that women's voices were not credible, which was offensive enough, they said that investing in roads was good, claiming that that was where the support will come for women because women

drive on roads. Is that actually how they think the economy impacts on women? Is that what they think?

The Premier said that it is not much of an issue here because women are regaining their jobs, he argues, at a faster rate than men. Where those jobs are coming back on line, they are still insecure, they are still precarious, and they mean that women still remain at risk. Encouraging women into trades is not a bad idea, it is not a new idea, but it is not the sole solution to responding to the structural inequalities which have exposed women to financial and physical risk. It is not the single answer.

Without significant reform to our economy women will remain disadvantaged as we recover from the COVID-19 recession and remain at great risk to that exposure if there are future pandemics or future outbreaks.

That is why, after speaking to many experts in this field and many economists who work in trying to recognise the impact on women, Labor will establish a Treasury-led task force to examine the structural inequalities in the economy that continue to impact so unevenly on women. The task force will include representatives of government, industry, unions, and the community sector and will provide advice on pathways to structural reform that ensure that women are recognised for the valuable role they play not just in our society but in our economy.

This work could be ground breaking and we could lead the nation in understanding how to change our traditional economic view and embrace a fairer, less gendered one. One of the barriers that we can quickly address is access to childcare. I commend those campaigns that are being run nationally to remove cost as a barrier. We can also take action here by increasing the availability of before- and after-school care in some of our government schools. We have spoken to women who have wanted to take up job opportunities or training opportunities but they do not have anywhere for their kids to go outside of school hours. Grants of \$75 000 to assist with the setup of costs of outside-school-hours care in 10 additional schools can really make a difference in areas where that kind of access is not provided.

There is a disturbing trend emerging in family violence. I will pursue my concerns in the 30 minutes allocated in the Estimates process, but also more broadly at future opportunities. The level of complexity and support required for women and families seeking assistance is growing. Reports may not have increased as much as we feared but what is truly frightening is an increase, it appears, in the level of tolerance. The impact of the pandemic seems to have been that people feel that they should absorb more before it becomes too unbearable and they seek help. The stories are more complex, the presentations more challenging, and the waiting lists continue to grow.

I cannot unpick the Budget and neither can the sector. We have been having conversations to try to work it out, to see which ones are re-announcements and which ones are increased investment. We will explore that. It is very clear that we are still failing to meet the demand. We have waiting lists for all our services. As we have said in the past, if we are asking women to reach out for help, if we are asking women to leave and therefore potentially putting them at additional risk, the least we should do is have the resources to respond to them and help them when they do.

Buy Local has to be more than just words. While many industries will understand this, the IT sector can provide one of the starkest examples. There are contracts that appear to have

been written purely for larger organisations to tender for and then that leads to a couple of locals being engaged in order to meet the Buy Local test. Under the Liberal Party's policy any company can be classified as Tasmanian if they have an office or a few people working locally. They are not genuinely Tasmanian, not genuinely buying local. That means that big international companies can win local contracts. We need to look at the way we plan our IT spend. We need to manage our contracts to support local application. One way to drive this is to have a genuine Buy Local response, not just a slogan.

Labor will strengthen the definition of a Tasmanian business to ensure it captures truly local businesses and ensure that when interstate and international companies claim to be using local content that those claims are independently verified. If we want to grow our IT sector then we need to invest in our IT sector. That means managing contracts in a way that locals can make application. We should leverage our buying power and grow the ability to help build new markets for growth industries such as our exciting IT industry.

The tourism, hospitality and arts industries are facing what is being termed three winters: the winter that we had, the COVID-impacted spring and summer period, and then winter again. Labor's plan will invest in a \$5 million reimagined events fund to support events and festivals to adapt to the changed environment brought by COVID-19. There was criticism of that because they are not arts events. I can assure you if you have ever been to Junction, it is an event and it is about the arts sector. We will give confidence to our event sector by helping them to cover higher insurance costs so that these events can proceed. Business Events Tasmania will be empowered with \$2 million to aggressively market new conferences for Tasmania to bring more people to our state and support our accommodation, events and hospitality venues. We need that flexibility to secure those events.

I have been events minister in the past and if you are not out there actively competing then you miss opportunities -

**Ms Archer** - You should know that Arts is not events.

**Ms O'BYRNE** - I do not know why you keep interjecting all the time. I did remain silent despite some of the things you said.

**Ms Archer** - No, you did not.

**Ms O'BYRNE** - I think you will find I did.

**Ms Archer** - I am giving you your own back.

**Madam SPEAKER** - I ask the Attorney-General to stop interjecting.

**Ms Archer** - Well, they should learn.

**Ms O'BYRNE** - Madam Speaker, is she back chatting you or reflecting? She just cannot help herself today.

**Madam SPEAKER** - I am sure she knows the rules better than that, thank you.

**Ms O'BYRNE** - Tourism and heritage rail can play an important role in our recovery. They create jobs and they offer attractions for visitors and locals. We will get tourist rail back

on track by working with the Tasmanian Association of Tourist Railways to fund the public liability insurance over four years.

We have heard there has been significant challenges with the closure of visitor information centres. It is more important we have a digital offering in those areas so we will provide an additional \$100 000 to help tourism and hospitality businesses build an online presence. Our attraction for people coming to our state is heavily reliant on parks and natural attractions. Therefore the infrastructure in those parks and natural attractions is essential if we are going to encourage visitors to stay longer, to spend more and visit more of our regions. We will invest \$20 million in infrastructure upgrades in parks and reserves to further future-proof our natural icons and support up to 200 jobs.

I am proud that we are talking about Labor's housing work policy, not only for this intensive construction program to create 550 more jobs for Tasmanians, including 75 apprenticeships, building new houses and repairing existing ones, it will fast-track 490 affordable homes. It is an indictment that the waiting list has blown out by so much. There is currently a \$60 million maintenance backlog in community housing; problems such as damp, mould and poor insulation. Some of these houses, and we have all visited them, are unliveable. We will immediately invest \$17.5 million to help clear the maintenance backlog.

Let me use the available time to return to the Budget presented by this Government, a document whose credentials are already in question from the nation's leading ratings agency, Moody's, who said -

Notwithstanding the budgeted increase in debt-funded infrastructure spending we consider slippage over the forward Estimate's period is highly likely. This reflects our view that the scale of infrastructure spending will be difficult to deliver within the projected time frames.

There is nothing wrong with borrowing to rebuild as we traverse the path out of COVID-19. It is generally encouraged. The Reserve Bank has said it is one of our best hopes of rebuilding. Governments around the country, including the Commonwealth Government, are doing exactly that. They are accepting debt but rebuilding something at the end of it. That is fundamental to getting people back to work. It is the key to getting Tasmanians back into jobs. If you borrow you have to have something to show for it at the end. You have to be able to say, this is what we got, this is what we did. In the end Tasmanians can be assured that they are not going to have anything to show for this Government's borrowings because this Government is hoodwinking them.

The Government claims it will deliver a surplus in two years. Most people realise how absurd and what a wafer-thin cover that is. To get people back into work you need to deliver and to deliver on a spend, not just aim to get the books back in the black. Almost certainly not to do that at the cost of jobs and services, something we know is this Government's go-to.

The Budget contains no new infrastructure project that will shape the future of our economy. It has a list of projects that the Liberals promised years ago, again and again, and are yet to deliver. There are 82 infrastructure projects on the books. We announced more than half of them last Thursday and that is despite the fact that the majority are already delayed. Of the 82 failed bids, 44 have been delayed and 24 are delayed for a year, 17 by two years and three by three years. That is a combined delay of 67 years.

The fact is, infrastructure projects across the state are going nowhere so the Government seeks to perpetuate a fraud upon Tasmanians. They want them to believe that this Government can deliver a construction-led economy, yet it is very clear that they have not been able to do that. The biggest failure in the Cabinet, Michael Ferguson, the Minister for Infrastructure, is at the helm, no less. Seriously, if it were that important, would you trust it to Mr Ferguson? Just look at his record.

The Government says it will spend \$4 billion on infrastructure in addition to the more than \$850 million through government businesses, yet last year they spent only \$521 million, \$200 million less than they budgeted for. In question time today the Premier suggested it was because of the six months of COVID-19 in the second part of the last financial year, but three months of it were not affected by COVID-19. It was a very long six months, apparently, Madam Speaker. They are not to be trusted.

The Premier has promised to build a path out of COVID-19, a premier and a government with a well-documented inability to deliver major infrastructure projects. This Budget might be a fairytale but it is a very dull, unimaginative and visionless shopping list of infrastructure projects from a broken government that tries to act as if it is new and innovative. The fact is, they are recycled and ashamedly not even close to being rebuilt.

This Budget speaks volumes about the priorities of this Government. Governments need to have a belief structure, something that they think they can do. What this Government does is take the amount of money it has and divvies it up, then divvies it up again in the next budget and divvies it up again and again because it fails to deliver.

What we need, and what Labor is delivering, is a vision for Tasmania that creates jobs - not just temporary jobs, not just jobs that are reliant on a little bit of money coming in from the federal government for a couple of budgets, but good, fair, long-term and permanent jobs to rebuild our economy. We have a plan to rebuild the small business sector and other sectors that have been hit hard by COVID-19. Tourism, hospitality and the arts all spring to mind. We believe in the dignity of work and earning an income for all Tasmanians. We believe we have the capacity as a government to leverage change to deliver that kind of job. We believe all Tasmanians have the right to a roof over their heads and that everyone should be able to provide for their families.

Madam Speaker, COVID-19 has threatened the foundations of our economy and our society. We were shaken by the pandemic and for a little while we came together and said we need to have a better society, a better community and a better way of approaching the way we live our lives. The Government has clearly forgotten that already. We talked about people not being homeless and not being jobless. We also talked about people not being at risk, and already we have walked away from that. We need a government that treats everyone with fairness and kindness. We need a government that is committed to building a Tasmania that is stronger, better and fairer and that recognises we are all in it together and that we all do well when we all do well.

This Budget needed to do more than re-spend existing money. It needed to do more to make us a stronger place. It was an opportunity for vision and an opportunity to give us hope, a hope that was squashed.

I am very proud to be part of a Labor team that will take up the challenge missed by this Government. Labor will not abandon Tasmanians, Labor will not take away hope, Labor will not condemn our community to 8.5 per cent unemployment. We believe in Tasmania and Tasmanians and we will invest in them.

[3.54 p.m.]

**Mr FERGUSON** (Bass - Minister for Infrastructure and Transport) - Madam Speaker, I am very glad to speak to the Budget and congratulate the Premier on delivering the Budget that has been a labour of love for him. It has been a difficult task made much more difficult and indeed confounded, it could be said, by the shock to the economy we have experienced out of the obvious disruption that the COVID-19 pandemic has represented, not only for our society, for our health system, for government, for our working people, for our business community, for our schools, our non-government sector of the community, but for everybody. Everybody has had their world changed this year.

I especially think of the young people of Tasmania who have been particularly affected. After all, they have experienced disruption to their education and there has been a significant increase in uncertainty for them regarding where they fit in all of this. Many young people work in part-time and casual jobs in venues, and I am thinking of hospitality and places of food where they have been particularly shocked. My heart is with that younger generation, not just of Tasmania but the whole country, because as the country now moves to economic repair and recovery, it is those young people who over the years to come will not just have the benefit of the infrastructure we are building but will also continue to carry the need to repay that debt that was levied up in previous federal governments and the debt we are dealing with in this Budget right now.

We have been very mindful of that. It would be very wrong for the Government to rack up credit card debt, as we are familiar with the Labor Party traditionally putting the current spending off on debt. That is why there has been a very specific decision in this Budget to support jobs, to support the construction sector, and to support industry right across the board, but to do it in a way that is actually building assets.

I could not help but notice that the member who has just spoken made the ridiculous claim that at the end of this we will not have anything to show for this infrastructure spending. That is one of the most fatuous, laughable comments I have heard during this Budget debate. It is a laughable, ridiculous statement on the one hand to be making that claim, when the \$5 billion infrastructure strategy that we have implicit in this Budget is fully \$1.4 billion of new projects coming into the Budget and forward Estimates period. Last year we went to a record of \$3.6 billion. This year it is \$5 billion and we are not building barns full of hay and then burning them down with that money. We are building roads that will be used by this generation and my kids' generation and I hope my grandkids' generation - including Davey Street.

We are building bridges at Bridgewater, the bridge that has been talked about for many years. The Premier this morning was a bit generous and gave a bit of a light touch to the Labor Party, I thought, when he said that the Labor Party had that money 16 years ago. The Labor Party had that money 22 years ago. In 1998 John Howard provided that money for the Bridgewater bridge.

The Labor Party says we will not have the new Royal Hobart Hospital that is being built by the Government in years to come, that we will not have anything to show for it, and the next stage minister Courtney is taking through of the Royal master plan. There is a brilliant facility being built at the Launceston General Hospital with ward 4K for our precious young people, our children, with a dedicated mental health service being provided as well, and women's services and outpatient services, together with the car park that has recently been finished. Somebody from the Labor Party with Labor economics says we will not have anything to show for that. Are you serious? Is that really what the Labor Party has come to? It is better for the Labor Party to not really talk about infrastructure.

This is my Budget reply, so I will be speaking to our Budget which is what this debate is actually about, not a phoney pretend alternative. I will say that the Labor Party badly failed on infrastructure. They brought the Royal redevelopment to a kaput stage where it could not go ahead, but that was not before Michelle O'Byrne took the helipad out. Why would you take a helipad out of a capital city hospital? It was a disaster. There was no plan for mental health patients who had to be decanted from the hospital; the Labor Party had nowhere to put them. You cannot demolish a building with people in it. That is what the Labor Party left behind.

I have mentioned the Bridgewater bridge, where maintenance was at an all-time low. Despite talking about the Midland Highway, the Labor Party did not upgrade a single kilometre north of Brighton. There is a lot of tarmac north of Brighton, there is a lot of Midland Highway north of Brighton. We are now 68 per cent complete on that project north of Brighton. We are making it safer for commuters through our action plan. One of the key risks on the Midland Highway has always been the sad fact that many lives have been lost as a result of direct head-on collisions. I cannot make that claim, although I would like to, but we are virtually eliminating the risk of head-on collisions on the Midland Highway. That is needed. There should not be any muttering about that. It is a good thing, it is a necessary thing and in this Budget we are putting more funding towards it.

The whingeing from members of the Opposition is hypocritical and dispiriting for many people in the civil contractors' groups because they are delivering this infrastructure. This afternoon I had the honour of attending the Tasman Highway project at the causeways. Thanks to the Morrison federal Liberal Government we have funding in this which is embedded in our Budget now because of the partnership to fully fund the duplication of those causeways, together with the existing south-east traffic solution we have put forward, and the existing Hobart Airport interchange project which got the big tick from the planning tribunal on Friday, which was brilliant. Congratulations to Hazell Brothers for holding the line and fighting the good fight. Today at lunchtime I was able to sign the deed with Fulton Hogan, which has successfully won the job at Midway Point. They will get that work started in coming weeks with the preliminaries - tree removal and preparing the construction site - and get the hard work started in the new year.

These are real jobs for women and men in that exciting industry. My colleague, the Minister for Women, has provided pathway funding to encourage even more women into an industry that is rewarding, that is building our future and is well paid. It is rewarding in that sense also. This is what you get when you have a government that is working together on the agreed priorities of government.

I do not want to spend too much more time talking about the Labor Party today because it is a waste of time. Their alternative today is not an alternative budget. It is Monopoly money.

It is a lot of ink toner; I would not recommend anyone print it out. There are not a lot of words but there are a lot of pictures. What I will call Labor's budget reply accepts 99.7 per cent of the Gutwein Liberal Government's Budget, therefore it is accepting our Budget. It is saying it is a good budget and we will accept the compliment. I will say again what a great job the Premier and all my colleagues have done working together on it.

One thing that the Labor alternative also does is increase debt. Having whinged about borrowings, it increases borrowings, and having whinged about deficits it obliterates a pathway to operational surplus in the third year as the Government's Budget does, because the Labor alternative has four deficits in a row. This is a matter for the Labor Party to explain to Tasmanians.

I am now going to speak about the Government's Budget that is a real budget. This Budget is about jobs, it is about confidence, and it is about community. It is a budget that backs business, that backs our critical industries to grow and is backing in Tasmanians. This Government has had to rebuild the economy once before after the disastrous Labor-Greens years which destroyed jobs in this state, not because of an out-of-control pandemic that was raging around the world, not because of national circumstances, not even because of a global financial crisis which, by the way, was in 2008, not 2013. We had a recession and plummeting business confidence because of the disastrous Labor-Greens government which ransacked the forest industry and locked up 400 000 hectares of productive forest only to keep Nick McKim and Cassy O'Connor as ministers and keep themselves in power. That was the deal Labor was prepared to do at that time. They did so voluntarily because they wanted to hold power and they put people 10 000 people out of work.

Our Government came to office in 2014 and we rebuilt this economy. We brought back business confidence. We supported the health system with record funding. We extended our high schools out to year 12, again to the opposition of members opposite, but we have restored hope in the hearts and minds of the people of Tasmania and businesses that we asked to risk their private capital and take a chance on their great business idea to lease some space and employ some apprentices. Their confidence is central to a government's budget strategy because without business confidence you cannot expect investment and jobs.

That is why I am so glad to report to the House, in all of my dealings with the business community since Thursday afternoon, this Budget has their thorough endorsement; endorsement from the civil contractors, endorsement from the Tasmanian Chamber of Commerce and Industry, and endorsement from the Launceston of Commerce. I do not know so much about the north-west chamber because I was unable to attend that event.

**Mr Ellis** - Loved it.

**Mr FERGUSON** - Thank you for the feedback, Mr Ellis.

There has been endorsement, importantly, as well from the TasICT, the peak body for the ICT industry here in Tasmania. They were delighted, were they not, Ms Ogilvie, with the investment of \$135 million into ICT?

**Ms Ogilvie** - It is a good spend, absolutely, and well done you.



**Mr FERGUSON** - It is of course on top of the existing spend but it is the biggest increase and for me, importantly, a focus on cybersecurity, which I have repeatedly said is my priority.

We cannot underplay the importance of confidence. It is central. That is why it is always concerning when some people with a vested political interest in wanting to destroy a government's reputation are prepared to destroy business confidence in the process. We saw that again this morning.

In my portfolio of State Growth, the Business Support Loan Scheme was one of a number of early interventions that we brought in to support businesses in response to the pandemic. It was thoroughly welcomed by the business community. More than 350 applicants were approved with interest-free and low-interest loans totalling \$35 million. That is a line of finance, a line of support. For some it was a lifeline. As minister Courtney knows full well, we were aware of one scenario where the person said, 'Without this, I wouldn't be wanting to say what I would have been prepared to do'. People have had very hard times and we have been supporting them.

Those loans have gone out. They have supported cashflow-poor businesses during a time of no income. They have allowed them to pay their bills and, in some cases, they chose to pay their staff. In a small number of cases they have had to finish a project that was mid-way but did not have the cashflow to complete it. I am thinking of one in particular on the east coast. I spoke to those people and they were grateful, even though they were going through really tough times. The Budget provides the funding necessary to meet those interest costs that the state Government is assuming and delivering the scheme through the Tasmanian Development Board.

Our later loans scheme that we opened back in September is at \$60 million provision. That opened for applications and has been very warmly received as well. This is about moving to a different phase. It is not about survival. It is about growth and taking advantage of opportunities to expand. I can inform the House that at this time 50 loan applications have been submitted.

The Budget also provides a \$145 million provision in Finance-General to boost specific initiatives to support businesses and our economy. This includes \$10 million for a building project support program. This program is expected to be launched early in the new year and will enable community and/or commercial shovel-ready projects to be brought forward to help stimulate the Tasmanian commercial construction sector which we know needs that support. The residential construction sector is going gangbusters because of HomeBuilder but this is something we are doing to support jobs in that sector.

To support Tasmanian businesses we are continuing to remove red-tape barriers. The Government's intention in this area was flagged in the Premier's first state of the state address back in March and it was announced at that time that the Government would introduce legislative time frames for permit processes for utilities and local government. We have had those debates and they have been successfully supported by the parliament. I am pleased to advise that the two building and construction acts have now passed both Houses and we have now finalised one set of regulations to accompany those. All this legislation is due to be enacted on 30 November. This means a change to the way businesses can engage with local government and the utilities, get snappier service and more predictable time frames, and that is what we have been here to do. I thank members opposite and the upper House for their support

of that legislation. It has been good to bring us all together. There will be further initiatives to support in the building and construction sectors in this space in the new year.

Another Budget announcement was the investment of \$160 million in TasWater to accelerate the infrastructure pipeline around the state. That money is part of an overall \$300 million investment in TasWater over 10 years, which will result in downward pressure on prices, additional investment in much needed capital upgrades - including the Tamar Estuary - and major projects, and alleviate pressure on TasWater's borrowing limit.

I have a few more comments on infrastructure. This Budget provides a record level of infrastructure funding and resourcing. On average, we are already delivering \$100 million a year more than the previous government. We are very pleased with that. It means jobs and more assets that generations to come can enjoy.

The Budget includes \$5 billion for infrastructure projects across the next four years, across government, across all portfolios, all ministers, and a range of GBEs. In my particular portfolio of Infrastructure and Transport, that represents \$2.4 billion in funding for the state roads program - roads and bridges. Importantly, the roads program now includes funding towards the duplication of the Midway Point and Sorell causeways which will now be constructed between 2021-22, and 2024-25. Previously this work was not funded; they were part of the program, but were to be resourced at a later time. That has been brought forward, and I was pleased to join the Deputy Prime Minister today in relation to the state and federal government contributions. This brings the total investment in the Hobart to Sorell corridor to nearly \$350 million and provides that continuous four-lane objective from Hobart right through to Sorell including the Sorell bypass. The project will make a massive difference to that community and the southern beaches community.

The Budget also includes the state Government's commitment to something very close to my heart. We have been working on this for all the time I have been Infrastructure minister, and including when I was the health minister working with Rene Hidding on how we could address some of the inadequacies of the Tasman Bridge. That bridge project has been worked up. We have had the benefit of some excellent engineering advice. We took advice that the bridge needed strengthening to extend its life out to 2070. We put the proposal through the federal government and we were delighted that they took on their share. That funding is in the Budget and it provides the lifeline we all understand is needed.

The Budget also provides and protects the funding for the Bridgewater bridge. The time frame is unchanged from last year's budget. I understand there was some interest in the fact that the final financial year of 2024-25 is present for this project. It is the same as last year's budget papers. We expect cars and trucks to be driving on the new Bridgewater bridge in calendar year 2024, that is in financial year 2024-25, and allowing for the usual commissioning and defect phase that is unchanged from last year's budget. We are building the Bridgewater bridge and right now the department is going through a process of assessing the early contractor involvement procurement. We have contractors on the hook and we are now going through the process of selecting the best two of those so that they can continue through the competitive process and go to design. This historic project is on track.

The Budget also delivers on infrastructure commitments as part of the economic response to COVID-19 through the state-federal infrastructure stimulus package. Funding committed for projects such as the Campbell Town underpass with full disability access, the Sandfly

intersection upgrade, and a new overpass at Leith, which I know is very important to members of the Braddon electorate.

Madam Speaker, I have mentioned the Midland Highway 10-year action plan. There is around \$190 million for continued upgrades. This allows us to do more and better, and over the Budget and forward Estimates we will ramp up the delivery of upgrades to the Bass Highway. We are particularly concerned with some of the pavement breaking up around Elizabeth Town and Paramatta Creek. We have \$147 million in work scheduled over the next four years. That is another brilliant partnership between the state and federal Liberal governments and was in part orchestrated by our submissions, but also with the advocacy of Gavin Pearce MP, the federal member.

I also mention other projects in the north - unsurprisingly dear to my heart - with more than \$141 million over four years for road projects, such as the West Tamar Highway, the Launceston traffic vision, the Sideling and northern roads package. This is about people in passenger vehicles and it is also about our heavy freight routes.

It is not all about new projects. It is also critically important that we invest in infrastructure maintenance. My department told me a year ago, as the new Minister for Infrastructure and Transport, that Tasmania has under-invested in maintenance for many decades. In the budget over the next four years, the Government will invest more than \$311 million, both state and federal funding, into infrastructure maintenance. That is \$20 million more than only one year ago. These are historic investments.

Our state has never seen a dedicated investment into roads across Tasmania, and that investment is critical. Again, I do not want to play off Labor too much here, but it is not true to say we end up with nothing. We end up with a lot of things we do not currently have. Try telling someone who lives at Sorell or the southern beaches that at the end of the budget period we will not have that four-lane access into Hobart. Honestly, it is laughable.

These are investments that are for generations to come. It is about making sure that the network is efficient and safe. I want to help businesses to take their goods to market more efficiently. More productivity means they can get that next contract, sign that next lease, employ that next apprentice and importantly, people can get safely from A to B. Our contribution to that is not only the quality of the road surface, but also re-educating drivers as much as we can, about their own behaviours and the risk factors for avoidable crashes.

I look forward to working with the federal government on delivering those projects, as we have done in other portfolios right across government.

I will now turn to renewable energy and transport. We have been working with Metro. We could have said, 'Hey, let's do electric buses'. We want to do better than that. We are asking Metro to work up the business case right now for a potential hydrogen electric bus trial in the north and south. We would like to be a world leader in this space. We produce that renewable energy and we will run the trial. It will be electric or hydrogen electric, but we will go through the process and make sure we are responsible with taxpayers' money in doing that.

Naturally, there is funding here for the on-demand passenger transport legislation recently endorsed by parliament. We brought that legislation through to reform the way in which taxis and Uber and other ride-sourcing platforms are regulated, in order to level that

playing field. Through that legislation, it is my intention to try to give our taxi drivers a fairer go, and I greatly appreciate the support we have received from the Taxi Council for those reforms.

In my portfolio of Finance, the HomeBuilder project has been a phenomenal success in Tasmania. This is an innovation -

**Ms Standen** - Home blunder.

**Mr FERGUSON** - That is where the Labor Party comes in with the silly quips. It is unconstructive and does not help anybody. When you say things like that, you are saying all those building companies who are now unable to accept any more contracts, have somehow blundered - and that is wrong.

**Ms Standen** - How many homes have been approved through HomeBuilder? How many homes have you been promised in your budget for social housing?

**Madam SPEAKER** - Order, please Ms Standen.

**Mr FERGUSON** - I defy Ms Standen to show me a building company she would be able to contract now, to build her a home. She will not be able to find one. They are full, and that is a sign of success. I understand some people may be disappointed. We are working through that, and we are encouraging the federal government to extend the scheme.

Far from being a blunder, the scheme has been very successful. As at 31 October, 384 applications for the Tasmanian grant had been received. Of those applications, 158 have been pre-approved, 27 were paid and a lot more are to come -

**Ms Standen** - Imagine if that investment went into social housing.

**Mr FERGUSON** - So you are not supporting HomeBuilder. I hope *Hansard* captures that, thank you. I repeat, a lot more grants are to come, noting that commencements have to be within three months of the contract. Labor now has egg on their face, on the record.

Together, these initiatives are helping Tasmanians build their own home but importantly it is supporting jobs in Tasmania - jobs in Burnie, in Launceston, in the Huon -

**Ms Ogilvie** - Hobart.

**Mr FERGUSON** - Jobs on the west coast, in Swansea, even jobs in Hobart, Ms Ogilvie. Later in the week we will say more about our tax incentives to encourage employers to take on more young people or to take on more apprentices and trainees. We are extending the rebates out for all industry sectors. In addition, if you do not pay payroll tax we will pay you a grant equivalent. We are working with Ms Courtney on that.

We estimate those initiatives will support a further 2000 new full-time jobs for apprentices, trainees and youth employees. These are wholesome, good initiatives by our Government to support Tasmanians.

I have appreciated working as a member for Bass in northern Tasmania. I believe it is the best electorate in the country. I have always thought that. Other members will be able to talk about their own electorates - but Bass is in my heart.

We are building assets and infrastructure for northern Tasmania. That means more homes, better schools including a new school at Legana, a new child and family learning centre on the east Tamar, roads, bridges and irrigation systems, as well as renewable energy assets for health and justice facilities. I note Scottsdale is online today.

I have mentioned the LGH, but I cannot help but mention it again particularly with the kids' ward being built right now. It is a stunning improvement to the streetscape, but more importantly, it is beautiful because of what it represents. It means more care for kids and young adolescents. It means a better standard of care including in mental health.

I congratulate the Premier and Treasurer, Peter Gutwein, for delivering yet another solid, sensible Budget that provides the pathway back to surplus. As Minister for Finance I have supported him closely. This is a Budget for these times, that none of us could have anticipated. As we have often said, this year has been an unprecedented circumstance. We have worked together to future-proof our industries and to protect the Tasmanian way of life.

I conclude with these points. Tasmanians have proved themselves to be resilient, but they need the support of their government right now and they are getting it in spades. As I travel around our community and the beautiful north of the state, I am constantly reminded of that resilience: Tasmanians' capacity to hope for something better tomorrow - as you mentioned in your first speech, Mr Ellis - and their capacity to recover; their capacity to defy what they see as circumstances occurring in the world and to believe that in the face of that hardship their bravery, their enterprise, their own investments, their own pulling on family resources will help them through. It is the definition of what it means to be Tasmanian, and even our brand reminds us of that - the quiet pursuit of the extraordinary.

That is what I love about the people of our state. There is a humility and a modesty to them. There is a 'can do' attitude amongst them, which is not often represented well by their parliamentarians on the other side. We know they are on to a good thing. Tasmanians know they are on to a good thing. This Budget is about their present circumstances and it is about their future. It is about jobs, it is protecting the most precious members of the Tasmanian family - our young people, and looking after their future interests, particularly through the training system, the education system and the health system. Ultimately, this Budget gives them a worthwhile, decent living through the benefit of a job.

**Time expired.**

[4.24 p.m.]

**Ms OGILVIE** (Clark) - Madam Speaker, I am in a privileged position as an independent member to take a different perspective. I try to give credit where credit is due, and to acknowledge good ideas no matter where they come from, right across the Chamber, and to put forward some of our own ideas. In that sense I always try to be propositional - not oppositional - unless of course there is a major issue.

I would like to run through some thoughts about the Budget, which is a fairly business-like Budget that does have some good and interesting things.

I am very pleased to see the delivery of the digital and technology spend. It has been an incredible, in its true sense of the word, remarkable and unprecedented year. We have seen the devastation that this virus has caused as it has ripped through our global community, our nation and our poor little state. We have come out of it because we are pretty battle hardened and we come from good stock. We have the capacity to weather things and to take things on the chin and just power on when we need to.

When I reflect on the response that we have had to the COVID-19 crisis I am proud to be the independent member for Clark. Without hesitation, our business community stepped up and took a big financial hit to keep families and loved ones safe right across the state. Many of them called me. Being a former commercial lawyer, some of them needed some help. I was always very pleased to get those calls and help them when I could.

It is a financial toll that will continue to impact Tasmanians for some time to come. Our young people, our migrant community and women were impacted severely in the devastating but necessary closure of businesses. We have learnt to manage, adapt and become more agile in the way that we do things in our way of working. Our digital and technology sector and those of us using technology, the consumers, have stepped up and delivered on a scale that I am sure no one ever expected to have to respond with. They have done so with true grit, determination and capacity.

Some large organisations, some big companies absorbed a lot of costs. That was a gift. Thank goodness they were able to do that to keep us all going and get us all working from home. This event has underscored the critical importance of ensuring Tasmania lives up to its potential as a digital power house. The Budget provides significant investment into digital transformation and cyber security within Government. I have been boring people for six years, if not more in this place, banging on about what great engineers we have, what great technology and IT sector we have, how great our university is, the work that we do at TAFE skilling kids up to do the broadband roll out, the cable, the fibre, the mobile phone networks, the GRN; all of this really good engineering that can come from here.

It is part of a global landscape, a global telecommunications and IT sector. I have been very fortunate to work across the globe in this area. The Budget provides significant investment into what we see as the future growth trajectory of this state. We could do with an even clearer vision of where this investment should take us. We see a steady hand behind this Budget. To give credit where credit is due I am attracted to the idea of an innovation Budget, a pool of funds. I have proposed that myself in the past. That is something that a Labor government has done well in the past and is something that I hope we will see in the future.

The opportunity for Tasmania is to do that in the context of space, technology, science, research and development partnering with the university, drawing more APS jobs to Hobart and looking at what we can do with Macquarie Point. There is a blended approach there that I think can work.

If we are looking forward to what is possible, taking learnings from those industries and those great players like the technology sector which just kept us connected and allowed everyone to keep working, our public sector to keep working, our health departments to keep working, those records to keep working, what is happening in our prisons and justice system right across everybody's portfolio, keep us working. That is where the rubber really hits the road.

I want to see a push on for that. I want to push further than what the Government has already proposed. We can do that. The huge investment in the transformation of how we do business for open government, open parliament and digital parliament all needs to be on the radar. That investment needs to come. I will keep the acid on the minister's heels in that regard. He and I see eye to eye on a lot of these matters. We talk to many of the same people in industry and so have similar perspectives on things.

Investment in future technologies is a massive opportunity for us. On my first or second day back in this place I was very grateful to be invited to the signing of the MOU between the state Government and the Australian Space Agency. It showed we have landed space investment in Australia. We know there is a huge amount of money out there and every dollar that is spent in space is spent on planet Earth, as Elon Musk's SpaceX people told us when we visited.

I take the opportunity to talk about space and space industries. It is something that people get really excited about, from kids in kinder right through to people looking at the stars with a glass of wine over a barbecue at night thinking just how amazing and beautiful is our lovely planet.

By 2030 the global space industry is expected to be worth \$600 billion. I want to see more of that being landed in Tasmania. Macquarie Point is a place where we can do that. Australia finally has its own space agency. We are experts in telecommunications. We are experts in radar technology. We are experts in working out how to communicate over vast geographic areas, and we have the beautiful scenario of being live when other areas of our planet are dark. Space-tracking, GPS, the elements we use day to day, in your car when you are driving around looking at your map, require not just Australian research and science capacity but Tasmanian. This is a really remarkable thing that we do and we can build upon this beautifully. We have such significant expertise in space research. Through UTAS our physicists participate in global initiatives already and our scientists work with NASA, SpaceX, the Japanese Space Agency, the Chinese Academy of Science and the Russian RadioAstron space telescope. We have the skills, the networks and the infrastructure but we can do more. I would like to see us do more.

At some point we have all been inspired or awestruck by space. We need to continue to reach for the stars. Space industry investment is the future for technology and engineering. It has particular opportunities for our state. It is predicted that not simply these industries but all businesses will be space businesses.

I am passionate about the marvellous food manufacturing we do in Tasmania. I see a potential for apples in the Huon. Perhaps Willie Smiths can create some apple products that go up to the International Space Station. What great branding that would be for our small island state and a great business as well.

The leading space businesses as we hit the 2030 mark are going to be the start-ups of today. That is where the innovation fund could come in. That is why as a state we need to be proactively lobbying, investing and attracting these businesses and start-ups to Tasmania and also from Tasmania, from the bottom up, from the grass roots. We have made a start with the space industry opening doors into areas we did not even know would be critical. The present opportunities for Tasmanians to become experts in are real and now and happening.

Space medicine is one of those areas. I was lucky enough to visit the hyperbaric and hypobaric chamber recently at the Royal Hobart Hospital and see the real and exciting opportunity this technology presents for us, not just as a lifesaving mechanism but for wound care as well as the testing and consideration of space-related science and technology. We punch above our weight in astrophysics. Our astronomers at the university are fantastic. We have the opportunity now to add complementary expertise to the package.

Tasmania is the home of the Commission for the Conservation of Antarctic Marine Living Resources - CCAMLR. We are the place into which Antarctic science, research and global expertise flows. We could similarly be home to be a treaty discussion for establishing boundaries for future space treaties. We helped write the Antarctic Treaty. Tasmanian lawyers were involved in that. We can do more. Technology and commercialisation have far outstripped the current legal frameworks. That is a fact, but ethics is the next big challenge in technology and Tasmania has a chance to be a world leader in this. We also need to be thinking hard about commercialisation and how we can take advantage of our natural advantages to ensure Tasmanian businesses are aware of the opportunities not only in space industries but in all industries and all innovation.

We have a place in the Australian Space Agency with our strategic location in the southern hemisphere. We are already mapping the Earth and monitoring our climate and the impacts on climate change and we are already part of the observation of Antarctic and the Southern Ocean.

This Budget is somewhat silent on the opportunities presented by the current space race, so I will be keeping the acid on the minister in relation to that. We do not want to get pipped at the post. We are in competition with other states and territories in this regard and South Australia is one that has done extremely well at carving out a niche for themselves in defence industries in particular. We need to take a leaf out of their book.

We are the gateway to the Antarctic but we are in competition with New Zealand so we must not be complacent about this. New Zealand has already added on a front-end which allows them to engage directly with the USA and that is something we need to think about here as well.

We are the home of the *Aurora Australis* and the *RV Investigator*. What an amazing vessel that is. I was very fortunate to have a tour. We will soon be the home of the *Nuyina* and we have IMAS and the Australian Antarctic Division, CSIRO and CCAMLR. We want to land more APS jobs here and I have been working hard on making that happen in conversation with CSIRO, David Thody and others at a federal and national level, both within government and in the science and research sector.

Our location as a gateway is not only about Antarctica but it is also about the Southern Ocean and we can be more than this; we can grow this. There should be no question of Tasmania's leadership in the Antarctic space. With the expansion of effort by other nations, the time is ripe right now for Tasmania to open our doors to welcoming more nations to our ports and deepening our relationships with countries like the United States so that we are the first choice for them, and I add the United Kingdom to this as well now that the world is changing. We have the opportunity to do more.



Defence Advocate Rear Admiral Steve Gilmore has done a stellar job in helping to make Tasmania business aware of the opportunities presented by Defence. This is a model that can go further and be applied across industries like tech and space, who have the time to sit down with him and look at the work he has done in assessing capability across air space and tech. That could be spread across more sectors and more businesses, particularly looking at food production, IT and telecommunications.

I turn now to Macquarie Point which is a great opportunity we have here in Clark, which is the best electorate in the state. I know there was some dissension on that point previously so I would like to clear that up for the record and *Hansard* that I have a great love of Clark. I was pleased to see the \$5.2 million investment into Macquarie Point from the sale of Elizabeth Street Pier. However, we would also like to see further articulation of the opportunity presented by Macquarie Point.

With Macquarie Point, Tasmania could provide a home to jobs across a wide range of fields digitally, in remote access work, service centres, call centres, data centres to the arts and film, music and writing, and we can deliver gender-neutral jobs in the tech sector. That is where they are, they all pay the same. It is an amazing industry. That is where I spent a lot of my career so I cannot oversell it enough.

Science, engineering, CSIRO, the Antarctic Division, programming digital games, content development, films and music - these are jobs that can be provided from school leavers right through to professionals. The Government needs to take a proactive step to make Tasmania a leader across the digital and technology sectors in the private sector as well. That is where we need to weigh it up. Well done, minister in government. I am super pleased with what has happened with digital transformation across the government. It is really timely and a great thing to do. It will create lots of actual jobs. I am very pleased about that, particularly for people who are perhaps in the older cohort and seasoned in their fields. It is a very good thing to do.

I would like us to apply some of that thinking into the private sector as well to attract parts of large organisations to Hobart in this sort of model we are proposing. We want to see Government move forward with Macquarie Point for that reason with a science precinct to maximise our Antarctic Gateway and leadership and our science and technology leadership. I would really like to see a local Space Agency office at Macquarie Point. Let us get that done. We could get that branding up there and that would be a shot in the arm for all of us.

Clark being the best electorate in the nation, there are some positive investments into my electorate in this Budget which I am very pleased to highlight, things I have been working very hard on. I would really like to thank the Government for working with me -

**Mr Jaensch** - Hear, hear.

**Ms OGILVIE** - Credit where credit is due - for working with me on things that are meaningful and matter. When I brought ideas, options and crises during the last year to the Government, they have responded very sensibly and have listened. I know I am in a tricky position as an Independent to do that but I am very grateful that you have been so responsive.

I have worked hard on the one I am going to mention now, and members in this place will not be surprised to hear me speak again about the Glenorchy jobs hub, which I love. I feel

it is my baby in a sense because the first question I asked when I returned to this place was about the terrible stats we had coming out of the employment stats in Glenorchy and thinking about what we could do for those people and also looking at local industry and businesses around that area, going to speak to the heads of those businesses like Liferaft Systems and Incat and others and saying, 'Can we pull all this together to do something for this place?'. I have been lobbying hard on that and make no apology for prioritising jobs for the people of Clark but also it needs to be about careers as well. We need the full spectrum of employment opportunities and stable jobs. I am claiming to have delivered \$1.3 million in funding for the Glenorchy jobs hub, even though the Government paid for it, so well done and thank you very much for that. I appreciate that.

Employment, particularly ongoing employment that delivers careers for people, is even more important as we deal with the significant disruption to our economy in the wake of the coronavirus. It is like a tidal flow that comes in and out and we want to keep our base-level employment in place. I am looking forward to this jobs hub being able to connect people with exciting projects like the build of the *Spirits of Tasmania* and Project Marinus. The tech sector stuff is really important, connecting into TAFE, the university and also our large schools and education capacity that we have sitting here in Clark.

I have also previously suggested to the Premier that we have a jobs hub set up in each local government area, and this is where I would like to give Labor a big tick. Great work on the jobs hub work, guys. You are right on the money with that, so we are in agreement on that. Jobs that will need skills and provide ongoing opportunities are able to be landed here.

In relation to palliative care, another passion project of mine - people will be familiar with that - I am very pleased that the Budget delivers on the commitment I secured from them around funding Palliative Care Tasmania which performs an essential service to many Tasmanians and their families. This million-dollar funding over two years will be a relief to the people who work there, give them some security and knowledge, and take away a bit of the stress that the organisation may feel in relation to them being at the mercy of funding cycles. Palliative care should be funded more thoroughly generally. I have written to the Premier and - I am not sure if this is a word but I am going to use it - bolshily asked for a \$20 million injection into palliative care statewide to fix it. We know that 95 per cent of people will need palliative care so it is a no-brainer from my perspective. I believe that is something we need to move to. I cannot say the Premier has agreed with me but that is my position.

We need to sort out the advance care directives. I have been on this mission for quite a while. After I drafted a bill and tabled a bill we had a palliative care inquiry. Then it went to the Law Reform Institute and the end result of all of that was that Attorney-General, with credit to her, has been able to bring forward an advance care directives bill for consultation. It is going to be a big deal. It is an important matter and 100 per cent of people will probably want an advance care directive. I am pleased to have made some contribution to that really important element of law reform and am looking forward to it coming before parliament once a deep and full consultation process has happened. From what I understand there has been a lot of interest in that. We have much more to do.

My team and I are very interested in equity, particularly gender equity when it comes to sports grounds. I have been on about women's sports facilities now for a long time. We had some work done at the New Norfolk football ground. We had some work at Taroona. There is so much more to do.

I was disheartened to visit Queenborough Oval recently because - I will call it postcode envy issues - there are no facilities there for young girls. It is a terrible situation. It is not just the girls from Tarooma and Sandy Bay who go to that ground and play, whether they are playing footy or soccer or cricket, it is everybody who comes to play them at a home game. It is not good enough that we have facilities that are okay up at Hobart Football Club but appalling at Sandy Bay. I am on a mission about that. The Sport and Recreation minister has been helpful and receptive to my lobbying efforts and there is some funding that we should be able to get access to.

I am quite enlivened about the issue of what a horrible time our kids have had at school this year. Everybody has done their best and everybody has worked hard to keep it together, but school from home and work from home at the same time, for many mums in particular, was exhausting and hard. In my own home I had three kids at three different schools, in three different rooms, on three different laptops. Frankly, it was pretty disastrous. I know many other mums feel that they just were not coping and able to do that.

What do we do about that now? The minister for Education has pointed me in the direction of work that is already under way in providing additional support but I would like us to take a leaf out of the New South Wales Government's book, which is a Liberal Government so maybe you could just adopt their policy holus-bolus. They have announced, for the first time in New South Wales, students will receive free tutoring in 2021 thanks to a landmark \$337 million program that is part of their budget. This is to help students get back up to speed after a very disruptive year. I had a child in year 11 and it was very difficult. They are going to employ additional staff, small group teaching at every New South Wales government school as well as non-government schools where they have a significant level of need. They are looking at bringing in retired teachers. They are going to create roles and jobs.

These homework clubs can also happen in local sports areas. The Sandy Bay Rowing Club could do with some facilities upgrade. It is a great club that caters for kids from all over the south of the state and is very keen on getting one of these homework clubs up and running. What fun for the kids to be able to go out rowing on the river and then come back in and get some homework done while they are feeling energised and pepped.

An incredible amount of work has been put in by teachers. What a year they have had - how hard and how difficult. They all stepped up. Did we not show what we could do when we pooled together out of necessity?

I would like to see a free tutors program in place, maybe just as an extension of what is currently happening. I am looking forward to discussing that more with the minister.

Coronavirus has had many devastating impacts on the Tasmanian and Australian economy and our moods. It has not been all simple and good. Many people have struggled. I have struggled. It has been a difficult year. However, in some cases it has presented opportunities to be agile and to adapt.

The *Spirits of Tasmania* contract is a prime example of this. I am a strong advocate for Tasmanian jobs and Tasmanian business. The Buy Local program of work is fantastic and very important. I have spoken about this as we have moved through the years but we also need to be careful. There was some mention of this this morning. Defining a Tasmanian business is really important. Then we can make sure only Tasmanian businesses get contracts. For

example, IBM, if it had a local office here, would be able to be contracted under a buy local framework. The fact is, IBM does not have a local office here. Anybody putting together a prime contract for a digital and technology sector deal, perhaps it is to do with GRN, will have to bring in companies that are global companies. You are going to have to bring in Motorola and Telstra and other major organisations which will employ a lot of Tasmanians.

Telstra's state employment budget is huge and rivals some of our large government department sectors. We need to be careful not to cut off our nose to spite our face. We want to buy local, we want prime contracts let here, but we also need to make sure that we are getting the best of global science, technology and research landed in this place. Let us carefully look at that. International trade agreements have traditionally been the reason why we have been careful about buy local. Let us look at those but it is a project worth considering.

Incat is a fantastic Tasmanian business in my electorate. Liferaft Systems is another great one. We are lucky they are located here, the work that they do, and they try to keep people employed. There is a synergy in the timing of the Glenorchy Jobs Hub, of which I am a passionate supporter, that initiative and the opportunity to build the next *Spirits of Tasmania* here in Clark, or as much of them as we can. We are waiting to hear what the scope of that RFI will look like. I have a brother who lives in Sweden. He goes up to Finland and we like Finland too.

**Mr Jaensch** - Defunded, \$1 million. Defunded from the Glenorchy Jobs Hub.

**Ms OGILVIE** - Oh no, do not do that. I am getting interrupted. We want funding, we want jobs in Clark. We want it all to happen. We have the chance to ensure that current jobseekers and school leavers seeking apprenticeships get to develop skills and experience on a tangible project that will deliver so much for Tasmania. Being the independent member for Clark has provided me with the most amazing opportunity this year to be creative, to give credit where credit is due, to acknowledge good ideas from wherever they come, to put forward ideas, and not just to be reactive to day-to-day issues.

This is why I have been passionate about getting on top of vaccines and vaccinations. I can afford to be a little bit ahead of the curve with strategic thinking about what we need to do. The vaccination issue is essential. We need to get it right, we need to understand the priorities, and we all need to sign up to those priorities and how that will work. It will not be enough that we get something that flows down from the federal government. We need to have a more grassroots conversation around that.

I will continue to pursue innovative solutions and opportunities for the best electorate in Australia, which is Clark. I will not have time to run through the last bit but I do have a list of all the projects and programs of work that we have running through each of the minister's portfolios. The great benefit of being independent is you can run across everything. The great disadvantage of being independent is that you have to be across everything. That means I have to read every bill, which I do, scrutinise every piece of legislation, and participate in the full gamut of parliamentary life, which I love doing.

Although it has been a very difficult and hard year my staffers, Simon Boughey and Kathryn Newett, are the best people in the world. We run a tight team and mainly have a really good time at work and come up with as many good ideas for the people of Tasmania as we can.

[4.54 p.m.]

**Dr BROAD** (Braddon) - Mr Deputy Speaker, as I go through the ritual of cleansing the rostrum here it is a reminder that the world and Tasmania have had a pretty tough year. Most people would like to see the back of 2020. We have seen devastation of economies and people's health all over the world. Tasmania through, a bipartisan approach, has put the state in good stead and now people's minds are turning from the coronavirus outbreak to coronavirus management to what the future looks like and indeed, that is what this Budget sets out.

The Budget that this Government sets out is a fairly bleak future, one of a recession that extends into next year and also rising unemployment rates. Coronavirus is not 100 per cent eradicated from Australia. What we have seen in South Australia over recent days highlights that we have to be ever vigilant and that our economic circumstances can change at a moment's notice. The Premier of South Australia has a fair few worries and let us hope they have got on top of that outbreak early and there will not be an ongoing spread of the virus leading to a Victorian-style lockdown. Hopefully that is not our future either.

As we change gear and look towards the future, we are all reasonably optimistic in this place that COVID-19 will remain under control in Tasmania and let us hope that is the case. As we change our frame and look to the future, Labor has a very positive plan for the future and that is Labor's plan for jobs and Working for Tasmania. If you have not seen a copy of this, I ask that you have a look at it because it is a fantastic document and a fully-costed jobs plan. Getting people back to work will drive the economic growth that we need to see in the future. I know the Government has complained about the amount of red ink in the document, red ink being Labor's colour and Liberals being blue. There is a red wave coming and this document is only the start of it, so get used to the idea.

The Government's version of the Budget sets out a bleak future. There is no real vision in the Government's Budget and I argue that there is not enough stimulus. Before I get there, I want to reflect on the Minister for Infrastructure and Transport's contribution. What I heard was a speech that somebody from opposition would make. I heard a minister of the Crown spending over half of his contribution talking about Labor. It was a slightly more nuanced version of Barnaby Joyce's 'Labor, Labor, Labor' argument but with words in between. Apart from 'Labor, Labor, Labor' the minister was heavily focused on what we are doing. He seems to forget that he is a minister of the Crown and in charge of a range of portfolios where he has the opportunity to make a difference in the state. Instead, he spent over half his contribution talking about us. It was all about Labor.

That sort of thing happens when you do not have much good stuff to say about your own work. What I saw in that contribution was a minister under pressure because of his issues, his past performance, and the pressure on him now to perform in this rollout of a so-called infrastructure budget that is going to drive Tasmania's economy. He is under pressure and it showed in his contribution, with his focus on us rather than on anything positive that he might have to say about his own Budget.

I also saw in the Budget some nice, deceptive, tricky use of information. One to point out is that the Government seems so embarrassed about their true budget situation going forward that they have had to resort to using dodgy graphs and cheap tricks. I point to chart 3.2 on page 41 of Budget Paper No. 1 which compares revenue and expenses over five-year periods between 1999 and 2014. Those particular budget years were all done in five-year chunks until we get to the period of the Liberal Government in power from the budget from

2014-15. All of a sudden, the Government, instead of using five-year periods, suddenly without changing any reference on the graph, uses a nine-year period, so they are not comparing apples with apples but apples with oranges.

Why would the Government want to use a nine-year period from 2014 to the end of the forward Estimates in 2024? Probably because this Government is renowned for hiding the truth and will use dodgy graphs to get away with it. The question I have is, why would they suddenly compare five-year periods to a nine-year period of their term in government and the forward Estimates? It is because they are trying to hide the real situation. This graph deals with revenue and expenses, and if that graph was done in five-year chunks we might see that the revenue is underperforming their expenses over a long period of time.

Another thing that the Budget highlights, which has not been discussed as far as I am aware, is the net worth, which represents the total assets, both financial and non-financial, of Tasmania's government businesses, including GBEs. This shows that Tasmania's net worth declines over the forward Estimates to \$6.5 billion. This is down from \$13.8 billion that was in their first budget in 2014. It looks like over this Government's term since 2014, the net worth of state government businesses, the departments and enterprises, has halved. I doubt the Government would want a lot of light shone upon that.

Our alternative budget is about jobs. What the Liberals' Budget will actually deliver is a Gutwein recession with negative growth for two years and unemployment above 8 per cent. I believe there is a meekness in this Budget because it simply accepts that high unemployment and a recession will happen. It does not seem like there is a big enough reaction to deal with this situation. The details talk of the state going backward and yet there are no real initiatives that change the state's trajectory, just this meek acceptance that we as a state will be going into an extended recession and unemployment climbing well over 8 per cent.

Under the Premier's Budget, Tasmania will be shedding thousands of jobs from now until at least 2022. The Budget also projects the unemployment rate will average 8.5 per cent in 2020-21, and then 8.25 per cent in year 2021-22. In the meantime, the national projections of unemployment over those two periods will be 7.25 per cent in the year 2020-21 and 6.5 per cent in 2021-22. That means that the state will have, according to the Treasury's projections, an unemployment rate 2 per cent higher than the national average. At the same time, our participation rate will decline to 58.5 per cent, meaning thousands of people will simply give up looking for work altogether.

What these projections actually mean is that a fair proportion of Tasmanians will have to move their families and their lives to the mainland in search of jobs. It is shocking that the projections in this Budget show an almost 2 per cent differential in unemployment. The reality of this is that we will see Tasmanian families having no choice but to move to the mainland in search of work.

On top of that, there are no employment or economic forecasts beyond the year 2021-22. My colleague, David O'Byrne, talked about this. The Government has built a budget on a house of cards. Job creation to get Tasmanians working again is a huge focus of this Labor Party and that is why we have delivered this fully-costed jobs plan. That is the number-one issue for us going forward and we will be rigorously campaigning on that from now until the election.

Tasmanians need to get back to work and that is why we are unashamedly focusing on job creation and real stimulus for the economy. Getting Tasmanians back to work will be the best stimulus to drive us back into surplus. I argue that Labor's job creation-focused strategy would see Tasmania back into a fiscal surplus much sooner than this Budget predicts. Getting people back to work will drive the economy forward. Having a meek budget that accepts over 8 per cent unemployment will not.

At the height of this pandemic, 20 000 people lost their jobs and 12 400 of these people have not found alternative employment. We all know this is the devastating impact of the COVID-19 emergency. Tasmania's unemployment rate has skyrocketed to over 7 per cent and according to the Budget Papers it is set to rise higher. At the moment, for every job vacancy there are about 27 Tasmanians looking for work. That makes it very tough on people. That has a psychological impact and, as the Budget projections show, people will give up looking for work. The participation rate will decline.

This Budget, and the Government's ideas on recovery, is mainly focused on infrastructure. The Premier and this Government have made many unsubstantiated claims around the infrastructure plan so I will spend some on this portfolio as shadow minister.

The Budget contains no new infrastructure projects to shape the future of our economy. Instead it once again contains a list of projects the Liberals promised years ago and are still yet to deliver. Of the 82 infrastructure projects on the books, the Government has relaunched, re-announced and otherwise re-done over more than half of them last Thursday. We know the majority of them are already delayed. My colleague and our shadow treasurer, David O'Byrne, pointed out that of these 82 infrastructure projects on the books, 44 have been delayed, with 24 delayed by one year, 17 by two years and three by three years - a combined delay of 67 years of work. The Government says it will spend nearly \$4 billion on infrastructure in addition to more than \$850 million through Government businesses. They simply cannot get money out the door.

Announcements do not cost very much, only really the cost of petrol to get to the stage that has been set. A media release is not a delivery. The Government goes out, makes the announcement and behaves as though they have already delivered. A media release is not a highway, a Tamar Bridge, an underground bus mall, or a fifth lane on the Outlet. You cannot drive over an artist's impression. Quite often we see these artists' impressions and the minister and the Premier behave as if it is already built.

Mr Deputy Speaker, talk is cheap, we know that but, in terms of this Government, it can be banked and it can be relaunched next year. They can talk, they can bank their savings, not actually do anything, and then relaunch it again the next year, rinse, repeat, rinse, repeat. That is what this Government keeps doing time and time again.

Last year the Government spent just \$521 million, which was \$200 million less than their infrastructure budget. I note the reason why the Government managed to spend \$521 million was largely because the Perth Bypass finished early, thanks to the good work of VEC and Shaw who built the bypass. If that Perth Bypass ran to time and was finished this year, then last year would have looked even worse.

Building things is not about the announcement. You need to take action - not announce the same project again and again. I cannot say this enough. The state cannot rely on yet another

reannouncement that the Government has demonstrated no ability to deliver. It is very concerning that the Premier has entrusted Infrastructure minister, Michael Ferguson, to lead Tasmania out of this COVID-19 crisis. The former failed health minister and the architect of Tasmania's health crisis is now responsible for getting infrastructure funding out the door. I believe we saw today some of the pressure he is under, because he is shifting his aggression to the other side of the room. That is what we saw in his contribution today.

It is farcical that the Government expects us to believe that they will be able to deliver a billion dollars of infrastructure projects before 30 July next year. We still do not know how far behind schedule the Government is, because the Premier fumbled his answer in question time today and would not commit to updating the House at a later time. It is not only Labor pointing out the Government's poor performance on infrastructure. Moody's says the travesty of this set of Budget Papers would be revealed less than 24 hours after their release. What did the nation's leading ratings agency have to say? I quote -

Notwithstanding the budgeted increase in debt-funded infrastructure spending we consider slippage over the forward Estimates period is highly likely. This reflects our view that the scale of infrastructure spending will be difficult to deliver within the projected time frames.

Whichever way you look at it this is a damning assessment of minister Ferguson and the Government's ability to get the job done, yet this is what the State of Tasmania is relying on to get us out of the COVID-19 crisis.

As our shadow treasurer has stated, there is nothing wrong with borrowing to rebuild as we traverse a path forward out of COVID-19. Indeed, the Reserve Bank says it is our best hope of rebuilding. However, if you are going to borrow billions that will need to be paid back, you have to have something to show for it at the end and we will keep holding the Government to account in this area.

I will now talk about Labor's sea highway plan that will invest in Tasmania, get Tasmania moving again, and create jobs. With the Liberal focus on re-announcing roads and bridges, they have definitely neglected our sea highway but we have a sea highway plan. We will invest \$150 million to significantly expand capacity at Tasmania's northern ports. We will fast-track delivery of the two new Bass Strait ferries and not, and I repeat, not wait until 2028.

A Labor Government will invest in northern Tasmania's network of ports and other key infrastructure, to get Tasmania's crucial export businesses moving again. This is a key plank in our fully-costed jobs plan. We have seen a lack of investment in the state's ports is constraining Tasmania's export industries and putting a handbrake on growth. It was only a few weeks ago that we saw a lack of maintenance having an impact on the woodchip loader at the Burnie port. I am not sure if that has been repaired or indeed how long it will take to repair, but it is an example of what can happen when you do not have the proper infrastructure priorities.

A lack of investment in the state's ports is constraining Tasmania's export industries and putting a handbrake on growth and we see that conflict between the different users has a massive impact, especially in the Burnie port. As an island state, Tasmania's sea highway is the most important highway we have. Real investments of \$150 million into our ports will drive costs down for exporters. It will also support major export businesses in mining, forestry



and agriculture and bringing forward the *Spirits* purchase will bring high-value drive tourists into Tasmania. Our plan includes -

- fast-tracking the \$850 million purchase of two new Bass Strait ferries. We cannot wait;
- contributing \$80 million to upgrade the Burnie port to accommodate larger vessels, improve bulk storage capacity and further improve ship loading efficiency, all which will drive down costs for exporters;
- contributing \$60 million to the Port of Devonport to accommodate the new *Spirit of Tasmania* vessels, expanding berthing facilities for transport and logistic providers, and creating future opportunities for commercial fishing and potential development of a marina and facilities for public events; and
- contributing \$10 million to Bell Bay port to create multiple berths for forestry and mining exports.

The Liberal Government has not funded any of these initiatives in their budget. Only Labor is committing funding to these projects. An additional investment will be made by TasPorts which has the potential to unlock even greater opportunity and commercial partners. We are not talking about pinching money from TasRail to get stuff done.

We have the emails and we know what happened, yet the minister is still in denial. He still denies that \$40 million for the ship loader in Burnie was pinched from TasRail. The ship loader is a great project and we want to see it completed, but that is not new money. The minister thought it was new money. We have the emails and the proof, yet the minister is still in denial.

This Government is shameless. Our plan to fund these upgrades is with real money, not false promises or pinching from other important projects. In contrast, Mr Ferguson has the audacity to spruik in a media release, under the heading of 'Fact - the Tasmanian Liberal Government is delivering \$200 million for ports under TasPorts 15-year master plan'. Delivering? There is no money in the budget - zero dollars allocated. We are allocating money to this. It is a priority which we will deliver on in government.

I will now speak on the Bass Strait ferries. There has never been a more important time to add capacity to Bass Strait. Imagine if we were seeing the first ship coming over the horizon next year, which was what the original plan was that this Government has back-flipped on. 2020-21 would have seen two new vessels coming into the Port of Devonport, with 40 per cent extra capacity. That would have driven massive growth in our tourism sector and also allowed massive growth in our time-sensitive freight sectors. It would be a boon for us.

The new *Spirits* with 40 per cent greater capacity would support growth in businesses in the tourism sector and trigger growth in jobs in the aquaculture, seafood and agriculture sectors. What we have seen is Premier Peter Gutwein plan to delay the new *Spirits* until 2028 and that is a disgrace. He promised Tasmanians before the last election that the ships would be delivered next year. He has always been a part of the decision-making process. That is why this backflip is so baffling. He has been there as a stakeholder minister the whole way through and has literally signed off on all of TT-Line's plans. Not only is it baffling to us, but businesses

are saying that the decision to delay the new ships until 2028 is already causing investment decisions to be delayed and will cost thousands of jobs in the tourism, agriculture and seafood industries.

We are not willing to wait. The Premier needs to explain why, when his own Budget says unemployment will be over 8 per cent for the next two years, he does not want to increase Tasmania's ability to attract more tourists and get more products like cherries, berries and seafood to market.

The Premier and minister Michael Ferguson have tried to played politics with the largest infrastructure project we have seen in many decades, probably since the King and Anthony hydroelectric schemes and it has backfired spectacularly. It is unbelievable that the Premier would roll over when the Prime Minister heaved him to accept a dodgy deal with Austal to build the ships in the Philippines by a boatbuilder with no history of building anything even remotely resembling the ships we need. What is really behind this decision?

In contrast, Labor's sea highway plan will fast-track the replacement of Bass Strait ferries and fund major upgrades to our northern ports. This visionary plan will drive growth in our tourism, agriculture, seafood, mining and forestry sectors for many years to come and create jobs. This will unblock a bottleneck in our economy. The delay until 2028 is outrageous and the Government having absolutely zero funding in this to change this bottleneck in our economy is a disgrace.

I will contrast a bit. I wonder what the hell is happening with the Macquarie Point Development Corporation that is set to receive the proceeds of the \$5.2 million sale for Elizabeth Street Pier with no indication of what that will be used for. After all the funding that Macquarie Point has received, it looks like they are still in need of cash to remain solvent. If this cash is to help fund moving the sewerage works, then commit to it. If not, then what is the money going to be used for? Give the Tasmanian public more details and commitments. Otherwise it looks like yet another lifeline for a floundering organisation.

Also, what was the announcement about Infrastructure Tasmania that we heard minister Ferguson talk about today? Was that in the Budget? I am very unclear whether that was an addition to the Budget, because that it is what it sounded like, so we are a week from the Budget announcement and already the minister is announcing new spending. I would like to see some clarification on that.

I would like to talk about primary industries. Labor is not willing to leave the agricultural sector behind. We think the agriculture minister needs to represent his stakeholders and farmers of Tasmania. What we have seen recently on many issues is that the minister has squibbed. Going back through the COVID-19 period we saw the boat-launching vans that really upset Tasmania's fishers. We saw the minister standing by as funding went from Screen Tasmania to *Wild Things*, a protester recruitment film, and that definitely put the forest industry offside. I managed to get a copy of the *Wild Things* documentary and can confirm that it is a protester recruitment film. It has numerous people sitting in trees in the Tarkine and is completely funded by the Tasmanian Liberal Government. What an outrage.

We have also seen the minister not backing in the red meat sector when Quoiba shut. That has disappointed many and led farmers, butchers and processors to come up with their own solutions in spite of the Government. Does this minister still agree with the assumption

in his report that red meat purchases are driven by price and price only? If that is the case, we will continue to see 800 000 or more sheep go to the mainland every year and the abattoirs that are left in the state close. But we have seen the community rally and set up their own saleyard in Smithton with another saleyard further along the coast hopefully to come.

We have also seen the minister disappointing the potato sector and the whole industry in fact by greenlighting potato imports from South Australia. This has once again resulted in questions around this Government's motives and the ability of the minister.

We have seen that the Budget has \$7 million over the three years for upgrades to modernise crown and TIA research farms. What we are doing in our budget is proposing \$12 million for a real centre of excellence in agriculture. I have talked about this for a long time. We are far better off as a state having a centralised research facility that could be of global scale. We have also seen recently that TIA has announced a relocation of a large number of their workforce to Launceston. I have not heard from the minister where he stands on this. We need to have a real centre of excellence of agriculture where we can have research, TAFE and farmer training all on one site. That would be great for Tasmania and it would also allow the university to leverage global-scale research funding and get the world's best to come to Tasmania to do the agricultural research that will set us up for the future.

In the Budget we have seen \$300 000 for salmon growth. This actually exposes the purely political nature of the Government's so-called salmon growth plan. It is not a strategy for growth. It is a strategy for stagnation and this funding proves that the Government has to fund a proper investigation of growth in the salmon industry rather than in the media office drawing lines on a map and that being the basis for the salmon industry moving forward. That is not good enough and this funding proves it.

As does the extra funding for the Titles Office. This is what happens when you make unstrategic cuts with arbitrary distinctions between frontline and backline operations. Your budget razor gang has got it wrong in this particular instance, and this is proof.

We have seen continued funding for irrigation in this Budget and that is good. Labor has a very proud history of funding irrigation. We are the ones who kicked it off. If you go back to the Meander Dam, that was Labor, and the first tranche and part of the second tranche of irrigation development was done by Labor. Since that point we have provided bipartisan support for irrigation. We understand that irrigation is key to value-adding in the state and driving our agricultural industries into the future.

On resources, we have seen that unfortunately Ta Ann is having to shut their Huon Valley operations and move to Smithton. I have not heard from the Government what support they will provide Ta Ann to help in this transition. Obviously it is good for Smithton to have the rotary peeler shifted up there so they will be able to do all the plywood peeling they need to construct their plywood panels. That is good, but there needs to be a transition and I have not heard if and how the Government is going to support this.

The upgrades to rail infrastructure for log transport are welcome, but despite the spin put on this, this is not new money but rather the reallocation of the \$5.1 million from Sustainable Timber Tasmania to TasRail. It seems that this time around at least TasRail is getting new money rather than losing the future funding from the rail revitalisation project like we saw in the ship loader election con job that I have already talked about previously. Being able to get

the logs onto rail is a good thing and we support that but I still have concerns that the funds from the sale of the plantations which STT has on their books could be used as a government cash cow until it is whittled away by dividends like the \$2 million contained in this year's Budget. Sustainable Timber Tasmania is paying the Government \$2 million.

It is also disappointing that in the face of declining exploration the Government has done very little to turn this round in the mining sector. I argue that \$200 000 for a geoscience initiative is nowhere near enough. We need to do more. We need to have more exploration because that will drive investment in mining.

### **Time expired.**

[5.25 p.m.]

**Mr ELLIS** (Braddon) - Mr Deputy Speaker, in life we do not get to choose our time, but it is what we choose to do with our time that really counts. It is about meeting the moment and rising to the challenge. We currently face the great challenge of our generation, a global pandemic the likes of which we have not seen in 100 years, and an economic and health problem that has tested our entire society in many different ways.

Our people have done it tough through no fault of their own. It is the tourism operator who is stacking shelves at the local supermarket, the young couples cancelling a wedding so that they can keep grandma safe, a small business family going without this week so that they can pay the wages for another week. It is the nurse in a north-west hospital at the lonely deathbed seeing another coronavirus patient sadly pass away.

In the short time I have been in this job, and this is my first budget that I have witnessed, I have doorknocked right across the beautiful north-west, west coast and King Island, including Mengha Road in the small farming community of Forest, Federation Court in the little mining town of Zeehan, and Risby Street in the coastal community of Ulverstone. The things that I hear over and over again are, 'You're that young bloke with the sense of humour, 'Do you think Will Hodgman knew?', and, 'That Peter Gutwein, geez he's doing a good job'.

People have seen what our Premier and Treasurer has been through this year. He shed a tear in the moment when, with the stroke of his pen, he put thousands of people out of work through no fault of their own just to keep our communities safe. He has personally called the families of people who have been separated by our borders and have not been able to attend the funerals of loved ones. Our Premier and Treasurer has met this moment and the people of Tasmania trust him to meet the moments to come.

I have spoken with nurses in the north-west who are suffering the effects of what is known as long COVID, the debilitating medical complications that comes with having this terrible disease. I have spoken with a man who lost his darling wife to coronavirus in the outbreak in north-west Tasmania. I have been there through the tears of an older worker who lost her job and does not know how she is going to go finding a new one. She does not even know whether she wants to go back because with a virus that targets older people and people with pre-existing health conditions she does not know if she is quite ready to take that risk. I personally know what it is like to cancel a wedding and to be expecting a baby and not seeing the family from behind closed borders.

These are truly extraordinary times but this is a budget for extraordinary times. I am privileged to represent the north-west, the west coast and King Island. I want to pay tribute to those remote communities by talking about them first and what this Budget means for them.

To the beautiful people of King Island, we know how important your health system is. We know how important it is that young families are able to stay on the island and get the health care they need in an emergency, and that older people are able to stay on the island as well. If they need to get something more complex done then we need to bring them to where the best care is, but if we can make that accessible for them that is good. We are putting \$7.4 million into the completion of the stage 2 upgrade of the King Island Hospital. I have been there and talked with the wonderful nurses and carers, and the tradies who have come over from the Tasmanian mainland to construct that hospital. It has been transformative for that facility and every member of the King Island community I have spoken to who have had the privilege, or sometimes in a medical sense the misfortune of going into hospital, have said it has just been an absolutely miraculous change. They are seeing a real future for the health systems available for them there on the island.

There is \$250 000 for the King Island District High School and I was very pleased to speak with the principal about that as well. One of the most important things for an island community and an extremely primary industry community is that you can have a sense that your kids are able to get educated there. I will touch on the west coast shortly but I know what it is like to work in a remote community and for families to feel that their job is dependent on the education that their kids can get there.

In a place like King Island where we have these extraordinarily productive farming and fishing communities and potentially even the mining community starting back up there again, we want to make sure people are able to educate their kids on that island in a facility that is fit for purpose, that enables them to take part in the STEM and the practical learning that can occur, particularly for practical people like so many of our King Islanders are. To be able to upgrade that school gives those people a sense of hope, which they should have, because at the end of the day, if the next generation is able to look better than the last then there is truly hope for the future.

As we know, being an island community, one of the most important things we can do is to support their air links off the island, so there is \$4.1 million for essential air freight and passenger services for our Bass Strait communities. We have seen with connecting flights down to Hobart for one of the first times the opportunities that has provided for our primary producers and our tourism operators. We all know how good the golf courses are on King Island and the way that is transforming the tourism space for the island but we must also be able to provide fast fresh freight opportunities.

We know that our seafood and dairy products there are truly second to none, so if we can get that produce off the island and to market in a timely way and support those people joining a dollar and have a job then our community across Tasmania is going to be in a better place. Improving air connections connects island communities with the rest of the Tasmanian mainland. One of the things many people comment on when they go to King Island is the sense that King Island talks about mainland Tasmania as, 'Oh, you flew in from Tasmania today'. If we can provide better air links, if we can provide better people-to-people links that can mean that families who have moved to King Island to take up a job in crayfishing or potentially mining coming up soon or tourism are able to go back to the Tasmanian mainland and see their

families. They can go back and enjoy a festival on the mainland, enjoy some of the arts and cultural precincts or get the healthcare they need. We know that those connecting flights will be about connecting all Tasmanians, not just those on the Tasmanian mainland.

Through the coronavirus pandemic we have learnt how important those connections are. Particularly being in an island community in Tasmania, we know that when the borders are closed the sense of isolation can be difficult for many people. We know the mental health challenges that are coming up as a result of the lockdown. If we can connect those families and bring them together with the mainland of Tasmania, truly uniting our series of islands in this beautiful state, our state will be in a far better place.

I want to speak about the west coast. I used to live there, I have many friends down there, a lot of good memories and a lot of trips scheduled ahead of me, I can tell you, Madam Deputy Speaker, after this period of sitting is done. One of the things I am most passionate about, because I drove them a lot, are the roads on the west coast. Being a plumber working from Waratah through Tullah, Roseberry, Zeehan, Strahan, Queenstown and way out to Gormanston and Derwent Bridge, I know those roads like the back of my hand. I have done it in a plumbing van, in the snow with a drain machine trailer on the back, so I have seen just how hairy it can get on a day when there is a bit of black ice going over Mount Black.

To put \$18.8 million into the Lyell Highway from Queenstown to Strahan to tidy one of the windiest sections of road you will see anywhere in Australia, will make that road a far safer road. We cannot fix the west coast geography. In many ways it is what it is. It is a place of mountains. It is a place mining. It is a place of swamps and rivers. By upgrading that road and making it safer, in a week like this week, which is national Road Safety Week, we all need to reflect on the impact that safe transport, better roads and more friendly driving conditions can make for families. Whether they are working as a drive-in drive-out person in our fish farms, or whether they are a local in Queenstown who needs to drive up to Burnie to go to the hospital, whether they need to pop over to the council chambers to pay their rates or their gym fees, being able to do so on a safe road that can get you to work in a timely manner and get you home safe is extremely important.

We are also putting \$37.5 million into the Murchison Highway. This is one of the engine rooms of our economy, linking the mines of the west coast, our fish farms, our forestry to the Port of Burnie. From there our fantastic miners, farmers and foresters can meet the markets of the world. The Murchison Highway is that link. It is one of the most difficult conditions you will find anywhere. Going over Mt Black in the middle of winter is not very nice. Doing so behind a truck, or in front of a truck, is not very nice. We cannot fix geography but we can fix our roads. By putting \$37.5 million into the Murchison Highway we want to see a more productive west coast, a more connected west coast and a safer west coast.

While I am on the subject of mining, we are putting \$1.6 million into exploration drilling contracts. You can talk to any drillers, any miners working on our west coast about the amount of potential we have in our mines, in the Mt Read volcanics prospectivity zone, how much potential there is for this state to rekindle its world-class reputation in the mining industry. It has been spoken about as one of the most mineral-rich provinces anywhere in the world. You can see varied minerals right across the spectrum. We are talking things like cobalt, tin, copper, lots of gold, zinc, iron ore and much more. What that means for the west coast is not just the mining jobs but coupling mining with minerals processing. At Renison, the bluestone mine,

they are pulling tin out of the ground, more than a kilometre deep in some parts, refining it on site and shipping it off.

We have an extraordinary future in mining. The Greens, when they have been in government with the Labor Party, have done anything they can to lock it up. We have spoken many times, friends of mine down the west coast, about Bryan Green's disastrous trips down there to tell people that the Tarkine extends right out through Tullah and as far as the eye can see. That kind of attitude speaks a lot about people. They want the benefits of living in a modern economy. They want to be able to go on their computers and their phones in their cars, go back to their homes. All of those things are put there by the mining industry, whether it is the dollars that it generates, or whether it is the minerals that it pulls out of the ground and puts to use. If you do not have a strong mining industry you do not have a strong country, you do not have a strong state and you do not have jobs for the future.

There is also \$600 000 for mining investment research innovation. If we can continue to grow our mining industry and for it to continue to create jobs, then we are much more likely to see a bright future for the west coast and for our young people.

Speaking of our young people, I want to raise quickly the Mountain Heights refurbishment. Mountain Heights is a wonderful school. People may have seen in the paper, I think it is acting principal, Toby Lutwyche, a mate of mine. He is less than 30 years old, younger than I am, not by very much, but he is stepping up and becoming principal of that school.

I have a few friends there of a similar age and they are doing wonderful things. To be able to recognise the hard work they are putting into our local communities, like refurbishing Mountain Heights is going to, as with King Island, improve education, particularly for practical kids, the ones who want to get hands on, get their hands dirty, figure out the science, technology, engineering and maths that make the world go around. Putting that kind of money into schools like that has life-changing consequences for good people right across our state.

Finally, I will talk about tourism on the west coast. One of the big headlines, eye bulging parts of this Budget is the \$19.4 million for the next iconic walk. For someone who has done the Overland Track and the Three Capes Track, I have to say that the Tyndall Range would rank in my heart even better than those. It is a truly stunning bit of country. To be able to put the next iconic walk on the west coast through the west coast range where those Mt Read volcanics are so productive regarding mineral wealth, but also to showcase the gorgeous mountains, the deep lakes, the snow and the wonderful biodiversity in that area, is going to show off the west coast but it is also going to show off Tasmania in ways that people might not see when they think of the rolling hills of the north west coast or the beautiful beaches of Freycinet.

It is wild and rugged country. That is part of the reason that makes it so outstanding, so exciting and so iconic. I am looking forward to the next iconic walk being rolled out on the west coast for our tourism industry. That is diversifying the economy of the west coast and becoming a magnet around Australia and around the world bringing tourists to our remote and regional areas, to bring in dollars and employ our young people.

There is \$8 million for the West Coast Wilderness Railway. In my first speech, I spoke about the creed of the old Abt railway workers. It is as relevant today as it was then, that we

find a way or we make one. The \$8 million that will go into the work that those railway workers were doing in the same country, on the same lines, to upgrade the track means that railway can have a future. People will be able to enjoy everything that the west coast has to offer through that railway. It will be extremely important as we move through the pandemic, open the borders and as our tourism industry begins to thrive once again.

I will give a little shout out to The Unconformity festival, which we are supporting again this year. It is like nothing you will see anywhere else in the world. That is why we love it. We do not call it The Unconformity for no reason. I encourage all members to get down there when it is next open and enjoy all that the west coast way of life has to offer.

I will touch on the north west coast where I live now and where my office is. One of the central things that we have learnt through this pandemic is the central importance of a good health system. On the north-west coast, we know it better than any other place. We have had a pandemic and we have had it in our health system. We are putting \$33 million into the Mersey Hospital redevelopment. There are people on the other side who tried to close it down, but we are not going to let that happen. We have secured the largest ever fiscal transfer from the Commonwealth to Tasmania to make sure that the Mersey stays open. We back the people of Latrobe, Devonport and surrounds. We back you, we back your hospital. We are putting \$33 million into it this year. We will put more money into it next year and into the future. We believe in the Mersey Hospital and the services it provides and the people of that region. It is a growing region and they deserve a great hospital.

There is \$5.9 million for the Burnie ambulance station. This is going to make it easier for our paramedics to provide the essential service that they provide right across the coast, putting it in a better position with upgraded facilities. We are going to look after those people because they look after us. They take our sick and our elderly to hospital. They are there when we need it. If there is a young bloke who is silly enough to get into a punch-up outside the Greens, even they get looked after, so supporting our ambos is really important for all of us.

There is \$11.9 million for more graduate nurses, and that includes 20 nurses in the north-west. Nurses put people at the centre of care, and we want to put them at the centre of our health system. There is \$11.4 million for the Community Rapid Response Service. I have met with those wonderful people who are out there in our community every day - the nurse practitioners providing people with the care they need, in their home, at the time they need it. They are wonderful people doing wonderful work, and they deserve to be supported in every way we can.

There are two new child and family centres, and these are wonderful community facilities. There will be one in West Ulverstone to service the central coast, and another in Waratah-Wynyard. I encourage people to get down there and enjoy those facilities once they are built. I spoke with the school cluster in the central coast around Ulverstone. People were so excited a child and family centre would become part of their community, and would become part of the educational make-up of our towns - bringing families into education, and young people and very young children into the world of learning. It is a transformational experience to be in a family working with these child and family centres. They want you to learn, to succeed and to grow.

There is \$4.2 million getting right to the very bottom of the circle of life - \$4.2 million for an antenatal clinic in the north west. We want to look after our mums and bubs in the



north-west. I am looking forward to taking part in it soon myself. Maternity services are such an important part of our healthcare system and so to be able to support with a \$4.2 million antenatal clinic gives it the recognition it deserves.

There is \$147 million for our roads from Deloraine through to Marrawah. That includes the Leith Overpass. I have spoken to many people in the community - a place I used to live at Forth - about how keen they are to make sure that road is safe. Again, this is National Road Safety Week, but the \$147 million stretches right across that corridor - Deloraine to Marrawah. We are talking Meander Valley to the far north-west, as far as you can go. We are looking at dozens of projects, to upgrade that road to make it safer and more productive; although it already is such a productive area of our state. If we are able to back that road and give people a road they truly deserve, then we will be taking Tasmania to the next level - and we will be looking after our north-west coast.

In terms of looking after our north-west coast, I will briefly talk about how important it is to buy local. People right across Tasmania have seen how much support there has been for their local shops, their local retailers on the high street, and for their local hospitality businesses, so we want to buy local as well. We want to back our manufacturers here in Tasmania, here in Australia to take part in the *Spirit of Tasmania*. This is the largest infrastructure build that Tasmania has ever undertaken. Dr Broad spoke very highly of it when he said that 'it was the equivalent of the King and the Anthony Scheme', and we built those here in Tasmania. We can do it here in Tasmania. We are an ingenious people. We are people who make things. We are people who get things done, and we want to make sure that the *Spirit of Tasmania* is able to be built in part or in whole in Australia and in Tasmania. Those are well-paid manufacturing jobs; their sovereign capability will live on a series of islands surrounded by islands. If we cannot build boats - and there are people in our own parliament who are telling us that we cannot build boats, despite the fact that we export them all over the world - then there is something wrong. We want to make sure that we are backing our manufacturers to take part in the *Spirit of Tasmania* which will be a truly once-in-a-generation build. We need to make sure that we buy local, that we build local and that we back local.

Finally, talking about the north-west, to the schools that we are planning to upgrade. There is a new school for Penguin, one of the most beautiful, fast growing places in Tasmania. It is a community that is almost second to none, and providing a new school for those kids, for that growing area, for those families who are moving into the Penguin district, we are looking after you. We want to see you succeed and we want you to have space to grow. More people will be coming and we are really looking forward to it.

We are backing the Devonport High School and the Spreyton Primary School with further redevelopments as well, because we know how important it is to look after our young people.

As the youngest member of parliament I want to speak about the opportunities for young people in this Budget. I want to talk about homes and about training. There is a 50 per cent duty deduction for first home buyers. That is a policy that we have developed before and we are delivering again, because we know that it was not just last year that it was important for people to get into their first home; it is this year, it is next year, the next four years, it is every year because buying your first home sets you up for life. It puts you on the pathway for investment, to a future, to a stable place to raise your kids. There is \$20 million for the Tasmanian HomeBuilders scheme, and there is \$19.4 million for the First Home Owners Grant.

It is all about giving people the independence to know that they own the home that they are living in; that their children will not have to move; they have a place where they can settle in, they can put down roots, they can join the local footy team, and they can have a good stable job.

We want to back people to own their own homes. It is the core of the Liberal tradition. If you are able to own your own home, in many ways you are able to control your own destiny. That is why we want to make sure that our young people can enjoy that future in an affordable way.

There is also training, JobTrainer, with 7000 additional placements. There is \$22 million in payroll tax relief. Young people and apprentice workers are not earning very big money, and payroll tax is in many ways quite a perverse tax, because it is not how much money you earn - it is how big a company you work for. You could be earning a small amount of money, as I was when I was a first year apprentice, but if you are working for a big company you are still getting your wages taxed. What we want to do is make sure that tax is gone. If you are an apprentice, if you are a trainee, if you are a young person, the company that hires you will not have to pay tax on the wages you are earning. That means more opportunities for young people.

Some of the apprentices and the apprenticeships that are available in our bigger companies that have to pay payroll tax are absolutely life changing. I have spoken with people who work for Elphinstone. I have spoken with one of the many apprentices of the year who have worked for Fairbrother. Those kids deserve a chance. Their mates deserve a chance. If we can reduce the tax burden on employing apprentices, then we are going to set people up for life. An apprenticeship is one of the best things you can ever possibly do. We want to make sure that people can do that, regardless of how big a company that wants to take them on is and given them opportunities. There are 4000 new placements for apprentices and we are very proud of that.

I will now turn to water and energy. They are the building blocks of life and they are the building blocks of a prosperous regional economy. There is \$28.5 million for the Don Irrigation Scheme for the people of Forth and surrounds. We know how great that country is. It can grow absolutely anything. You could put a toenail in there and you will grow a foot. If we can make sure there is water in the dry season at a time when the rain is not coming down then people can still grow their spuds and carrots and make plenty of money for our local community. It is about surety. It is about certainty. It is about delivering the promise of irrigation in Tasmania. We can feed this country and we can feed the world. That is why we are backing the Don Irrigation Scheme. That is why we backed the Duck Irrigation Scheme and schemes right across the state - because we believe in the transformative power of water. The minister speaks of it as liquid gold and that is absolutely right. The story of agriculture in Australia is 'just add water'.

**Mr Barnett** - Liquid gold.

**Mr ELLIS** - Absolutely.

Finally I will speak about energy. We know how important energy is to the future of our state. It is about Battery of the Nation. We know that Tasmania was built on the hydro schemes that were started 100 years ago. Rolling out the next generation of those schemes through pumped hydro and renewable energies - the 200 per cent renewable energy target generation

that we are delivering for Tasmania - is going to set up our state and our young people and our future, for generations: to be able to roll out the Battery of the Nation, to continue the hard work that the minister has done, that all Tasmanians have done through generations, to build our hydro, to build our renewable energy.

It is about honouring the past and building for the future. What could be more exciting than the announcement that came out today, about hydrogen potential, particularly at Grange Resources in the north west. This is a precursor of green steel and I am excited to see our super power rolled out.

**Time expired.**

[5.55 p.m.]

**Ms HADDAD** (Clark) - Madam Speaker, this has been a year the like of which none of us has ever seen before. Pandemics with the magnitude and effect of COVID-19 come around, hopefully, only once every 100 years or so. This pandemic has rocked the globe, indiscriminately ravaging every country, every demographic around the world, and it has presented unique and ground-breaking challenges to every government around the globe.

While we have seen the results of poor government decisions in countries like the United Kingdom and the United States and parts of Europe, on the whole Australian governments have made the right decisions to keep our cities and communities safe. Early action to work together, and early decisions to enforce lock-downs and close borders across each state and territory proved correct. While the illness and death toll in Australia has been heartbreaking and will not be forgotten, it has not been quite the devastating scale as seen in other countries such as Italy and the United States.

I, like many members of the Tasmanian community, was encouraged by the early commitment and tripartisanship from this Premier, to deal with the challenges that COVID-19 presented. However, in recent weeks and months that commitment from the Government has been well and truly abandoned, with the Government even refusing the Opposition's multiple requests for current briefings from Public Health and emergency services. The Premier confirmed this today in question time, telling the Leader of the Opposition in answer to a question that briefings would continue to be denied to the Opposition. We were invited, instead, to write him a letter. Playing politics in a pandemic is appallingly irresponsible and disappointing.

Labor supported the hard decisions that this Government had to make and called and pushed for more. At both state and national level, Labor called for stronger action on borders, for wage subsidy payments, and for support for those who missed out - including local government employees and people on work and study visas.

In many ways, the pandemic brought out the best in people. We saw community groups spring up to deal with unexpected and emergency demands. For example, Alexis Wildsmith, a Hobart resident, began the Southern Tasmania Community Network on Facebook to share urgent COVID-19 information as it unfolded. Now with over 10 000 members, the group continues to be a source of immediate and vital information for many people.

At a local level, we saw groups like Show Hope at the Wellspring Anglican Church in Sandy Bay established, to support the thousands of visa workers and international students who missed out on government support by providing food and other direct relief.

Football clubs, like the Glenorchy Magpies, for example, volunteered their time. Training and matches were cancelled, and so they gave their time instead to help pack hampers at FoodBank and deliver them for the West Moonah Community House and the Migrant Resource Centre as well as others.

Organisations like the Migrant Resource Centre, the Salvos, Hobart City Mission and hundreds of other NGOs found new and innovative ways to support people, some of whom had never needed to reach out to community organisations for support before.

In my own street in my neighbourhood, a Facebook community group was started by one of my neighbours, offering to help elderly neighbours with shopping, sharing produce from our gardens, and assisting people with information about COVID-19 when we needed it. It is still going now.

Another example was the project begun by the Taroona Community Association, called the Street Coordinators Program. Recognising they wanted to assist their community through the pandemic, the Taroona Community Association got together to discuss what they could do. Being a small and very connected community, the association's executive realised that between them, they knew someone in all but three of Taroona's 40 streets. They worked between them and with the wider community, and together they found one coordinator per street. That coordinator then had the responsibility to letter-box, phone and contact each household in their street to check in on residents and connect them to the help that they needed. The system worked really well and made sure that no one in Taroona fell through the gaps. The group is now going to continue the program, to deal with the upcoming fire season and they will easily be able to spring it back into action for any future emergency situations as well.

These are some of the examples of the positive things that the crisis situation of the global pandemic brought out right here in Hobart and our suburbs and I hope that many of these positives will endure once the pandemic is finally at an end.

Sadly, COVID-19 also exposed many of the structural flaws inherent in how our society works. It exposed the weaknesses in our health system. While health workers across Tasmania in hospitals and in Public Health and elsewhere worked incredibly hard and did an outstanding job to keep Tasmanians safe, the pandemic exposed how stretched and under-resourced the system was even before the pressures of a pandemic were added to their already heavy workloads. COVID-19 also exposed the inflexibility of some of our contracting approaches for the not-for-profit sector which needed more autonomy and flexibility in how they were able to tailor the services that people needed in an unprecedented and unanticipated way.

It also exposed the dangers in our prison system with overcrowding at Risdon now at dangerously unsafe levels. The very real risk of a pandemic outbreak at that site was frightening and it was only a matter of luck that that type of thing did not unfold on prison grounds.

Most devastatingly, the COVID-19 pandemic exposed how precarious our jobs market is and how incredibly dangerous this is for workers not only industrially but also when it comes

to their health. Right from the start of the pandemic workers were heavily criticised and publicly attacked for going to work when they had flu-like symptoms. They were told they were selfish and thoughtless. While their actions no doubt put themselves and others at risk, the Tasmanian and federal governments failed to recognise that the precarious nature of work means that people are stringing together multiple casual jobs just to make ends meet, and workers forced to string together multiple casual jobs in this way do not have access to sick leave, annual leave, or any other type of leave entitlement that would allow them to stay home sick. For those workers, staying home meant no pay. Staying home meant no money to pay bills, no money to buy food for their family, heat their home, or pay their rent or mortgage and so going to work sick is what our current workplace conditions forced those people to do. That is, of course, until the trade union movement fought for and won paid pandemic leave across multiple sectors.

A crisis like the pandemic laid bare how precarious our workforce has become. Thanks to years of Liberal governments at state and federal levels we have seen devastating casualisation in our workforce across all industries and sectors nationwide. There has been increasing unemployment and underemployment, weakening of working conditions, stripping of workplace rights, decreasing wages and conditions, all while the cost of living increases. COVID-19 saw massive job losses across the country and over 20 000 job losses here in Tasmania. People who were just getting by were plunged into uncertainty, rental and mortgage stress and even homelessness.

This year's Budget paints a worrying picture for those who are still struggling during this pandemic which is still upon us. In the Budget we can see huge levels of unemployment into the future. During the pandemic our unemployment rate rose from 6.4 per cent to 7.6 per cent, even higher than Victoria's unemployment rate during their recent lockdown. Worrying as that is, it is set to get worse, with unemployment set to average at 8.5 per cent in the 2020-21 financial year and 8.25 per cent in 2021-22, likely the worst in the nation. At the moment, a whopping 12 400 of the 20 000 Tasmanians who lost their jobs during the pandemic have yet to find another job, and for every job vacancy currently advertised there are 27 Tasmanians looking for work. It is these people that this Government has forgotten.

Coupled with this increasing rate of unemployment, the rate of employment is also down 1.7 per cent this year, falling by a further 1 per cent next year and a declining workforce participation rate too, only 60.5 per cent this year, falling to 59.5 per cent next year. This is most worrying and means thousands of people in Tasmania will likely stop looking for work altogether. Economic growth is also going backwards, declining by 1.5 per cent this year, and meaning that at least two consecutive years of recession lie before us.

Over the forward Estimates the Budget will be in significant debt and cuts will be felt across all areas of government spending. The main areas earmarked for savings over the forward Estimates in the Budget Papers that we have seen this week are economic affairs, \$55 million; housing and community amenities, \$25 million in cuts; social protection, \$26 million; environmental protection, a whopping \$48 million in cuts; and recreation and culture, \$15 million. Those cuts will hit hard and they will affect people.

This Government has said that we will build our way out of COVID-19. They said infrastructure, bricks and mortar, roads and bridges is the way to recover economically and socially, but what we have seen is a massive long list of commitments previously already announced being reannounced as new ideas or new spending. They have promised more in

infrastructure spending than they can possibly get out the door. We know this because last year they spent only \$500 million of the \$700 million they promised. The idea that they expect the Tasmanian people to believe that they will go even close to getting the more than \$1 billion promised this financial year out the door is simply not believable, let alone the \$5 billion over the forward Estimates.

While infrastructure is no doubt an important element of our economic recovery, this Budget forgets people. After all, we do not live in an economy. The economy is an illusory construct. The economy only exists because people exist. Economy means people, communities, individuals, families, jobs. While Tasmanians are struggling and finding it impossible to find work or enough work to get by and live a dignified life, people suffer and the economy suffers too.

After federal Labor called for wage subsidy and increased social security support during the pandemic, we saw the federal government introduce JobKeeper and JobSeeker. Those payments were lifelines that made it possible for people to put food on the table and pay their rent or mortgage, but too many thousands of Tasmanians are still relying on JobKeeper and the Government does not have a plan to deal with the fallout when that payment inevitably begins to be wound back.

It was utterly heartbreaking and cruel that the first industry to have JobKeeper wound back was early childhood education. Early childhood educators and carers working in that sector are the backbone of our society. They did some of the hardest yards of any industry very early on in the pandemic. They pulled together to support families when we were facing the greatest uncertainty any of us had ever seen. While families and communities were struggling to come to terms with the magnitude of the seriousness of the pandemic, early childhood educators were turning up for work, caring for our young people and making it possible for parents and carers to continue to work in their jobs. They were absolutely some of the unsung heroes of the pandemic, especially in those very early days.

The waiving of fees by the Government for a short period meant that sector could survive, and yet in one of the cruelest blows, the first workforce to have JobKeeper removed was this one. I could not fathom it at the time and I cannot reconcile it now. As the pandemic winds on with these spikes and outbreaks elsewhere, as we have seen in Victoria and more recently in South Australia, it is imperative that these workers and all workers are not forgotten or left behind.

This Government forgets people and it is no secret that early childhood education sector is one of the many industries with a predominantly female workforce. As we know, it is female-dominated industries that have the lowest pay and the most insecure working conditions of all sectors.

Labor has a plan to level the playing field for women in employment. We recognise that industries that primarily employ women were hard hit by the pandemic and will be disadvantaged as we recover from the recession. That is why we will invest in a Treasury-led task force to examine the gender barriers in the economy that continue to disadvantage women. The task force will include representatives from government, industry, unions and the community sector and will provide advice on what structural reforms are needed.

This initiative is one of the many elements of Labor's fully-costed plan for jobs. Announced today by Rebecca White and David O'Byrne, this is our solid and deliverable plan to get Tasmanians back into work. It is called Working for Tasmania and it is Labor's plan that will put in place the right support to industry, training and workers to create and support 35 000 jobs across this beautiful state. Job creation was the biggest economic challenge facing Tasmania before the pandemic. It has only been compounded by the job losses experienced over COVID-19.

Creating and supporting safe, secure, well-paid jobs with good working conditions must be our number one priority. Under Labor's plan we would put in place a number of the essential building blocks to get people back into work to give our state the best chance at a strong, economic and social recovery. We would create Labor's second chance career program recognising that age-related workplace discrimination starts as young as 35 or 40 years old and recognising that workers above this age were hit hard by job losses during the pandemic. This program would provide a \$30 000 apprenticeship guarantee for workers retraining for a new career over the age of 35. This would create new career and training pathways for 500 Tasmanians.

We all should be very proud of TAFE and our TAFE system. I am, and we all should be. My mum and dad both studied at TAFE, dad to become a chef and mum to become a commercial baker. Years later my mum was a teacher at TAFE and eventually headed the Drysdale Institute in what was arguably, in my view at least, its strongest period on record. Back when my parents were students at TAFE and when my mum was teaching there, TAFE was the answer for quality skills and trade training. It should be now.

Tasmanians have a long, proud history with TasTAFE, a lot of it we should be very proud of. Sadly this Government continues to forget TAFE, to starve it of funding and let down the thousands of Tasmanians who want to train there. Enrolments are down 31 per cent since this Government got elected. Skills shortages meanwhile are getting worse. That is why Labor has a plan to rebuild TAFE from the ground up. We would increase TAFE teachers by 20 per cent, funding 80 new full-time TAFE teaching jobs over four years. We will create a TAFE regional delivery fund to deliver more training in the regions and create a new taskforce to review the wider VET system. This complements our existing policy to make 20 000 TAFE places free in key areas of skills shortage.

Under Labor's plan we will also make sure public spending supports jobs. Under a Labor government we would implement a Tasmania first, buy local plan which would ensure Government contracts for all government departments and GBEs were prioritising purchasing goods and services from Tasmanian-owned and run businesses.

We would also ensure that at least 2 per cent of purchased supplies of consumables by government departments would be from Australian disability enterprises (ADEs). That would inject \$26 million into ADEs and create 300 jobs. It would also ensure that 20 per cent of workers on government-funded projects and jobs were apprentices. That would make sure that we are planning for and training the workforce of the future.

Labor recognises the danger of insecure work. Under this Government even the public sector has become far too reliant on casual and short-term contracts which provide insecure working conditions for public sector workers. Beginning with workers in the Tasmanian health system Labor will prioritise converting long-term contract positions into permanent jobs,

including full-time jobs where appropriate. This will begin in our vital health sector that relies so heavily on locums and casuals and short-term contracts. It will then be extended to other public sector agencies.

Our jobs plan also has commitments that will see government working hard to revitalise the tourism, hospitality and arts sectors that have been hit so hard by COVID-19 and which Tasmania has become so reliant on.

In recent decades Tasmania has transformed into a destination of choice for mainland and international visitors. It is vital that the globe begins to recover from the pandemic and while it does that we are ready to welcome those visitors back who now seek us out for our world-class bushwalking as well as our food, hospitality and events. That is why our plan includes support to help these industries recover and thrive after what is now being called the three winters in a row created by COVID-19 for those sectors.

Labor recognises the housing crisis Tasmania was in long before COVID-19, which has been seriously compounded during the pandemic. We have record numbers of people now homeless, sleeping rough and in rental stress at risk of homelessness. Under our housing works policy Labor would fast track the building of 490 affordable homes. By contrast this Government has delivered five. This intensive construction program will also create 550 jobs, including 75 apprenticeships. Only with a safe, secure roof over our heads can any of us live a dignified life where we can provide for our families and plan for our futures.

I began my contribution by talking about the challenges that hit the globe when the COVID-19 pandemic hit in March this year. Before COVID-19 made its way to Australia in March we faced a massive disaster of a different kind. The year 2020 began with massive raging bushfires across the southern parts of Australia. I happened to be in regional Victoria during that time with my family for my grandmother's 95th birthday. Where my family lives, in East Gippsland, bushfires have been the hallmark of summers for some time. It is getting worse and much worse every single year. What used to happen infrequently is now a constant and imminent threat every summer. The background sound of family gatherings is the ABC Emergency Radio broadcast and the sound of sirens from fire engines making their way to do what they can to help stem blazes that ravage the bush, the towns, the homes of that region. It is frightening and it is real. For the younger generation, like my kids and their cousins, it is the one key thing that keeps them awake at night and has them worried about their futures.

Climate change is the most profound challenge facing governments the world over. In Australia, only Labor governments can truly tackle the challenge it presents. As a party of government it is our responsibility to present policies that deliver what is needed to make tangible and lasting change to reverse the effects of climate change and deal with the future - policies that are deliverable in government.

As part of the jobs package announced today, Labor will invest in job-creating projects that will conserve and protect Tasmania's unique natural environment. It will create 200 jobs by supporting projects that will protect communities from the effects of a changing climate, including flood, erosion and fire mitigation, as well as threatened species.

This Budget is the most important in a generation: arguably the most critical since the Second World War. It was an opportunity for this Government to be bold and to reinvent Tasmania. It was an opportunity for Tasmania to see real vision, to learn from the challenges



of the pandemic and emerge a stronger, more compassionate, more resilient state, even more so than we were pre-pandemic. Instead what we have seen is a list of re-announced projects and commitments, most of which have not only been announced but have been delayed by months and years. When looking at this Budget I believe Tasmanians will see it for what it is - a narrow, small target budget that does not build Tasmania into the place we deserve it to be, the best place in the world to live.

When we needed to see a plan for jobs, we saw a plan that will lock in 8.5 per cent unemployment and do nothing to ease the pressures on working people or improve their working conditions. It is a list of unrealistic predictions and reannouncements of unachievable promises. They want to be the Government that builds us out of COVID-19 with roads and bridges, but in seven years they have not provided very much of either. Roads and bridges will not get us far if people do not have a job, or do not have a home, or are stringing together multiple insecure casual jobs just to get by.

That is why I am proud to be part of Rebecca White's Labor team, a team with a strong plan to get Tasmanians back into jobs, back into training and with the social supports around them they need to flourish. The plan announced today by Rebecca White and David O'Byrne provides the fundamental building blocks to recover, with more to be announced before the election. These are the building blocks that will not only see us recover from COVID-19 but will build us back into the best place in the world to live. I believe we are the best place in the world to live, and we can be even better under a Labor government that would govern for a compassionate, kind Tasmania.

[6.19 p.m.]

**Mr BARNETT** (Lyons) - Madam Speaker, I am delighted to stand in support of the 2020-21 Budget and our crucial plans to not only maintain a vibrant and growing economy but to build jobs to ensure confidence and to support our community.

What is important is we are backing Tasmanian households, Tasmanian families, those regional communities and businesses large and small across this great state of Tasmania. During the COVID-19 pandemic it has been a very tough time, the biggest economic and health challenge that we have faced since World War II. It has been such a pleasure and an honour to be part of the Government that responded to maintain that top priority of keeping Tasmanians safe and healthy wherever possible.

I want to congratulate the Premier, Peter Gutwein, for his steadfast and decisive leadership to take and lead our community through these very difficult and challenging times. People stop me in the street and say, 'Please pass on my congratulations to the Premier and thank him for his leadership'. This has been consistent since mid-March when COVID hit us thick and hard. In fact it hit us earlier than that, particularly in the seafood sector, and we had to respond quickly on behalf of the Government and in fact led the nation in our response to support the rock lobster industry roll over that quota and provide funding support to the seafood sector. I remember well working through the weekend to ensure we delivered an outcome for our industry and those involved in the seafood sector, and the rock lobster sector in particular, and we kept people in jobs and people on the ground.

It has been a real Team Tasmania approach. I talk about it often when I talk to my productive industries, key stakeholders and those in the community. We are working together,

shoulder to shoulder to get the job done. It has been such an honour and a pleasure to be part of a government that has been working with our community in partnership.

I remember very distinctly the many roundtables I hosted together with my relevant departments with our productive industries and key stakeholders to respond to the challenges of COVID-19 and the supply chain challenges, the lack of export markets and to respond to the health challenges of the coronavirus. It was not just the productive industries. I met with the companion animal stakeholders representing dogs and cats and our pets in the community that are important. We have one of the highest pet ownership rates in Australia in Tasmania. It has been a real pleasure working with them round the clock, round the table, to respond to those challenges. Likewise, we organised roundtables with wildlife parks in Tasmania to help them through these difficult times because of the lack of a market, lack of tourists, lack of visitors and people in their wildlife parks.

At the end of the day we are about achieving our potential in this state. Kate and I say to our three kids, 'We want you to achieve your potential. Be the best that you can be. Lean into your strengths and build on them.'. This is the same vision that we want for Tasmania: to be the best that we can be, to achieve our potential, to deliver on our natural assets, to have that competitive edge and deliver for families and individuals so that they can be the best they can be, so communities can be the best they can be.

The Budget that has just been delivered by the Premier and Treasurer is a budget for our times. In the face of the most deadly global pandemic the world has seen in a century, our response has been proportionate and strategic. As I say, Team Tasmania. We have been keeping people safe but this is a budget to recover and rebuild our community. Our economy is now returning to growth and we have seen that in the budget figures for next year. That is so encouraging. It provides a pathway back to the black in just a few years' time.

As I say, the Budget is all about jobs, confidence and the community and it includes the largest and most significant infrastructure build in the state's history. It is a landmark \$5 billion infrastructure investment in roads, rail, our schools, our hospitals, our homes, across the board. It will support 25 000 jobs across our great community of Tasmania and increase that aggregate demand right across our economy.

Tasmania is the best place in the world to live. We have proved it during this COVID-19 pandemic, thanks to the leadership of Peter Gutwein and the decisive action of this Government. The Budget has now responded and it is a winner. I was at the business breakfast just last Friday morning straight after the Budget and the feedback was very positive indeed. I notice Rob Mallett of the Tasmanian Small Business Council said -

Today's Tasmanian budget, whilst forged in the fires of the world's worst crisis in a hundred years, provides unprecedented opportunity for the Tasmanian small business sector.

That is very encouraging. Economist Saul Eslake said -

The overall conclusion is that this budget is an appropriate response to the circumstances which the government is confronting.

Madam Speaker, we are futureproofing our industry back in business recovery. We are making it easier to hire apprentices and trainees, and it was an excellent response from Felix Ellis, the member for Braddon, talking about the importance of our younger Tasmanians and getting into work, apprentices and trainees, not just in the electorate of Braddon but across the state of Tasmania. I really enjoyed listening to Felix Ellis's contribution.

We want to protect the Tasmanian way of life and keep Tasmanians safe. It is so disappointing that Labor again did not deliver an alternative budget. Quite frankly, it was nothing like an alternative budget. Their so-called jobs plan contains no specific initiatives for our important productive industries such as forestry, aquaculture and mining - nothing.

Labor says it will not work with the Greens again, when in fact it is just circulating a flyer around the community from the Leader of the Opposition, up to 30 000 homes apparently. What a joke. The flyer says, 'We will not go into a coalition with the Greens, we do not agree with that.' Well, we remember what happened last time - four long years of a Labor-Greens government. Of course they vowed and declared prior to coming into power that they would not do a deal with the devil. Former leader David Bartlett said, 'We will not do a deal with the devil', and they went and did that deal. Then we know what happened, Tasmania went into recession and 10 000 jobs were lost. It was a dreadful time. The forest industry was decimated, brought to its knees.

Nobody can believe the Leader of the Opposition and the Labor Party when they put out a flyer like that; it is absolute nonsense. They opposed our workplace protection legislation in this Chamber and publicly said they would stand with the Greens to oppose the Government's workplace protection legislation to allow people their right to work and operate a business free from the intrusion and the impeding efforts of those who want to stop them from working, tying themselves to equipment, to machinery, whether it is in the forest industry, in agriculture, mining industry, wherever it is. Why is it that Labor has supported this on the mainland at the federal level and in the various three or four other states on the mainland, but not in Tasmania? It is because they are so tied at the hip to the Greens they cannot help themselves. They do not believe for one moment what the Leader of the Opposition is saying in her flyer or publicly that she does not want to do a deal with the Greens. It is rubbish, and I do not believe it for one moment at all.

I want to say how proud I am of the agriculture sector and what this Budget has to deliver for agriculture. First, we have that \$10 billion target at the farm gate by 2050 and I am so pleased and proud we are on track. That is because of the policies supporting agriculture around Tasmania. We are taking agriculture to the next level, with \$12.3 million over the forward Estimates, providing that support for industry across dairy, red meat, horticulture, wine and many more of our agricultural sectors. I am pleased and proud to be working in partnership, on behalf of the Government with the Tasmanian Farmers and Graziers Association, Tasmanian Women in Agriculture, Rural Youth and Rural Business Tasmania.

Peter Skillern, CEO of the TFGA, said -

The state budget has once again shown the government's support for agriculture in the state. In conjunction with recent announcements, the total package for agriculture is to be warmly welcomed. The TFGA will work closely with the government to ensure that the implementation of these

announced programs and funding maximise the benefits and prosperity of Tasmanian farmers.

That is greatly appreciated. It is on the back of the \$1.9 million announcement a month or so ago, over the next two years, for the agricultural workers resilience program. That is all about the Tassie Harvest Jobs' Take your Pick campaign.

Madam Speaker, this is so important for Tasmania. Our objective, standing shoulder to shoulder with the industry, is to pick the fruit, harvest the vegetables, crush the grapes and get the product to market. We are there, backing you in right to the end to get that product to market and to ensure those jobs in rural and regional Tasmania not only remain, but are boosted.

I am pleased with the campaign we have had; an expectation of doubling the number of Tasmanians in those jobs. There was an estimated 3000 last year and an estimated 6000 this year. These are jobs for Tasmanians, thanks to this team Tasmania approach, led by our Government and policies that are delivering jobs in those rural and regional areas.

Regarding leading the nation, irrigation. Water is -

**Madam SPEAKER** - Liquid gold.

**Mr BARNETT** - Liquid gold. It is wonderful to know there is such a spontaneous response from Madam Speaker and others in the community who know how important water is. Seventeen of the last 21 major irrigation projects across Australia have been built in Tasmania. We are delivering in those rural and regional areas. Scottsdale is a \$57 million project with 84 irrigators, 106 properties, 8600 megalitres, 13 000 hectares supporting dairies, supporting crops, supporting vegetable growing of a variety of types and 92 kilometres of pipeline. This is investing in our future. It is future-proofing the north-east.

It was great to catch up with Michael McCormack this afternoon and to talk about our irrigation plans for Tasmania and impress upon him our plans for our pipeline to prosperity tranche 3. I thank the Deputy Premier and former minister for primary industries for his leadership to get these projects on the table and to set out that vision which we are backing to the hilt. Michael McCormack was very encouraging. I was delighted to talk about not only Scottsdale but all our plans for water for the years ahead. He can see that we have delivered so well in the past. He knows we are on the money when it comes to delivering jobs in our rural and regional areas.

It is disappointing there was no commitment from the Labor Party regarding irrigation in today's Budget reply, only criticism and negativity. Labor's commitment at the last election paled in comparison to our \$70 million, which we have now increased to \$85 million. There was nothing for irrigation development and nothing directly for agriculture from Labor, other than the carbon copy that they referred to of the Government's research and training initiative. It is an insult to one of the cornerstones of Tasmania's economy. It is not good enough. Is the Opposition for our investments in rural and regional Tasmania, or is it against it?

I mentioned seafood and the aquaculture industry. We are a strong supporter of our iconic seafood. We want to support Tasmanian seafood and are backing it with \$500 000 to support the seafood industry growth and recovery plan. We provided that support during the COVID-19 pandemic, over \$5 million for the industry to support them during those tough times

to keep people in jobs and on their boats. We are now reviewing the Living Marine Resources Management Act 1995. A study is being undertaken into the Tasmanian ocean business incubator concept. Julian Harrington, chief executive of the Tasmanian Seafood Industry Council said -

The Tasmanian Seafood Industry Council welcomes the 2020 Tasmanian State Government Budget and the announcements that will help the Tasmanian Seafood Industry further recover from the impacts of COVID-19.

I really appreciate that. We are backing the salmon industry, supporting sustainable growth, a further review of the sustainable growth plan and identifying potential sustainable growth areas for new off-shore fin fish marine farms. We are on the go.

In addition, we have border controls. I am pleased and proud of my department in so many ways for supporting and serving their local community regarding border control through Biosecurity Tasmania. It provides the protection to keep Tasmanians safe. Whether it be at the airports or, at the sea ports they play a critical role in keeping Tasmanians safe, keeping our community free of pests and diseases. Biosecurity is everybody's responsibility, it is not just the Government's, it is not just industry. The Budget locks in \$6 million for the continued delivery of the traveller assessment and border control measures across the state, the G2G PASS app and the Tas e-Travel system. Should the COVID-19 situation change in other states there will be increased resources to ensure that Tasmanians are kept safe. Those resources will be increased if required. That is on the back of the \$2.6 million we have injected into the Budget for securing our borders, to keep people on the front line in Biosecurity Tasmania. I say thank you to the people in Biosecurity Tasmania for serving your community. I am grateful for your wonderful service.

Inland and saltwater recreational fishers are so important. It is part of the Tasmanian way of life. We have some of the best fishing opportunities on our coastline but also inland. We are funding new amenities at popular trout fishing locations. We hosted the World Fly Fishing Championships. We have funding support for Anglers Alliance Tasmania, likewise for TARfish and for infrastructure improvements to access jetties and improve boat and trailer parking. Now we are part way through developing the recreational fishing strategy, a 10 year plan. We are about protecting the Tasmanian way of life.

A bit has been said on this side of the House about the importance of our renewable energy powerhouse status. What a time to be alive and to be part of a Government that is leading not just Australia but the world in having low-cost, reliable, clean electricity. It is what the rest of the world wants. It is what the rest of Australia wants. We are delivering. In our Budget we are funding support for Project Marinus and Battery of the Nation. It was great to be able to talk to Michael McCormack about Project Marinus and Battery of the Nation and how important those projects are to Tasmania and the nation.

It is all part of the Tasmanian Renewable Energy Action Plan and our world-leading renewable energy target legislation that passed through unanimously in this Chamber. I am very grateful for the support across the Chamber and across the community, not just from members of the public but children as well. The children responded to the children's version. Many adults said the children's version of the action plan was far more interesting and easier to read than the adult version. They might be right. I appreciate that feedback from our students.

We are developing the Tasmania Bioenergy Vision 2021. That includes the development of a feasibility study and a boiler replacement program for heating purposes. There is a lot happening in this space. It is all because we have world-class water assets and world-class wind assets. We are an island state. In the Roaring Forties we have three renewable energy zones and we are kicking goals. We are laying out that vision. It is a 10-year vision, a 20-year vision. Our plan is to be not just 100 per cent self-sufficient in renewable energy but 200 per cent by 2040.

From the feedback, it has taken the world by storm. Despite repeatedly mentioning our renewable energy advantages, Labor has made no commitments today in the budget reply. Tasmania is still none the wiser as to whether Labor totally supports our plans or not.

They mention Woolnorth, they go back to Basslink but it is here and now and it is the future. What is their position, Madam Speaker? Nobody in the community would be any the wiser. They have no idea of the views of the Labor Opposition.

I will make some comments on renewable hydrogen. Tasmania will be the epicentre for renewable hydrogen, not just for Australia but for the world. Let me make it clear - Tassie's renewable hydrogen is Tassie's super power. We have available a wonderful natural asset. You need three things for hydrogen - water, electricity, and infrastructure - road, rail and port.

We have it here in Tasmania. We have 1 per cent of Australia's landmass, 12 per cent of Australia's rainfall, and 27 per cent of Australia's water in storage. We have the water, we have the electricity - and it is low cost, reliable and clean - and we have the infrastructure, with Bell Bay clearly identified as a hydrogen hub. Likewise, Burnie is in the game. Today, Origin Energy, Able Energy and Grange Resources have identified as progressing with their feasibility studies - two at Bell Bay and one at Port Latta at Grange Resources.

In addition, Fortescue Metals has come through the process as well, and is looking at a 250-megawatt facility based out of Bell Bay. It is very encouraging. We are talking about hundreds of jobs and thousands, probably millions - possibly billions - of dollars of investment in the years ahead. We have the long-term plan - the renewable hydrogen action plan - that will take us through to 2030, where we will be a manufacturer, an exporter and, indeed, a global exporter going forward.

Cost of living is very important. I emphasise that we have one of the most generous concessions for Tasmanians doing it tough. We have a regulated power price decrease of 1.38 per cent at 1 July this year, and we want to keep downward pressure on prices. All our plans are about keeping downward pressure on prices to support all Tasmanians, including residential, business and small businesses doing it tough.

I turn now to mining. There is no greater friend of the Tasmanian mining and mineral processing sector than our majority Liberal Government. The sector is a big employer, particularly in the north-west and west coast but also across the state. More than 50 per cent of our mercantile exports are from this sector - \$2 billion annually - and we are proud of it. We are backing it in with \$2 million in funding over the next two years to encourage investment, including the export drilling grants initiative; \$150 000 to gather the update of the geoscientific data; and \$450 000 has also been provided through our mining sector innovation initiative.

We are backing that in and will continue to do so. Labor will need to do more than simply cutting and pasting and talking about ports. We already have a TasPorts masterplan that is far in excess of the contribution from Labor.

Forestry is so important, particularly in rural and regional areas, with thousands of jobs; it is worth \$1.2 billion to the economy. We have backed it in in our Budget with a \$5 million transfer from Sustainable Timber Tasmania to TasRail, which will improve the cost-effectiveness of transporting forest products across the state. It will be more efficient, more effective and easier for the industry to transport those products.

It will provide funding support and more jobs at Triabunna on our east coast, with Elphinstone Engineering commencing the manufacturing of 40 additional log container units. I was pleased to be with the Minister for Infrastructure and Transport, Mr Ferguson, and representatives of the forest industry, including Nick Field, recently, to make that announcement. I am also looking forward to catching up with Ross Hampton, the Australian Forest Products Association CEO. I note Ross' comments about the Government -

I commend the Tasmanian Government for showing leadership on the issue and listening to the science and I urge all states and territories to do the same.

He was talking about the Tasmanian Government's significant investment in bushfire mitigation and the inclusion of mechanical fuel reduction in the state's Fuel Reduction Program.

We have funded support for LAND Tasmania. I have mentioned earlier the importance of animal welfare and our pets and we have provided \$200 000 to the Dogs' Homes of Tasmania and to the Ten Lives Cat Centre to support them with their critical upgrades.

Turning now to veterans. Tasmania has a long and distinguished military history. On Remembrance Day last week most in this Chamber wore red poppies to say thank you to our veterans and that was much appreciated. We continue to roll out the Government's program - a \$750 000 election pledge to a number of new and existing programs to support our veterans and ex-service personnel. We have 10 500 veterans in Tasmania, so we continue to support the RSL as the peak body. I will also mention the Teddy Sheean VC Memorial Grants Program. In a few weeks we will witness the investiture of Teddy Sheean - the posthumous granting of the Victoria Cross. We are grateful for his service and his sacrifice. When I think of Teddy Sheean I think of three words - courage, mateship, and sacrifice. That inspires me and it inspires many other across Tasmania and Australia, when they think back on his story and his service to his country and to his mates.

We have funded the Veterans Active Recreation Program, and we have also funded the Frank MacDonald Memorial Prize, with support for year 9 students as part of that process. Legislation has recently passed through this place supporting Legacy Tasmania in the north and the south of the state, with some \$40 000 per annum.

We are delivering massive infrastructure support right across the state in this Budget. In conclusion, I will say that it has been wonderful to be supporting and serving the members of the community in the Lyons electorate. I am pleased and proud to be a member for Lyons. I know the community of Lyons is cautiously optimistic and I appreciate that optimism. We have taken action across all our sectors to create the right environment for business so they

have confidence to invest, and to create and support more jobs, and to rebuild a stronger and more resilient Tasmania for all Tasmanians.

Madam Speaker, before I conclude I move -

That the debate be adjourned until tomorrow.

**Debate adjourned.**

## **ADJOURNMENT**

[6.49 p.m.]

**Mr BARNETT** (Lyons -Minister for Primary Industries and Water) - Madam Speaker, I move -

That the House do now adjourn.

## **Mount Barrow Challenge Armitage and Tullochs - Auction Houses**

[6.49 p.m.]

**Ms O'BYRNE** (Bass) - Madam Speaker, I rise to raise a couple of issues tonight. The first is the Mount Barrow Challenge which has run for more than 10 years in the north. It is run by a local Launceston organisation called Fit'n'Kicking. The annual foot race sees participants conquering Mount Barrow via walking, running or a combination of both. Each year all the funds are donated to a nominated organisation. They have supported organisations such as the Holman Clinic and Launceston Feeding the Homeless with, on average, \$2500 being donated each time. The New Horizons Club benefited this year, and received a donation in these most difficult of times of \$3880 - a record amount.

The initiative was formed out of group of fitness friends who wanted to support the cause of fundraising for motor neurone disease when one of them was diagnosed with that disease. From the initial small group of friends, the event has grown to an annual tradition and is treated by many as a training event for the Point to Pinnacle. This year's event was a bit chilly and windy - as I personally experienced - but the resolve of all the people who attended to fundraise never weakened. It came together with the help of many volunteers who I would like to mention.

Thanks to Jono, Leanne, Tim and Greg for driving the buses. The support car drivers were David, Duncan, Chris and Pete, and the very important car shufflers - if you knew how cold it was on top of the mountain, you would understand how important that role was - were Kirsty, Carol, Cheryl, John, Emma and Therese; there is probably a few I have missed and if I have, I apologise. Steve Button very importantly provided the portaloos because this is a path with no such infrastructure, and Carol and her crew every year provide entertaining signs all the way along the route to try to encourage you to keep going and not lose heart, and also the ones that alert road users to the event. Carol puts in a huge effort every year with more than just the signs, and I know that Meg, who runs the event, has her deepest appreciation. She



apparently says she is retiring, but I am not sure that Meg will let her so I wish her well with that. Thanks also to the all-important teenage cheer squad and lolly bag providers in Ava, Chelsea and Ashley. Their work was very much appreciated.

I end with the most important tribute to Megs Culhane, who despite already juggling having two small businesses, works to put on this event every single year and to ensure that every dollar is maximised for the charity of choice for that year. It is a great event, it supports great causes and Megs is a great human.

The other issue I wanted to raise is to do with recognising that 2020 has been a very difficult year for many local businesses in Bass, but this evening I wanted to pay tribute to two well-known but probably not discussed that much in parliament businesses in Launceston, Armitage and Tullochs. These two auction houses have been a mainstay in Launceston for decades and many of us, over the years, have purchased something or found something in our homes that has come from one of those businesses. After a little research it turns out that Armitage Auctions was set up in 1972 by Hilary Armitage and Tullochs in 1980 by Kaye Pickett and Peter Callahan.

This was prior to the internet and for many Tasmanian families actually prior to them having phones in their home. Computers were in their infancy and the net was something we just used to play tennis over. As many of us in the Chamber know, Tasmanians love their antiques, collectables, tools, cars and outdoor equipment. I really was pleased to see that during 2020 both these auction houses continued to meet the community's need and did so in a COVID-safe way by moving onto online bidding, first Tullochs and then Armitage.

The businesses demonstrated the tenacity for which small business in my electorate is known. They did not just identify change in purchasing behaviours, they also acted upon those evolving buying patterns. I know sometimes we as a community might need to have a conversation about some of those things that are offered for sale through second-hand agencies, whether they be auction houses, antique places or community fairs, and that is a debate I think at some stage we have to have, but it is also something that impacts in regional fairs, online platforms, eBay and Gumtree. In the meantime, I want to thank both Tullochs and Armitage and congratulate them for their service to the wider community and on their nimble approach to business in 2020.

### ***Central Cookery Book - Ninetieth Anniversary***

[6.53 p.m.]

**Ms BUTLER** (Lyons) - Madam Speaker, I have often heard it said that you are not a born and bred Tasmanian unless you have a copy of the *Central Cookery Book* in your kitchen. The ubiquitous Tasmanian cookbook turns 90 this month. This is my copy of the fifteenth edition, stained and faded with goodness knows what, and well used for basics like scones, pancakes and teacake.

**Ms O'Byrne** - That is a bit neater than my copy.

**Ms BUTLER** - I will explain why in a minute. As shadow minister for Heritage and a former health practitioner, I want to pay tribute to this little book that reminds us that heritage is not just buildings and bridges, it can also be the small everyday things. The *Central Cookery*

*Book* is the subtle prompt that sometimes our heritage can be sitting on our kitchen shelf right at home.

In 2009 my colleague, the member for Bass, Michelle O'Byrne - and I pay credit to her today - who was then the minister for Women, inducted the author, Alice Irvine, into the Tasmanian Honour Role of Women. Miss Irvine, as she was known, was a domestic science teacher in the Tasmanian Education department. In fact the front cover says, 'late mistress of domestic science in the Education Department', a quaint term.

She taught cookery and nutrition across the state and was a trailblazer in daily dietary requirements. Like so many professional women of the period, she received little credit for her work and even finding a photograph of her, I am told, has proven difficult for historians. Nine decades on the *Central Cookery Book* is still used by many of us for basic recipes such as pikelets, anzac biscuits, rock cakes and tomato sauce, amongst others, which have endured over generations. I am told that originally Miss Irvine included hints on cooking for invalids, perhaps reflecting the presence of ex-service personnel in the Tasmanian community after World War I. Notable by their absence are recipes that arrived with post-World War II migrants, like pizza, pasta and stir-fry, to name a few.

In the foreword of my copy written in 1976, Miss Nancy Brown, supervisor of home arts and part of the editorial committee of, I note, six women, says -

The 'Central Cookery Book' has always been regarded as a basic textbook for cookery in Tasmanian schools. It has become almost a household word in most homes in Tasmania, as the majority of girls who have learnt cookery at school have retained their copy to form the foundation of their collection of cookery books when they have set up homes of their own.

Again I say how quaint, but ironically, as I opened the front cover of my copy of the *Central Cookery Book*, I realised that I had actually swiped this copy from my brother Paul, who selected this book as he was awarded the accounting prize, no less, in 1987. That would have been his grade 12. He selected it; it is not like he was just given this book.

**Ms O'Byrne** - And that's why it's so neat?

**Ms STANDEN** - Yes. I am sure my own copy that would have been more dog-eared was around somewhere. Anyway, I can certainly attest to the key role this text played in at least one young man's life, as well as all those girls that Miss Brown referred to.

The *Central Cookery Book* has had a profound impact on the health and wellbeing of so many Tasmanians. It is part of what inspired me after four years of high school home economics, as it was called then, to go on to postgraduate study in nutrition and dietetics.

Madam Speaker, I know you will join me in wishing this gem of a book, the *Central Cookery Book*, a very happy ninetieth birthday.

## John Madden - Tribute

[6.57 p.m.]

**Ms BUTLER** (Lyons) - Tonight I rise on the adjournment to deliver a tribute on behalf of the Madden family, good friends of mine. The following has been written by Dr Andrew Mulcahy -

Dr John Madden, 1954-2020.

Dr John Madden recently passed away in Hobart after a short illness. John was a specialist anaesthetist who served the community of Hobart for more than 30 years and was renowned for his great care for patients and his skills as an anaesthetist throughout his career.

John grew up in Launceston under the care of his aunt and uncle after the loss of both of his parents at a young age. He won an entrance scholarship to the Launceston Church Grammar School where he completed his secondary schooling. He excelled academically and was accepted into the University of Tasmania Medical School in 1972.

After gaining his medical degree in 1977, he travelled to Brisbane for his intern year at the Princess Alexandra Hospital. After completing a residency year at the Royal Canberra Hospital in the ACT, John took a year off to go travelling in Europe with his wife Sally.

Upon his return to Australia, he worked in general practice in George Town before successfully applying for an anaesthetic training position at the Launceston General Hospital.

During his first year as an anaesthetic registrar in 1982 John became the first anaesthetic trainee from the LGH to pass the anaesthetic first part exam at the Faculty of Anaesthetists. John continued his anaesthetic training in Hobart at the Royal Hobart Hospital as well as at the Royal Children's Hospital and the Royal Women's Hospital in Melbourne. John passed the final exam and became a Fellow of the Faculty of Anaesthetists, Royal Australasian College of Surgeons, in 1985.

In 1986 John accepted a position in the Hobart Anaesthetic Group, known universally as the group, and soon after was appointed as a visiting medical officer to the Royal Hobart Hospital as a consultant anaesthetist.

John always excelled at successfully completing the challenging academic requirements of his anaesthetic studies and he was subsequently invited by the faculty of anaesthetists and later the Australian and New Zealand College of Anaesthetists to be an examiner for the final anaesthetic exam. John undertook his work as an examiner with pride and absolute dedication, and he also assisted many anaesthetic trainees successfully prepare for their final exams.

As an anaesthetist, John was renowned for his excellence, his great knowledge and skills, and his absolute calmness in dealing with crises. John

possessed all the attributes of an ideal anaesthetist, with the safety of his patients being paramount. He was extremely popular with work colleagues, surgeons and nurses alike, not only because of his skills as an anaesthetist, but also because he had that rare ability to combine all those skills with kindness, compassion and humour.

There is so much more to John than his excellence as an anaesthetist. John was a dedicated family man who was devoted to his four children, Sam, Jack, Tom and Alex, and three grandchildren, and supported each of them in their individual pursuits throughout their schooling and their adult lives. John was also an accomplished athlete throughout his life, particularly in the fields of long distance running, bike riding and mountaineering. John was extremely physically fit and enjoyed competing in many of these activities with his children. John completed several marathon races, as well as ultra-marathons, and was a stalwart veteran of the run the Overland Track event for many years.

During his short illness John was cared for by his loving family and his devoted wife, Ange, and passed away peacefully at home with his family present.

In closing I place on record that all of us would only hope that our children can reflect on us with as much pride and respect and love as what John Madden's children do. He was admired and loved dearly.

### **Landcare Action Grants and Weeds Action Fund**

[7.02 p.m.]

**Mr BARNETT** (Lyons - Minister for Primary Industries and Water) - Madam Speaker, as Minister for Primary Industries and Water, it is a great honour tonight to speak on how the Government's Landcare Action Grants and the Weeds Action Fund is supporting farmers, landowners and the community across rural and regional Tasmania. It is supporting one of our great strengths, that is agriculture, our natural environment and our environmental assets.

The Government continues to work with our farmers and Landcare groups to sustain the natural resources that underpin our world-class agricultural sector. There is no greater supporter of Tasmanian agriculture than the Government. We continue to support these important community members who are undertaking sustainable agriculture, river care activities and managing weeds on their properties. I want to thank those many volunteers.

Landcare Tasmania is an organisation I have been supporting. It has more than 200 groups and organisations in Tasmania, essentially operated by volunteers. The spirit of volunteerism is strong in Tasmania. We have one of the highest rates of volunteers in Australia. It is particularly so in rural and regional areas. To Landcare Tasmania, Rod Knight and the team, thank you for what you are doing. The Government has doubled the funding support for Landcare Tasmania. We are proud of that initiative. Tasmanian Farmers and Graziers Association is a key partner with Government in these Landcare Action Grants. Thanks to the president Marcus McShane for what you are doing and to the CEO Peter Skillern and his team, including Nikki, for promoting these Landcare Action Grants.

The grants support farmers, landowners and community groups to improve landscaping, riverine health, stability and resilience, support enhanced land management practices to reduce erosion and sedimentation and assist the community to holistically manage natural and productive land and waterways across the landscape. Round 3 of the Landcare Action Grants program is currently open until 23 December. I encourage as many as possible to apply.

I opened that last round at Chris Kilby's property, Pine Lodge, at Westwood in the state's north, not far from my home town of Hagley. It was great to see the work that Chris has in store to provide support for the Meander River, to help prevent cattle impacting on that waterway. Round three follows a very successful round two.

I also want to mention the Tasmanian Government's Weeds Action Fund. There has never been a worse time to be weed in Tasmania. We are backing it with \$5 million of support. I acknowledge Ross Hampton from the Australian Forest Products Association and his strong support for our forest industry, the sustainability of it and the importance of it in delivering jobs in rural and regional Australia, particularly in Tasmania. Welcome to the Chamber, Ross.

I thank NRM North for its role in delivering stage two of the Weeds Action Fund on behalf of the Government. It is working with NRM South and the Cradle Coast Authority. The launch of stage two was at Frank Archer's property at Landfall, overlooking the Tamar River. Landfall is a great Angus cattle breeder. The Archers go back many generations, including with my own father who was president of the Angus Society of Tasmania and Australia. He judged at every royal show in Australia, and judged in North and South America. They are beautiful beef cattle. I was brought up to know and understand that Angus beef is best. Landfall is renowned for Angus beef, not just in Tasmania but across Australia. Well done to Frank Archer for hosting us there to launch of that program. Thanks Rosanna Coombes for your leadership of NRM North. To the operations manager, Eleanor Hetharia, and to the Weeds Action Fund co-ordinator, Dr Raelene Mibus

I acknowledge Pam Allan, the new-ish chair of NRM North, who is doing a great job. I appreciate her leadership.

In conclusion, both the Weeds Action Fund and the Landcare Action Grants program are terrific. I acknowledge Ian Sauer as chair of the Weeds Action Fund Committee. He has done a great job of leadership making it very clear that it is not just a responsibility of government but it is everybody's responsibility. We want to promote the importance of tackling weeds to protect and support our agriculture, our environment and our natural resources. I pay a tribute tonight to both the Landcare Action Grants program, the Weeds Action Fund and all those involved in the flowing of those funds and the objectives of those programs.

### **Budget 2020-21 - Threatened Species Funding**

[7.08 p.m.]

**Dr WOODRUFF** (Franklin) - Madam Speaker, something that becomes apparent very quickly when reading the Liberal Government's Budget is that Tasmania's native wildlife does not get a guernsey. They are being completely left out at being protected. Tasmania's rare, threatened and endangered species remain on the brink of extinction under this Liberal Government. This Budget does nothing to address their continual steps towards being lost forever, not just to the people in Tasmania today, but for future generations forever.

We face a huge dual climate and biodiversity crisis. If we do not confront it head-on it will be catastrophic for our planet for every country and place therein, including Tasmania.

The Tasmanian Government's website page called the Threatened Species Link records that 680 species are listed as threatened, either rare, threatened or endangered under the Tasmanian Threatened Species Act 1995.

The same website page, Madam Speaker, that has the task of informing us about management and conservation advice, says at the bottom in bright red font, quote -

Please note: the fauna data on the threatened species link is currently not being maintained. As such, some of the information may be out of date and some links will not function.

What an abject failure of the Liberals in government. Not only do they not have an ounce of interest in putting serious money into protecting and reversing the decline of threatened species status in Tasmania, they are not even documenting the status of that decline. Not a cent of money is directed in this Budget to the threatened species link website, or to the skilled staff that administered it in the past. Even more sombre reading in the Budget is that five currently listed species are expected to show a decline in their threatened status next year by 2021, while three more species are predicted to improve their status.

It is not at all clear from the Budget papers, which species are expected to improve their status. We have no scientific information or population monitoring data to understand what that was based on, because since being in government for the last six years, this Government has cut money to monitoring programs and the collection and reporting of threatened species population data. The evidence is that the trend in Tasmania for species protection is going in the wrong direction, and it is going that way fast. The Government has shown zero interest in protecting threatened species, even when they have been given a clear and direct opportunity to make a difference.

The endangered leafy sun orchid on Rosny Hill could have been protected by Mr Jaensch. He could have refused to grant Crown Land consent for a massive hotel development. Instead he chose to waive that problematic development through. He could still refuse to grant the authority for the use of that nature recreation conservation area, to protect the endangered orchid - which lives nowhere else except at the top of Rosny Hill, on that sunny hilltop. He could do that for the orchid, and for the host of other very substantial reasons that that hill should remain in public hands for the community to enjoy. But, he remains silent.

This Budget was an opportunity to re-fund the Threatened Species Unit, and to recommit to bringing species back from the brink of extinction. Instead of another flyover or a bypass, we could be rewilding, encouraging regenerative farming, funding conservation land management, and putting an end to native forest logging. Funding could have been committed to review and update the now 20-year-old Threatened Species Recovery Strategy. That strategy ought to govern the 680 threatened species listed in Tasmania. The government has a responsibility to do everything it can to protect them from extinction.

Instead of additional funds, all we have seen from the Gutwein Government towards protecting species and the Threatened Species Unit is more cuts. The funding for the Threatened Species Unit is cut in the year 2022-23, by nearly half a million dollars -\$446 000.

The Budget Paper footnote explains this cut as resulting from the completion of the Save the Tasmanian Devil initiative. Well how would it be the case, that there is an indication that the threat to the Tasmanian devil has ceased. It would certainly be welcome news if that were the case but that is not the information we are in receipt of, and it is not the information that is widely understood in the community that the Tasmanian devil has not changed its status.

The devil facial tumour disease was first discovered in the 1990s and is already estimated to have reduced the State's devil population by 75 per cent. There is a huge task still ahead of the researchers who are doing incredible work trying to identify how normally non-transmittable tumours are being passed onto healthy devils.

There is preliminary research to show that transmission is comparable to a transplant rather than the ordinary transmission of disease. To cut funding for that crucial research now would be disastrous for the survival of Tasmanian devils.

The information available on the Save the Tasmanian Devil website says there is no evidence to date of the decline in devils stopping or the prevalence of the disease decreasing. The Tasmanian devil remains endangered and until the Government invests in skills and programs, we will continue to see a decline and extinctions across Tasmania.

**Time expired.**

**Denise Delphin - Tribute  
Pork Processing in Tasmania**

[7.16 p.m.]

**Mr FERGUSON** (Bass - Minister for Infrastructure and Transport) - Madam Speaker, tonight I rise to inform the House about an important local woman, Denise Delphin, a pioneer and a shining light for people in the northern suburbs of my electorate of Launceston in Bass.

I pay tribute to Denise Delphin tonight. She is still alive and kicking, and she is still in the job - but she has announced her retirement in the lead-up to Christmas this year.

**Ms O'Byrne** - Hear, hear.

**Mr FERGUSON** - Anybody in this House, certainly members for Bass and perhaps Lyons, might be aware of what a tremendous person she is. She is a very humble, kind and generous woman. I am advised she has been working at the Northern Suburbs Community Centre, based in different parts of the northern suburbs, for 37 years. For 21 of those years, she has been general manager of the organisation.

Ms O'Byrne would agree with me that Denise is a wonderful woman. I have worked with her on many issues. Over 37 years, many governments have no doubt worked with her on a range of issues.

She has brought the northern suburbs' presentation and sense of status and esteem very much to the fore in the time that I have known her, which would be since around 2002.

I found her to be a constant during that time; she is somebody who has tirelessly worked for the local community - for women, men and children; for disadvantaged communities; for people who have made a new home here as refugees; for people who have fallen foul of the law and have needed to mend their ways; for people who, for whatever reason, have had family separations and struggled to find a path forward; for families who have been victims and perpetrators of violence; for people who have lost their licence; and for people who did not have a licence, but were caught driving, and trying to find them a way to come back to a proper way of living.

She is somebody I really admire and this House ought to take note of her character. She was named as Launceston's Citizen of the Year in 2019 - and not before time. At the time, in February last year, the citation from the City Council said this -

It is often said that hard work spotlights the character of people. Some people turn up their sleeves, some people turn up their noses and some just don't turn up at all.

Denise certainly is in the turn up their sleeve's category. This amazing woman has been instrumental in transforming what was once a small centre to a community centre.

The citation hints at the fact that in that time Denise worked with the Tasmanian government and particularly for then minister Mrs Petrusma on developing a brand-new community centre to replace the very tired old site at Archer Street in Rocherlea. It is now a beautiful property, well appointed, with lots of space, and speaks to the importance of the work that is being conducted there. It is a genuine new home for the Northern Suburbs Community Centre.

They are doing marvellous things - time will not permit me to go into them all, but it includes housing programs and literacy programs. Denise was instrumental in establishing the Men's Bizz group and the Men's Shed, and childcare services. I have worked with her on issues to do with neighbourhood crime and safety programs.

I have mentioned the mentor driver program. She and her team, including volunteers she has fostered, have run carols events, been involved in the Healthy Tasmania initiative, and been involved in the Good Neighbour Week. As I say, there are supportive employment programs and a NILS outlet as well for people to get some financial support to pay the bills and to buy an appliance for their home. They continue to cook meals and freeze them for people at affordable prices for those who need that support and there is a vegetable stand and, of course, the peace garden. It just goes on and on and she deserves our thorough praise and in this House on behalf of the people I wanted to say those words about her.

In conclusion, Madam Speaker, I inform the House about a very important development in Tasmania that happens to be in my electorate. I have been working with the Minister for Primary Industries and Water, Guy Barnett, on this and we are very pleased to inform members that we are keep pork on your fork this Christmas. As we know, we have had a major risk of losing processing of pork in Tasmania. We are grateful that Tasmanian Quality Meats stepped in and continued to run the Devonport facility. They have committed to do this until Scottsdale Pork has their new \$3 million facility at Scottsdale to which we have granted \$2 million to make it commercial. Until it is commissioned, TQM will continue to do that work. This means



that these jobs in the processing sector will stay here in Tasmania. Without this initiative all Tasmanian pork to be processed could only have been done interstate. I thank my colleague, minister Barnett, for working with me on that.

I particularly acknowledge the Unwins at Scottsdale Pork including Joseph, Daniel and Roger. They have been working extremely hard and I have been on site, seen the work that is under way, and it is a brilliant construction on the way. This supports not just the processing sector but also supports our growing sector here in Tasmania. We, as a clean producer of pork in Tasmania, should be processing it here and we should be buying it. I look forward to updating the House as that development comes to the commissioning phase.

**The House adjourned at 7.22 p.m.**