



PARLIAMENT OF TASMANIA

HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY

REPORT OF DEBATES

Wednesday 19 August 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 - Border Closure

Ms WHITE question to PREMIER, Mr GUTWEIN

[10.02 a.m.]

Just two weeks ago you set 31 August as the date you would make an announcement about when Tasmania might reopen its borders to safe states. Yesterday you deviated from this plan. In an announcement that surprised everyone you have extended border restrictions for a further three months. Like you, we have been inundated with people who have been affected by this decision. They include families of fly-in fly-out (FIFO) workers, those who plan to attend weddings for friends and family members and, sadly, funerals for loved ones. There are also hundreds of Tasmanian businesses and thousands of jobs that are on the brink if the borders remain closed indefinitely.

We understand and accept that you have said you have made this difficult decision based on Public Health advice. However, your own recovery council has expressed the importance of your Government being open and transparent with the community about your strategy to manage COVID-19.

You say you have accepted all of PESRAC's recommendations. Will you commit to sharing the Public Health advice and the modelling that informs that advice so people can fully understand why you have made this decision now?

Ms O'Connor - Do you not support it?

Mr O'Byrne - She said we support it.

Ms O'Connor - No, she did not say we support it. She said 'understand and accept'.

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I thank the Leader of the Opposition for that question. I think there was a question thrown across the Chamber then: do you support?

Ms White - Yes. We want you to table the advice and the modelling so that we can understand it.

Mr GUTWEIN - You do support it. Dr Mark Veitch together with Commissioner Darren Hine as the State Controller and also the State Health Commander will be joining me at lunchtime and we will be explaining their advice. It is relatively complex in terms of the moving parts of this in respect of the reasoning behind setting 1 December as the date to open our borders.

I have heard from industry that they want certainty. They want to know where we are going. That is why we have set a date and on 1 December we will open to safety restrictions. That is the position we have taken.

You only have to look at what is occurring in Victoria at the moment to understand that with them in a state of disaster, and also with serious concerns being expressed about the level of their testing, that they have some challenges in front of them.

Today, once again, they have provided an update with more than 200 positive cases; more deaths as well again today. What is interesting is that yesterday the Victorian Premier indicated his concern that testing levels across the community had fallen by 30 per cent. It is only a week or so ago that we were getting testing results in Victoria of over 400. If testing is reduced by 30 per cent and you reduce that 400 number by 30 per cent as well, you get down into the two-hundreds. What is going on in Victoria at the moment is of real concern. They have some challenges in front of them.

Regarding the border date of 1 December, as I said very clearly yesterday, Public Health advice, advice from the Department of Health, the State Control Centre, which includes the State Controller and the State Health Commander, has informed the decision concerning the time frame.

I can understand the difficulties they all face because I felt it yesterday in announcing that date. It is challenging and that is why we have provided additional support to the tourism and hospitality sector, encouraging increased visitation across the regions, out of individual municipalities to get people into accommodation and to ensure that they engage with tourism experiences. We know this is a difficult period.

Another point I will make and it is something that needs to be put on the record, is that Victoria with the difficulties it is in, is 60 per cent of our interstate tourism market. It has to be understood that that market is not coming back quickly. It is incumbent upon all of us to ensure that we do what we can to drive intrastate visitation and support those businesses and experiences here.

In the last full financial year, my understanding is that interstate visitation impacted on our economy by around \$2 billion. In the same period, there was more than \$1.6 billion, almost \$1.7 billion, spent by Tasmanians out of the state. What we need to do is to encourage Tasmanians to spend locally, to buy locally, and to assist us to employ locally as we work our way through this period.

Regarding the 1 December date, if things worsen, if there are no safe jurisdictions, then we obviously have another decision to make. A further point I make in that context is that if things improve over the period to 1 December and Public Health advice changes and that we can have a travel bubble to a safe jurisdiction, then we will accept that advice, but it is important that we take Tasmanians with us.

A recommendation from PESRAC was in relation to ensuring that we clearly communicated our response to Tasmanians, importantly what safeguards we have in place and what the plan is. Yesterday, I announced the plan regarding its timing. We will start to provide further information to the Tasmanian community concerning our health system readiness, our ability to track, trace and respond rapidly and importantly, information about what is occurring

in other jurisdictions as well. There is no doubt that Tasmanians are anxious in the main about what it means when we do open our borders. We need to ensure that they understand when we say a jurisdiction is safe, what that actually means.

On this side of the House, we will get on with the job of taking Tasmanians with us and supporting those industry sectors that need support while we do it.

COVID-19 - Quarantine Enforcement

Ms WHITE question to PREMIER, Mr GUTWEIN

[10.09 a.m.]

You have decided to keep Tasmania's border restrictions in place for at least another three months but the sacrifices that people are making risk being undermined if controls at the borders are not properly administered and enforced.

We have been contacted by an individual who travelled from New South Wales to Tasmania and was given an exemption on compassionate grounds to quarantine at a private residence. On arrival at the airport she showed her G2G PASS and was given an information pack but then she was left by herself to catch a taxi to her destination. During her 14-day stay in quarantine, no-one checked on her. She was never proactively offered a test. She was only given a test when she insisted on it at the end of her quarantine period.

This is concerning, because we have heard evidence from Victoria that, in one in four cases, people who are meant to be in quarantine at home, when they were checked, were not there.

In this case, no-one from government even bothered to check that this person was following the rules. Luckily this person did the right thing but how can you guarantee other people will be as responsible? Sadly, this is far from an isolated incident. We have heard similar stories from multiple people who were not visited during their home quarantine period.

How did this failure happen? Will you commit to making sure that people in home quarantine are checked at least once?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I thank the Leader of the Opposition for that question. I am presuming you have actually brought that to the attention of the State Control Centre or to my office.

Ms White - This person did the right thing.

Members interjecting.

Madam SPEAKER - Order. Order, please.

Mr GUTWEIN - Under our system, there are supposed to be regular contacts, and at the end of the day, visits as well. There is also a text system that is established to remind people,

if they are in home quarantine, on the 5th and the 12th day, I think, in terms of testing. My understanding is that they should be contacted -

Ms White - Is everybody visited?

Mr GUTWEIN - Excuse me, just for one moment. Can we have the details of that person, so we can follow up the circumstances?

Ms White - Details of multiple people.

Mr GUTWEIN - If we could have them. You are not telling me, seriously, that you are sitting on details of multiple people?

Ms White - These are people who have done the right thing. These are loop holes in your border control.

Madam SPEAKER - Order, please, order.

Mr GUTWEIN - I think the Leader of the Opposition has just confirmed to me that she is aware of some issues that need to be fixed, and has been sitting on them to raise in parliament. When did you first become aware?

Ms White - Yesterday.

Mr GUTWEIN - Why did you not bring it to our attention yesterday?

Ms White - I am doing it now, Premier.

Mr GUTWEIN - At the end of the day we have a responsibility when we lead parties. If you are so concerned, and if you were aware, why did you not bring it to our attention at the earliest opportunity?

Ms White - I am doing it now. These are multiple cases of people not being checked.

Mr GUTWEIN - Could I ask you, in all seriousness, to please send me that email as quickly as you can, so that we can look into these issues?

Members interjecting.

Madam SPEAKER - Order, this is very unseemly behaviour. For anyone watching parliament, this is kind of reckless. The Premier is speaking; he is asking a reasonable question. If you want to answer it, please do so, but do not continue with this rabble. People's lives and deaths are at stake here.

Mr GUTWEIN - That has really concerned me. If you are aware of information that we should be following up quickly, then please bring it to my attention. Do not just sit on it.

Ms White - These people did the right thing. These people are not the problem.

Madam SPEAKER - Order. Leader of the Opposition, I am warning you.

Mr GUTWEIN - When you have an example where somebody has not been contacted, do not just sit on it to use in parliament.

Members interjecting.

Madam SPEAKER - Warning.

Mr GUTWEIN - I am truly staggered that she would not, as a matter of urgency, have forwarded that matter on.

Ms O'BYRNE - Point of order, Madam Speaker. It is very clear that this person actually did raise it with government when they insisted on a test at the end of their quarantine. Clearly the Government is aware that no test was provided, because they then had to provide one at the end of their quarantine.

Madam SPEAKER - That is not a point of order, but *Hansard* can record it.

Mr GUTWEIN - That is not an answer to the issue. If you have a list of individuals who believe they have not been followed up appropriately, please forward it to me so that we can do the right thing and follow them up.

Ms White - They did that.

Duck Hunting Season

Dr WOODRUFF question to MINISTER for PRIMARY INDUSTRIES and WATER, Mr BARNETT

[10.14 a.m.]

Last month a document inadvertently released under a Greens RTI, titled Minutes to the Minister for Primary Industries and Water, revealed that your department strongly recommended against the duck hunting season on a range of reserve lands. This recommendation was made by your principal wildlife management officer of Game Services Tasmania.

The document noted that other states are taking measures to protect wild duck populations after significant waterbird decline on the mainland due to severe drought, and that Tasmania's participation would be important for the recovery of Australia's native duck populations.

Minister, earlier this year, in response to the Greens' questions in parliament, you suggested the decision to open up this duck hunting season was sustainable. However, the briefing note prepared for you makes it clear that proceeding as normal with this season was not sustainable.

What advice, if any, have you received that makes you confident enough to reject the strong recommendations of Game Services Tasmania, as well as to take a completely different management direction from other states?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I thank Dr Woodruff very much for her question, and the opportunity to respond.

I make it very clear on behalf of the Government that we recognise that appropriately managed duck hunting is a traditional form of recreation in Tasmania. As I have previously advised, the department manages an open season to provide access for recreational hunting and has strict regulations and procedures in place to ensure that hunting of ducks is humane and sustainable.

I have also indicated previously that long-term population monitoring of wild duck populations, conducted annually by the department, shows no evidence of long-term decline in wild duck numbers.

Dr Woodruff - Hold on, this is not true.

Madam SPEAKER - Order. I know you are attempting to respond, and I am attempting to keep order.

Mr BARNETT - Thank you. Wildlife population trends are determined using scientifically robust and statistically valid methods -

Ms O'Connor - Yes, that is why they advised you to stop the season this year.

Madam SPEAKER - Order, Ms O'Connor.

Mr BARNETT - Wild duck population monitoring has been regularly conducted in Tasmania for more than three decades under previous governments of all forms and all colours, including the Labor-Greens government. The same surveys, the same reviews, the same assessments - and, as far as I am aware, there was no ban on duck hunting under the Labor-Greens government when it was in power.

Surveys undertaken in February 2020 showed that numbers remain within the range observed in recent years. The 2020 hunting season for wild duck in Tasmania opened on Saturday, 7 March and closed Monday, 8 June.

Ms O'Connor - Who made the decision?

Madam SPEAKER - Ms O'Connor, order.

Mr BARNETT - Thank you, Madam Speaker. Wildlife enforcement officers monitor the activities of duck hunters at wetlands to ensure compliance with the rules and regulations.

Dr WOODRUFF - Point of order, Madam Speaker. We were asking specifically - point 45, relevance - what information the minister had that was different, because he is not responding to that part of the question.

Madam SPEAKER - I cannot instruct the minister how to answer the question, but I can ask him to remain relevant.

Mr BARNETT - There were many parts to the question, and part of the question referred to the RTI, and that was what I was about to respond to before we were interrupted.

However, Madam Speaker, with respect to the draft minute referred to in the question, that was not provided by the department to me or my office. I received no advice.

Ms O'Connor - Who stopped it then?

Mr BARNETT - Are you interested in an answer?

Madam SPEAKER - No. It does not look like it. Excuse me, Greens members: could I respectfully remind you that you are not above anyone else here, and you are not allowed to interrupt.

Mr BARNETT - Madam Speaker, as I was saying, I received no advice from the secretary that I should make a new order or an amendment order to change the provisions for the 2020 duck season.

I was advised of the secretary's decision to open specified reserved land for duck hunting in the course of normal business shortly before the opening of the season.

Madam Speaker, section 30 of the Nature Conservation Act 2002 provides for the minister to determine, by order, the seasons, dates and places for the taking of various game species in Tasmania. The Nature Conservation Open Seasons Order 2004 currently defines the period of the wild duck open season in each year as that period, and that has been noted.

Madam Speaker, I have said before that, in terms of the long-term evidence, there is no long-term decline in wild duck numbers.

Dr Woodruff - That is not true.

Madam SPEAKER - Dr Woodruff, warning number one.

Mr BARNETT - Thank you Madam Speaker. I will conclude, and make it very clear that it is based on advice from the department and surveys across decades of past governments including the Labor-Greens government.

COVID-19 - Border Closure and State of Emergency

Ms OGILVIE question to PREMIER, Mr GUTWEIN

[10.25 a.m.]

Last month you extended our state of emergency until 31 August and you said this is because of the terrible situation in other states. We have heard you describe today what is happening in Victoria and we are all very aware of the challenges we have, but it is not the state of emergency here; we are in a different scenario.

In light of your announcement yesterday to provide necessary certainty by keeping our borders closed until 1 December, will you today commit not to extend the state of emergency

to implement this but instead bring specific legislation to the parliament to keep our borders closed or to control our borders? I have spoken about this before in the House and I believe it is time to end the state of emergency under that legislation and return sovereignty and full democratic decision-making to our parliament. Will you bring that legislation forward?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I thank the member for Clark, Ms Ogilvie, for that question. The State Emergency Management Act was designed and passed by this place and amended within the last handful of years to be fit for purpose for the circumstances we find ourselves in. If you understand that then you would obviously understand as well that within the State Emergency Management Act there is a number of levels. Obviously one is a state of emergency, the other is a state of alert. We are currently at the state of emergency.

The key aspect of the powers that the State Controller utilises at the moment is captured under either a state of emergency or a state of alert in terms of our borders. At state of emergency level it provides the State Controller with a range of additional powers should he need to use them, should there be an emergency that is affecting us on our shore.

The other point that should be made clear is that the State Emergency Management Act provides for either an emergency occurring or the risk of an emergency. I argue very strongly that there is the risk of an emergency in terms of what is occurring in Victoria on the basis that they are still in the heightened state of a state of disaster, which is above a state of emergency. We obviously do not have that next step.

As to the extension of the state of emergency, I will receive advice from the State Controller supported by other agencies, DPAC being one, about whether we should extend the state of emergency or step back to a state of alert. If Victoria remains where it is I believe it would be fair to expect that the state of emergency will stay in place. That can be for a period of up to 12 weeks, which would take us out to the end of November, the end of the period where our borders are currently being controlled. However, within that period, the state of emergency can be taken off. It does not have to remain in place for the entirety of that period and should circumstances change it will be dropped to a state of alert if necessary.

Regarding introducing specific legislation, that is not on my radar. I believe that the act is fit for purpose. The other legislation that plays into this is the Public Health Act, under which there is a health emergency declared as well and the Director of Public Health has a range of powers under that.

You would be well aware that as we stepped into this there was a staged approach. The Director of Public Health first took action under his act and then elevated that to a state of emergency. We then followed the progression with the state of emergency legislation.

It would be my view, and I hope that we can end our reliance on this act at the earliest opportunity. However, as I have said, Victoria is very concerning at the moment. I hope they get their testing results up. I sincerely hope for all Victorians and all Tasmanians who have friends or family over there that we will see a natural decline in the number of positive cases. It is concerning that if testing is dropping at the same time as positive cases are occurring, there is strong correlation between the two and I hope they can get more Victorians to test.

Coming back to your question, it is not our intention or on our radar to introduce further legislation. I believe the legislation currently being utilised under both of those two acts is fit for purpose for the circumstances we are in.

COVID-19 - Border Closure and Restrictions

Mr TUCKER question to PREMIER, Mr GUTWEIN

[10.25 a.m.]

Can you update the House on yesterday's announcement on borders and border restrictions remaining in place until 1 December?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I thank the member for Lyons, Mr Tucker, for that question and his interest in this matter. It is important that we provide some more information to the House regarding the advice that was received and the decision-making that occurred throughout this.

Our number one priority throughout coronavirus has been the health, safety and wellbeing of Tasmanians. I recently received advice from Public Health, the Department of Health and the State Control Centre, which includes the State Controller and the State Health Commander. The nature of that advice was that, as a result of a range of factors, our borders should remain under restrictions and closed until 1 December. Those factors included the risk to public health posed by uncontrolled transmission in Victoria and, to a lesser extent, the transmission occurring in New South Wales, and the need to monitor and understand the progression of the virus in these locations and what impact this community transmission may have on other states and territories.

Furthermore, noting that whilst our public health and hospital system has been readied and resourced to adequately deal with a significant outbreak of the virus and has previously demonstrated its capacity in relation to the north-west outbreak, the Victorian second wave has provided further insights into the stress placed on the hospital system when managing a significant outbreak. In Victoria, this has included the cancelling of and withdrawal of health services including dental, elective surgeries and other minor procedures as a result of the capacity being taken up in their hospitals with COVID-19.

Extending the time until we open our borders provides for our health system readiness to be further improved and ensures outbreaks, should they occur, do not necessarily mean the withdrawal of other health services, as has occurred in Victoria. In Victoria, they have more than 1000, maybe 1200 or more, staff who have been furloughed and have either tested positive or are in isolation.

Furthermore, and it is important we touch on this, we have all seen the heartbreaking situation unfold in residential aged care in Victoria, a situation that has resulted from the high rate of transmission of the disease within the community. At the moment there are around 1600 aged care residents who have tested positive and over 1300 staff who have tested positive out of the broadly 7500 positive cases they have.

While aged care is a federal responsibility, the fact that Tasmanians are in a federally funded and regulated aged care setting does not change the fact that it is Tasmanians who are the residents. It is important we accept responsibility for their care through this period and ensure they are kept safe. Given our aged population and the broader Tasmanian demographics, through Public Health and in collaboration with the Commonwealth and THS, we are working on preventing community spread, whilst also supporting the aged care sector to prepare.

Public Health and DPAC have met regularly with representatives of the aged care sector in Tasmania, including the Aged and Community Services Tasmanian group, the Aged Care Guild and the leading aged care services in Australia since earlier this year. Following National Cabinet last week we, together with all other jurisdictions, are working with the Commonwealth to prepare bilateral plans to further strengthen our aged care preparedness and response measures.

Whilst the state has been constantly engaged with the sector and pandemic plans are in place, additional work is under way in collaboration with the sector and the federal government on this matter. It is clear that broader workforce planning and crisis readiness needs to be undertaken to ensure that all facilities are sufficiently prepared and ready to cope with an outbreak should that occur.

It is also a fact that Tasmanians are relatively older and more vulnerable than other Australians. Understandably at this time, many are anxious and, in some cases, very fearful and distressed by the thought of the risk of opening our borders even to relatively safe jurisdictions. The additional time we have now will enable information to be provided widely to inform our community of the safeguards we have in place, such as health system readiness, including testing, tracking and tracing, and our capacity to rapidly respond and deal with outbreaks as well.

It will also provide time to ensure Tasmanians are comfortable trusting in our border measures to protect us from high-risk areas as well as enabling travel to safe areas that pose little risk.

I also received additional advice from Treasury - not through the State Control Centre - part of which was included in the July Economic and Fiscal Update, that indicated the initial shutdown in March, April and May this year wiped out around \$100 million a week in economic activity in Tasmania.

The lifting of restrictions has seen an estimated \$40 million per week in economic activity return, as well as 13 400 of the 20 000 jobs estimated to have been lost at the peak. Importantly, Australian Bureau of Statistics - ABS - labour force data for July released last week showed that we had the highest employment growth in Australia, which was pleasing.

Treasury advised that a further shutdown, like that which has occurred in Victoria, would wipe out an additional \$500 million to \$600 million in economic activity from our economy.

Based on all this advice, I am firmly of the view that the decision to delay our border opening to safe jurisdictions until December is the correct one. Throughout this pandemic, we have been agile and responsive. It has meant that at times we have brought forward the easing of restrictions and other times we have extended them.

If things change, if circumstances on the mainland improve more rapidly and the advice is that we can open to a safe jurisdiction sooner, we will. That will need to be viewed as a bonus and Tasmanians should plan ahead, based on the time line to the end of November with a 1 December opening, as we have outlined.

The strategy we have outlined for fortress Tasmania is working and is keeping Tasmanians safe. It is keeping our health system safe, our aged care residents safe and is protecting our economy from the risk of a deadly second wave, such as is being experienced in other jurisdictions.

It would be foolhardy to progress, based on the advice we have received regarding the significant impacts that would be felt both in our economy, but also the risk that exists at the moment, to opening our borders sooner.

As I said very clearly, if we receive Public Health advice that indicates that the circumstances in Victoria are controlled and that other states and territories are in a safe position, consideration will be given to opening to safe jurisdictions sooner. Tasmanians should plan for a 1 December opening to safe jurisdictions and, importantly, we will work very hard to ensure that Tasmanians across our community understand clearly the steps we are taking and the safeguards that are in place to protect them and to protect their health.

COVID-19 - Essential Worker Exemption Process - Changes

[10.33 a.m.]

Ms WHITE question to PREMIER, Mr GUTWEIN

You have taken steps to change the essential worker exemption process, which is an admission that the system was flawed and an acknowledgement that public confidence in the scheme was falling. However, your changes do not go far enough because you still allow essential workers, including those from Victoria, to step straight off a plane and onto a work site.

Public Health advice requires all Tasmanians tested for COVID-19 to isolate until they get a result. Why are Victorian workers coming in under your essential worker scheme treated differently? Why are Tasmanians required to isolate while they wait for a COVID-19 test but mainland workers flying in here are not?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I thank the Leader of the Opposition for her question. As I said, we will rely on Public Health advice -

Ms White - Why is it different for Tasmanians compared to mainlanders?

Madam SPEAKER - Order.

Mr GUTWEIN - As I said yesterday, we are strengthening the steps in relation to essential traveller exemptions. The reason for that is we are going to be in this period of restrictions for a long time so it is important we take that step.

As they have been requested, businesses must provide confirmation that services and skills for the required work cannot be sourced in Tasmania and are time-critical. Further, businesses should only source essential services and workers not available in Tasmania from other states ahead of Victoria or other designated hotspots, unless it is for lifesaving or industry-critical needs.

Each application is assessed individually, based on the information provided. Under the current system, it is first assessed by the team at Biosecurity Tasmania and then by the State Control Team, with the final decision by the State Controller. That is the process that has been followed all along and, as I said yesterday, I have confidence in the decisions that are being made.

As I announced yesterday, we will now add a further step to that arms-length process. The Department of State Growth will now be involved in the assessment process along with DPIPW and the State Control Team. They will provide another layer of review in the process. To keep Tasmanians informed, we will also make publicly available statistical and regional information regarding essential traveller exemptions granted to enter Tasmania. This will be done on a weekly basis taking into account people -

Members interjecting.

Madam SPEAKER - Order.

Mr GUTWEIN - Madam Speaker, again - and I come back to a matter that was raised - my understanding of the system as it works at the moment is that specified persons travelling from an affected region in Victoria or affected premises, either in New South Wales or Queensland, if they are listed, are currently required to undertake a clinical health assessment on arrival. For sites that do not have a medical presence - if they cannot be tested onsite when they get off the plane - they must be tested within 24 hours.

The clinical health assessment includes health screening questions, a temperature check and obviously the COVID-19 test if it is available onsite when they arrive. Obviously anybody who does not pass the clinical assessment and has symptoms will be asked -

Ms White - About 50 per cent of Australians are asymptomatic, but have COVID-19.

Madam SPEAKER - Order.

Mr GUTWEIN - We take Public Health advice on this.

Ms White - Why are Tasmanians treated differently to the mainlanders?

Mr GUTWEIN - We have taken Public Health advice on this right throughout this process and we will continue to do so.

Agricultural Industry - Seasonal Workforce and Job Opportunities

Mr STREET question to MINISTER for PRIMARY INDUSTRIES and WATER, Mr BARNETT

[10.37 a.m.]

Can you update the House on how the Tasmanian Government is working with the agriculture industry to assist it to attract and retain an effective seasonal workforce and identify new employment opportunities for Tasmanians as well?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I thank the member for his question and for the opportunity to spend time with Tim Reid at Reid Fruits just a few days ago learning more about the importance of the fruit growing industry in Tasmania and its response to COVID-19. I thank the member for his interest and question and look forward to responding.

I also acknowledge in the Chamber today Mark Kable and Terry Brient from the Tasmanian Agricultural Productivity Group, and Howard Hansen and Peter Cornish from the Fruit Growers Tasmania. I really appreciate the opportunity to work together in partnership to address some of the very important issues raised in the question.

The fact is that the COVID-19 pandemic has changed the world in which we live but at the same time we know that the primary industries - the vegetable, fruit and seafood sectors - have to get food on the table not just to feed Tasmanians but also to provide food for the great nation of Australia and for our export sector.

The COVID-19 outbreak has had an impact and it means restrictions at the border, as the Premier made very clear today and in recent days. It has changed the way the industry has operated and conducted its work. The fact is that we are heading into seasonal workforce demands which peak in the summer time, particularly in that December to March period, but right through spring, summer and into autumn.

Through an environmental scan and a needs assessment for that workforce, we have identified a 4700, or just short of a 5000, gap that will be necessary during that peak time in the December to March period. We need to address that so we are working in partnership with the fruit growers, with the Tasmanian Farmers and Graziers Association, with the wine industry and across the board so that we can work together to deliver for Tasmania. We need to ensure that the fruit can be picked, the vegetables can be harvested and we can get the product to market in the time available. That is our ambition.

Today, I am pleased to announce a \$1.9 billion package over a two-year period to help meet that need. It is the Agricultural Workforce Resilience Package, which has key elements. The first of these is an advertising campaign to get Tasmanians into jobs. This is about jobs, jobs, jobs and about putting Tasmanians first.

We are going to have a two-year strategic industry partnership agreement with our key stakeholders, some of whom are represented in this Chamber. We will be looking not only at building resilience across the industry, but also at promoting and targeting skills and training to get the job done, to get Tasmanians into work. We want to build the capacity and their skills

and training so we get them fit for purpose to do the job. We are pleased and proud of that part of the package.

We are going to have an 1800 hotline through FarmPoint where it is a one-stop shop. You can get that information whether you are in agriculture, the wine sector or in the fruit growing sector. It is a critical single point of contact that will be available for our primary producers to access that information.

Safe Farming Tasmania: those in the industry know that it is already working well. We are proud and thankful for that, but we will boost that over a two-year period with more support so that COVID-19 safe work arrangements can be put in place for all of those sectors as we get Tasmanians into those jobs to meet the need for that workforce.

There will be a new Tasmanian agribusiness workforce roundtable, and representatives in this Chamber today are the representatives on that roundtable. It will be chaired by my secretary, reporting to me as minister, and it will be represented across government. This is not only one single focus, it will be across government - team Tasmania working in partnership with the key stakeholders to meet this need, to get the job done, the fruit picked, the vegetables harvested and the product processed and then to market. That is what we are aiming to do and we want Tasmanians to do this.

We will do this on the back of the Agriskills Entry Program announced last week by the Deputy Premier and the Minister for Education and Training. Thank you for the leadership there because that is an absolute ripper of a program which has been well received by the partners in industry.

You heard Nick Hansen last week and how pleased he was on behalf of Fruit Growers Tasmania. I spoke to Nick again on the weekend. He is very happy indeed and we are pleased to have Labor's support for that program.

Our agriculture sector is worth \$1.64 billion at the farm gate but the processed food value is \$4.86 billion. Agriculture is a cornerstone of our economy, providing those jobs in rural and regional Tasmania. We are proud of that and we are working in partnership.

As the theme of this Government, we have been making very clear that we are producing local, harvesting local and buying local. The Minister for State Growth wants you to buy local and he is leading that campaign and doing a terrific job.

Throughout the pandemic emergency where the Government sought to be clear and consistent and to provide certainty to Tasmanians, unfortunately the Labor Party - and Ms White in particular - has done the opposite. No-one would have any idea where Labor stands based on their flip-flopping.

Madam SPEAKER - Minister, you are well over six minutes.

Mr BARNETT - Madam Speaker, they have requested a royal commission.

Madam SPEAKER - I appreciate that it is good news, but you have had enough time.

Mr BARNETT - I will wrap up with a quote from an editorial in the *Mercury* -

Open the borders, close the borders, lockdown the state, ease restrictions:
Labor is working hard to undermine the Government's coronavirus response
but instead of showing the voting public how it could be a credible
alternative, the Party shows a lack of resolve and a lack of consistency.

Duck Hunting - Right to Information Request

**Dr WOODRUFF question to MINISTER for PRIMARY INDUSTRIES and WATER,
Mr BARNETT**

[10.44 a.m.]

In response to media reporting on a briefing minute released under RTI that revealed it was recommended that you curtail Tasmania's duck hunting season, the secretary of the Department of Primary Industries, Parks, Water and Environment, Tim Baker, issued a statement claiming you had never received the minute titled 'Open Season on Wild Duck 2020'.

Earlier this year, your response to questioning from the Greens in parliament contained phrases and information contained within that briefing minute.

No other briefing minutes in relation to duck hunting were released under our RTI request. How do you explain this difference? Is it normal for your department to issue a recommendation in a briefing minute to you, for you to never see that briefing minute, and then for your secretary to decide unilaterally to act against the explicit advice recommended in the minute, all without your knowledge or input?

Are you prepared to state on the record in parliament that you never saw this briefing minute and were in no way involved in the decision to open up the duck hunting season as usual?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I thank the member for her question and her persistence in pursuing a conspiracy theory because that is what the Greens are very good at, and you are at it again - a conspiracy theory.

I responded honestly and as comprehensively as possible in my earlier answer. I am not sure if you were not listening, but I am happy to repeat what I said earlier.

Ms O'Connor - No.

Mr BARNETT - Yes, I will. You have asked me the same question yet again. Madam Speaker, they are entitled to use their questions how they will, and they have asked me the same question.

Ms O'CONNOR - Madam Speaker, point of order, the minister is trying to avoid giving an honest answer to this question. He is actually misrepresenting the question we asked and he knows it. He is trying to insult parliament by just reading out the brief he read out before.

This is actually a really important issue that goes to your credibility and the governance of your department.

Madam SPEAKER - I accept your concern, Ms O'Connor. You understand my restrictions in being able to direct the minister. I do ask the minister to be relevant.

Mr BARNETT - Absolutely, Madam Speaker, I am as relevant as hitting the nail on the head. That is what we are doing, and I have called them out because it is a conspiracy. It is a Greens conspiracy. You have a track record, we know. You can do this all day long. Bring up conspiracy after conspiracy and we will respond honestly.

I make it very clear that there has been no evidence of long-term decline in duck numbers. You say it is not true.

Ms O'Connor - Have a look at the graphs.

Mr BARNETT - This is based on advice that goes in, year in, year out, including under the Labor-Greens government. Did you ever ban duck hunting?

Members interjecting.

Dr WOODRUFF - Point of order, Madam Speaker. Will the minister state on the record for parliament that he did not see the minute and that he was in no way involved in the decision to open the duck hunting season this year against the advice of his department?

Madam SPEAKER - I accept that is a straightforward question and I ask the minister to give you a straightforward answer.

Mr BARNETT - Thank you, Madam Speaker. They ask many parts in the first part of their question, but I will make it very clear: the draft minute the member referred to in her question was not provided by the department - I said this earlier, let us say it again - by me or by anyone in my office. How about that, Madam Speaker - is that clear? I answered that question earlier today; they have come back. They have a conspiracy theory.

That draft minute in question was not provided by the department to me or my office, Madam Speaker. How clear can you get?

I received no advice from the secretary that I should make a new order or an amendment order to change the provisions for the 2020 duck season. I was advised by the secretary's decision to open specified reserve land for duck hunting in the course of normal business shortly before the opening of the season.

That is the advice I received. I have passed that on. This is another conspiracy theory. You were in the Labor-Greens government and you did not ban duck hunting.

Power Bill Relief

Mr O'BYRNE question to PREMIER, Mr GUTWEIN

[10.49 a.m.]

Yesterday your Government announced belated but welcome power bill relief for businesses operating in multi-tenanted properties some four months after the matter was raised with you.

There are many more Tasmanians though who are struggling with the cost of winter power bills. After three months of lockdown, which saw many people lose their jobs or forced to home-school and work from home, the shock from power bills is already putting a massive strain on family budgets. You have repeatedly dismissed Labor's call for a winter energy supplement similar to the cheques that you cynically sent out shortly before the 2018 election.

In last week's preliminary outcomes report it was revealed that you are ripping a further \$40 million out of Hydro Tasmania and TasNetworks in dividends. Why will you not use at least some of this money to provide a winter energy supplement to struggling households?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I thank the member for that question and his interest in this matter. To be frank, I thought the Minister for Energy explained this very well yesterday when he pointed out very clearly that the first thing we did was provide power bill relief for small businesses. Many of them would have been households as well, I am certain, that were running businesses in that first quarter. Second, we put a freeze on power price increases and subsequently my understanding is that we have delivered a reduction in the price of 1.38 per cent.

Members interjecting.

Madam SPEAKER - Order, please - little bit of discipline.

Mr GUTWEIN - I cannot help but think that the reason you are on this particular issue is because of guilt.

Mr O'Byrne - I expect this dross from him but not from you. I expect this rubbish from him.

Madam SPEAKER - Order, Mr O'Byrne.

Mr GUTWEIN - It is a statement of fact that when you were in government prices went up 65 per cent, from memory.

Mr O'Byrne - Why did you give a supplement just before the election in the middle of summer but you won't do it now?

Mr GUTWEIN - Prices went up 65 per cent under you. Under us they are coming down. They are falling.

I commend the minister for his announcement yesterday in dealing with what is a very complex issue of embedded networks and arriving at a position whereby we would now make available a grant of \$1000 to businesses in embedded networks to assist them. It is an extraordinarily complex matter. I note the advice from Treasury and the machinations they went through to come up with a suitable mechanism.

Mr O'Byrne - Sometimes government isn't easy, you've got to do stuff. Come on, work it out.

Mr GUTWEIN - I will tell you what was easy under you: to stand back and let power prices go up 65 per cent.

I am proud of the fact that we have provided more than \$1 million-worth of support to the Tasmanian community. We have put downward pressure and in fact delivered lower power prices as well through that period.

We are providing an unprecedented level of support to our community and our business sector. I am proud of that and we will continue to do so. The point I make to the member is that power prices have gone down, regulated prices have gone down, we have already provided a waiver of the last bill of the quarter for last year to small business and as a starting point, and I am pleased that we have gone further than that, we actually said that we would freeze. That came at a cost of around \$25 million.

We are putting significant resources in. I point out to the member who asked the question the contrast between that side and this side - 65 per cent under you; power prices going down under us.

Madam SPEAKER - I will just make a statement. In respect of our staff, I know everyone here wants to speak at either of the podiums but so far we have a dirty cloth sitting there. I saw the Minister for Primary Industries and Water stick it in his pocket, which was very thoughtful but unnecessary, and our Premier has just left that one there. I do ask that you use the rubbish bins, please.

Mr GUTWEIN - I was not even aware that the rubbish bin was under the desk.

Madam SPEAKER - I am just pointing it out so that we all do the right thing by everybody. Thank you.

Housing and Homelessness Support

Mr TUCKER question to MINISTER for HOUSING, Mr JAENSCH

[10.55 a.m.]

Can you please update the House on the Government's delivery of new housing and the homelessness support to Tasmanians?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I thank Mr Tucker for his question and his passion for housing Tasmanians, which I share. Today I am pleased to release the Government's quarterly housing

report for the quarter ending 30 June 2020, which covers the first whole year of the Government's second Affordable Housing Action Plan.

The report shows that throughout this first year we have maintained the momentum, delivering and assisting almost 700 additional Tasmanian households with their housing needs through our second action plan and through funding released under the Commonwealth housing debt waiver. This includes delivery of 316 new social houses, release of 34 new affordable lots of land into the market and installation of 43 new units of emergency accommodation. Importantly, through this time we have also supported 69 households into home ownership for the first time and assisted over 200 other households with housing that meets their needs, including through Rapid Rehousing and our Private Rental Incentives Program.

I am also pleased today to be tabling the Government's response to the House of Assembly Select Committee on Housing Affordability. While the Government did not oppose the establishment of the committee, we remain of the view that the inquiry was unnecessary and substantially duplicated consultation already underway and undertaken with key stakeholders and other processes of scrutiny of government operations. This view was reaffirmed when the committee's final report was released with the majority of its recommendations pointing to actions that were either already underway or completed.

Examples of initiatives that were underway before the report was released and even before COVID-19 arrived in our own state included our original \$200 million investment in a comprehensive set of actions through affordable housing action plans 1 and 2; \$58 million invested over four years to June 2023 into programs that increase access to social housing reduce homelessness and improve housing supply across Tasmania funded from debt waiver savings; and a \$5 million investment to expand the capacity of existing crisis shelters in Hobart, including 18 new one bedroom pods at Bethlehem House, 10 new two bedroom units at the Hobart Women's Shelter and leases on seven additional family dwellings also managed by Hobart Women's Shelter.

COVID-19 has thrown up new challenges and social and economic impacts of the coronavirus are still emerging, so the Government has acted decisively to minimise housing insecurity associated with COVID-19 and the public health measures it has brought with it.

We have provided increased protections for residential tenants, including protection from eviction and rent increases. We have committed to not increase rent for social housing tenants and not count Australian Government emergency payments when calculating their rental contributions. We have supported those who have fallen through the gaps with the COVID-19 Rent Relief Fund established to provide support of up to \$2000 or four weeks rent for tenants suffering extreme hardship. We have increased funding to the Private Rental Incentives Program to increase the pool of available houses by 75 and we have invested \$4.3 million to improve Housing Connect's capacity to provide brokered emergency accommodation and to expand and extend the Hobart Safe Night Space project to a 24/7 service in three locations around the state.

Importantly, all of this has included increased funding for mental health and wraparound support services for those experiencing homelessness at this time.

Importantly, as the Premier has said, housing will also play a key role in our economic recovery and we are walking the walk on this. Over the past nine months we have announced that \$34 million in savings from the Commonwealth housing debt waiver agreement will be used to deliver 300 new social housing dwellings over three years. As part of our COVID response we are bringing forward the rollout of those funds to deliver those homes 18 months earlier than originally planned.

These measures will deliver support for the sector in the critical next six months, addressing the immediate market downturn and housing need, but we need to provide confidence for the long term also. That is why we are investing another \$100 million into new social housing over the next three years. These funds will deliver up to 1000 additional new social housing dwellings under new agreements with our community housing provider partners, driving down our housing partner waiting lists while providing longer-term baseload certainty for the building and construction sector.

Overall, this Government has delivered and committed almost \$400 million worth of works to deliver new housing and homelessness services for Tasmanians who need it, in addition to the hundreds of applicants that are supported with their housing needs each month and the more than 12 500 Tasmanian households who are currently in social housing around the state. This is our track record of delivering and supporting Tasmanians in need and I thank the House for this opportunity to update you on this important matter.

Payroll Tax Rebate - Extension

Mr O'BYRNE question to PREMIER, Mr GUTWEIN

[11.02 a.m.]

As a part of the economic and fiscal update, you reported that you would underspend funds that were earmarked to support businesses struggling through the COVID-19 pandemic. This is particularly galling when the shortfalls and maladministration of your small business hardship support program had been well documented. With your announcement yesterday for further restrictions on travel and commerce, business is under even more pressure.

Payroll tax relief and motor vehicle registration are two areas where applications for support came in under Treasury forecast. Last week you confirmed payroll tax measures cost around \$30 million less than Treasury predicted. Your payroll tax waiver was only for a limited window to the end of the 2019-20 financial year but it is clear that the pain for businesses extends well past this date. Given the significant impact businesses continue to feel and your announcement yesterday to keep the borders closed to 1 December and the subsequent impact that this will have on a number of businesses, will you commit to extend the payroll tax rebate to support jobs in the Tasmanian economy?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I thank the member for Franklin, Mr O'Byrne, for that question and his interest in this matter.

Regarding the economic and fiscal update, whilst still a difficult set of numbers, it was a much better set of numbers than we had originally forecast back in May, for a range of

reasons - obviously treatment of GST and better tax receipts we saw in terms of things like stamp duty holding up and Tasmanians being confident enough to go out and purchase homes.

The point you raised regarding payroll tax is interesting because it does seem to be a little anomalous that Treasury originally forecast around \$70 million worth of waivers and then only around \$40 million was paid. My understanding - and it is a trap for young players - is that businesses do not put their final tax adjustment in until late in July. I expect that after they have reconciled those tax adjustments we will see more payroll tax relief provided back to those businesses and that it will not be a \$30 million -

Mr O'Byrne - But the point stands. If you underspend in the area -

Mr GUTWEIN - The point does not stand until we have actually done the reconciliation. In terms of allowing Treasury to go through the process and for those businesses to reconcile their position at the end of the financial year, we will allow that process to take its course and I hope that a number of businesses, and the overall quantum of refunds, that that would increase. That process needs to take its course. Businesses reconciling and putting in their end of years occurs late in July. That process will be finalised and then we will understand whether the forecast amount of payroll tax that was due to be paid will be paid, and what the difference is.

I make the point that as this is a question broadly about business support, this side of the House - and I would say unsupported by that side of the House too, I believe, when we introduced the measures - provided unprecedented support across the board to our businesses, our households and our broader community. As I have always indicated, when there is a need to do more we will do more and we will work through those processes carefully and cautiously and sensibly, targeting support where it is needed.

That is why we did what we did yesterday regarding the tourism and hospitality sector and visitation to ensure we can support those businesses with \$2.5 million worth of vouchers per month. At a high level, it could generate around 25 000 bed nights on a monthly basis. It could generate up to 50 000 vouchers at \$50 a voucher to support a business offering some form of tourism experience. That is the practical application of what we do in supporting our businesses.

As to the matter you have raised, as we work through the process and the construct of the oncoming Budget, we will look at other measures and, as I have said, where there is a need for support we will obviously reach in and do so.

Royal Hobart Hospital - Commissioning of K Block

Mr STREET question to MINISTER for HEALTH, Ms COURTNEY

[11.07 a.m.]

Can you provide an update on the Government's initiatives to boost services following the commissioning of Royal Hobart Hospital's K Block?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, it is a delight to be able to update the parliament on K Block. This is an exciting initiative and is a \$689 million project that has been talked about for years but has taken a Liberal government to deliver it.

I thank the hardworking staff, particularly those all around our health system - in our testing clinics, our labs, on the front line, in primary health and in our hospitals. They have been working incredibly hard this year. That is why we were pleased to be able to accept possession of K Block in March, and I know that has been welcomed by all Tasmanians.

K Block delivers brand new areas for our staff and patients. We have five new operating theatres, procedure room, and an angiography and cardio lab. We have a world-class hyperbaric chamber on level 3 and modern birthing facilities, including birthing baths, and a helipad. Where would we be without the helipad that is on site to support our paramedics? It is great that it is being used, because we know that this delivers timely care for Tasmanians.

One of the biggest benefits of K Block is it finally gives the hospital the physical space that it needs to expand services. We have seen this week the capacity on site to decant a ward to allow for repairs after a blocked drain caused water damage to a ceiling in the mental health inpatient unit. Because we have this capacity we have been able to safely decant these patients while we fix this problem. This means we are able to fix this problem faster and have less impact on patient care.

I am also delighted that the Government and the Tasmanian Health Service have now begun delivering on our plan to open new, permanently funded beds. I can confirm that there are already more than 50 new beds open since K Block was commissioned, including 15 new permanent, general surgery beds, 13 permanent gen med beds, 15 paediatric and adolescent beds, eight beds in the new expanded transit lounge, and we have also seen 12 new hospital-in-the-home beds, which is an innovative model delivering acute-level care in a patient's home.

Recruitment is ongoing for these new beds, which will open progressively and as demand requires, but I can also advise that in the meantime, the Royal has made an operational decision to open up to 13 additional gen med beds to help us expand during winter.

We know we cannot deliver these beds without staff. I am advised that some 160 FTE staff have been recruited to support K Block and these new beds: seventy-seven FTE nurses, 20 FTE allied health, and additional support positions such as cleaners, orderlies and food services staff, who we know are absolutely crucial for a hospital to run. This comes on top of 128 graduate nurses who have been engaged in the south this year, supported by their incredible clinical coaches.

Members interjecting.

Madam SPEAKER - Order please, on both sides of the House, thank you Mr Ferguson. I am interested in hearing the answer to this question.

Ms COURTNEY - K Block is helping provide the capacity we need to deal with the challenges of COVID-19, as well as ensuring that we have the capacity to deliver health services for Tasmanians into the future.

Spirit of Tasmania - Replacement Vessels

Dr BROAD question to **MINISTER** for **INFRASTRUCTURE** and **TRANSPORT**,
Mr FERGUSON

[11.11 a.m.]

Your Government has thrown the *Spirit of Tasmania* ship replacement project into chaos, and put a handbrake on job creation in the tourism and time-sensitive freight industries such as salmon, berries and cherries. It is becoming increasingly apparent that your mismanagement of this project will end up costing Tasmanian taxpayers hundreds of millions of dollars.

In 2018, a contract was signed with German shipbuilder FSG to construct two replacement vessels at the cost of \$688 million. When the contract fell over in February this year after months of denials and uncertainty, your Government claimed that the debacle had not cost taxpayers a cent. However, when you pulled the rug out from under TT-Line by instructing them to abandon a contract with Finnish shipyard RMC, you decided to reject the expert advice of the TT-Line and instructed them to abandon the contract with the Finnish shipyard, and in those public statements you put the cost of the build at \$850 million, a figure you used again yesterday.

Can you confirm that your bungling of this critical project is already set to cost the state \$162 million, which is the difference between those two contracts, and can you rule out further cost blowouts as a result of this latest delay?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I thank the member for Braddon for his question. I could equally say thank you to the 'member against jobs' for his question, because that is what this is about. It is about looking for the most opportunity for domestic input into our ship replacement program. That is the point that we made yesterday. That is what this side of the House stands for. What that side of the House stands for, through your utterances, is clearly you have been against this from the beginning. I do not understand the mathematics of the construct that you just tried to put forward in your question, Dr Broad. I do not understand -

Members interjecting.

Madam SPEAKER - Order. We are nearly at the end.

Mr FERGUSON - All these geniuses on the other side, they are against local jobs. It has been demonstrated day after day, and that is the beginning and the end.

Ms O'Byrne - Explain it to us.

Mr FERGUSON - We explained yesterday in detail how the task force will conduct itself, who will be on it, and that they will report to Government. It is good that has been welcomed across the state. Business back us. The local community has been backing us right around the state. People understand.

The answer to the question that Dr Broad had to ask all of us yesterday - what has changed - well, Dr Broad, a hell of a lot has changed. The world is in a global pandemic. The world is in a global recession. One of the world's biggest shipbuilders went belly up, Dr Broad.

With this major purchase that we do not have to make until the current vessels go past their optimum replacement date of 2028, we want to take a moment to pause and reflect, and get advice on the best way to get Tasmanian and Australian input into the TT-Line's future.

Madam SPEAKER - Excuse me, minister. While I appreciate there is a bit of levity in the House for a change, this is a serious subject, and I would prefer it if members all stopped talking among themselves and were just more respectful to the speaker. Thank you. In this case, I mean the minister.

Mr FERGUSON - Thank you, Madam Speaker. I think Ms O'Connor hit the nail on the head earlier when she reflected on Dr Broad, that this is misfiring for Labor. You are against jobs. I do not know what you are hoping to achieve out of this -

Dr Broad - Did you ditch the contract because it blew out? Is that what the problem is? Is that why you ditched it?

Madam SPEAKER - Order, Dr Broad.

Mr FERGUSON - The commentariat is saying that you are asking Dorothy Dixers.

I want the task force to be able to go about its business without political interference from you.

TT-Line - Proposed Third Vessel

Dr BROAD question to MINISTER for INFRASTRUCTURE and TRANSPORT, Mr FERGUSON

[11.18 a.m.]

Minister, perhaps you will answer this one: in an opinion piece, Liberal senator, Claire Chandler, acknowledged that Australia does not have the capacity to build steel monohull ferries. She questioned the need to replace the current *Spirit of Tasmania* vessels at all, saying -

So a question for the taskforce is whether replacing two steel-hulled ferries with two more steel-hulled ferries is the only option. Why not look at adding an Incat catamaran to TT-Line's portfolio to complement the ferries?

Do you agree with Senator Chandler's proposal to add a third vessel - an Incat catamaran - to TT-Line's fleet?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague, the member for Braddon, for his question today. It is not that we did not see him coming.

This is an important issue for our state. In fact, the Premier and I, when we announced the decision to implement the task force to get further advice to government, which the member opposed, we were very open about the fact that we expected interest from any and all Tasmanian and Australian interests in this industry - and well they ought to tell us what they are capable of doing. Are you against that, Dr Broad?

If I am not mistaken, on that day 'Pappy G', as he is now known - Pappy G, Pappy Gutwein, our leader, as our young people are now calling you - actually made it clear that we would expect input and contribution from Incat. It is amusing, Dr Broad, that you raise that question, when, only in the next three days, guess who was driving up to Incat? Your leader.

Time expired.

EXPLANATION OF SPEECH

Royal Hobart Hospital - Commissioning of K Block

[11.18 a.m.]

Ms COURTNEY (Bass - Minister for Health) - Madam Speaker, it has been brought to my attention that I may have misspoken when I was outlining the more than 50 new beds that have been opened in K Block.

I would just like to repeat my answer: it is 15 new permanent general surgery beds, 13 new permanent general medicine beds, five paediatric adolescent beds, eight beds in the expanded transit lounge, as well as an additional 12 Hospital in the Home beds providing acute care.

PETITIONS

Voluntary Assisted Dying

[11.19 a.m.]

Ms O'CONNOR - Madam Speaker, I present an e-petition signed by approximately 11 699 citizens of Tasmania, a record for the Tasmanian Parliament, and a written petition signed by 1383 citizens of Tasmania requesting that the House supports the forthcoming End of Life Choices (Voluntary Assisted Dying) Bill 2020.

I acknowledge the presence in the gallery of Jacqueline and Natalie Gray, who lost their mother, Helen, last year.

The total number of signatories in support of voluntary assisted dying is 13 082. The petitions conform with the relevant Standing Orders and rules of the House.

I move that the petitions be read.

Petitions read.

TABLED PAPER

Parliamentary Standing Committee on Public Works - Major Redevelopment of Sorell School

Ms Butler presented a report of the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Public Works on the major redevelopment of the Sorell School, together with the evidence received and the transcript of evidence.

Report received.

TASMANIAN CIVIL AND ADMINISTRATIVE TRIBUNAL BILL 2020 (No. 25)

First Reading

Bill presented by **Ms Archer** and read the first time.

CONDOLENCE MOTION

Lebanon Disaster

[11.24 a.m.]

Mr GUTWEIN (Bass - Premier - Motion) - Madam Speaker, I move -

That the House -

- (1) Expresses its sadness regarding the recent disaster in Lebanon, which resulted in the death of in excess of 178 people, injured at least 6000 more and has left an estimated 300 000 people homeless.
- (2) Extends its deepest condolences to the families of those killed, and all whose lives have been impacted by this disaster.
- (3) Extends its support to the people of Lebanon in dealing with the tragic aftermath of this event.

On 4 August, in Lebanon's capital city of Beirut, two huge explosions occurred in the port area. This resulted in the death of at least 178 people, injured 6000 more and has left hundreds of thousands of people without a roof over their heads. I must admit I was shaken and saddened by the news of this destructive explosion. As I mentioned to Ms Haddad yesterday, I could not believe it when I first saw it.

We need to remember as well that this unfortunate disaster has occurred against the backdrop of ongoing efforts to contain and manage the coronavirus pandemic both in Lebanon and the wider region. The city's health facilities have been badly damaged, reducing its capacity when they need it most. Faddy Zouky, the Honorary Consul General for the Republic of Lebanon in Tasmania, recently likened Beirut to Hiroshima.

Lebanon is an ancient country and they have been through much, including war and disasters. This disaster comes on top of the worst economic crisis in Lebanon's modern history as they too battle the pandemic that we have seen touch our own shores. Now they must also manage the political instability that events such as these can bring about.

Despite its small size, Lebanon has contributed much to global culture. It has a large diaspora throughout the world and close ties with Australia. I acknowledge the 20 000 Australians living in Lebanon and the tragic loss of a young Australian life.

Tasmania and Australia share many close ties to the people of Lebanon. According to the census, several hundred Tasmanians have Lebanese heritage, and I acknowledge them and their extended families, especially one of our own here in this parliament. Our best wishes to

the member for Clark, Ms Hadadd - Ella - and her extended family. We wish them well in the face of this ongoing crisis.

I acknowledge the work of Faddy Zouky, the Honorary Consul General for the Republic of Lebanon in Tasmania, who has been working to assist Tasmanian families to contact their families in Lebanon. In his words, 'These are dark days for the country'. He also said he would like us to have Lebanon in our prayers. I will be getting in touch with Mr Zouky personally to thank him for his hard work to help the people of Lebanon. I understand that the Australian Government has now provided \$5 million in support and I know there are ongoing efforts within Australia to raise further funds. I would like to echo the cause and Mr Zouky's and the member for Clark's recent comments that for those who can, support can be given to charities such as Lebanese Red Cross.

We have, of course, experienced our own disasters - recent bushfires and floods - and we know the pain these events cause and time it takes to rebuild and recover. On behalf of Tasmanians and my Government and my own behalf, I express my sincere condolences to all the people of Lebanon, especially those who are suffering directly as a result of the explosions, and I wish them well as they face the twin adversaries of the explosion and the pandemic.

In recent times this parliament has come together to respond and manage the health and economic impacts of the global pandemic, and I am sure that this House will once again come together in acknowledging the devastation that has occurred in Lebanon. I commend the motion to the house.

Ms Haddad - Thank you.

[11.27 am]

Ms WHITE (Lyons - Leader of the Opposition) - Madam Speaker, I rise to contribute to the debate on this motion and on behalf of the Tasmanian parliamentary Labor Party to convey our deep condolences to the people of Lebanon and their families across the world who have been devastated by the blast that rocked Beirut on 4 August. More than 230 000 Australians have Lebanese heritage and the impact of this tragedy has been widely felt across the community.

The shocking images of the blast were captured by residents in Beirut as they filmed the smoke billowing from the port and never in their wildest imagination would they have known what was about to happen next. As the explosion took place, the magnitude of it knocked people off their feet as the impact of the blast was felt. I was horrified as I watched images of that blast broadcast on Australian media outlets and social media, but the horror of the impact from that blast would only be revealed in the days that followed.

The explosion was claimed to be the third most powerful after Hiroshima and Nagasaki, but the human impacts from this disaster have been more profound. So far more than 178 deaths have been recorded and 6000 people injured, and people are still missing. Nearly 300 000 people have been left homeless. Losses from the catastrophic blast are estimated to be between \$10 billion and \$15 billion. Sadly, one Australian was killed in the devastating explosion, a small child, a beautiful little boy, Isaac Oehlers, who was only two years old. In a statement, Isaac's family said -

We are heartbroken by the sudden and tragic loss of our beautiful little boy following the disaster in Beirut. Isaac was two and will be deeply missed by family and friends.

The Australian Government has committed \$5 million in humanitarian support for the country. This funding will support the humanitarian effort in Lebanon as its people recover from the devastating explosion in Beirut. It will assist charitable organisations to help ensure that food, medical care and essential items are provided to those affected by this tragedy.

The people of Lebanon have endured enormous disruption to their lives in recent years and this tragedy will require a monumental effort to support people to recover.

I acknowledge the work of the Honourable Faddy Zouky, the Honorary Consul for Lebanon in Victoria and Tasmania, and the work that has been undertaken to support Australian Lebanese residents and their families.

We convey to them our sincere condolences and wish them strength and hope for the future.

[11.30 a.m.]

Ms O'CONNOR (Clark - Leader of the Greens) - Madam Speaker, Dr Woodruff and I both wish to pass on our sincerest condolences, which is not a strong enough word, and all the love in our hearts to the people of Lebanon. We acknowledge that for people of Lebanese heritage anywhere in the world it must have been utterly devastating to see those pictures.

We live in a world of very rapid exchange of information. So many of us witnessed those blasts through social media, and when it became clear how powerful that explosion was, I think it left the world reeling.

We know at least 178 people lost their lives. Thousands and thousands of people were injured and 300 000 people have been made homeless. Because of the blast impact on health facilities, it has been particularly difficult to treat the injured.

I have seen images of the residents of Beirut cleaning up their own city, looking for survivors and, as one of the survivors said, our hearts are shattered into pieces. The blast obliterated vast tracts of Beirut and was felt in Cyprus, 190 kilometres away. There was blast damage at the airport 10 kilometres from the Port of Beirut.

We know this blast was caused by 2750 tonnes of ammonium nitrate that had been left in a warehouse in the Port of Beirut since 2013, which goes to the corruption of the Lebanese government and of a global shipping industry which too often has negligence and corruption at its heart.

From reading an investigative journalist's report into the cause of the blast, my understanding is that it goes back to 2013 and the story of the MV *Rhosus*, the ship that delivered the ammonium nitrate to Beirut. I am reading now from an investigative report by Rachel Slade how a Russian grifter ignited the tragedy in Beirut -

An undisclosed buyer paid the Russian business man Igor Grechushkin one million dollars to ship 2,750 tons of [ammonium nitrate] from Georgia

to Mozambique. It's unclear whether Grechushkin had any prior shipping experience, but clearly, that didn't stop him.

All you need to become a shipper is, well, a ship.

To carry out his end of the bargain, Grechushkin apparently used some of his windfall to purchase the *Rhosus*, a 27-year-old cargo ship, from a Cyprus-based company. He employed a fellow Russian, Boris Prokoshev, to helm the ship. The [ammonium nitrate] was manufactured in Rustavi, Georgia, by Rustavi Azot, a large chemical manufacturer, and loaded onto the *Rhosus*, which then sailed across the Black Sea, stopping in Istanbul, Turkey; Piraeus, Greece; and finally Beirut.

...

Prokoshev saw the first red flag during the Istanbul layover. "I see the whole crew is changing for some reason. It struck me as suspicious." Grechushkin quickly dismissed his captain's concerns, but later, Prokoshev learned that the seamen had jumped ship because they hadn't been paid for four months.

The *Rhosus* then made a pit-stop in Piraeus, Greece, for refuelling and provisioning. There, Prokoshev says, Grechushkin "himself came and returned almost [all the food] back to the suppliers. He did not pay. He said there was no money." Instead, to generate cash, Grechushkin sent the ship to Beirut to take more cargo.

Although the *Rhosus* was already loaded with tons of ammonium nitrate, Grechushkin contracted to carry heavy road equipment on her deck. While docked at the Beirut port, Prokoshev was alarmed to see a hatch cover sagging under the weight of the machinery. The captain knew that an overloaded ship is a deadly ship, so he pushed back against the vessel's owner, risking his job to save his life.

The ship wouldn't be able to leave anyway, because Grechushkin hadn't ponied up the port fee. While the Lebanese were holding the *Rhosus* at the dock, the fresh crew heard that the previous crew hadn't been paid. They went on strike and eventually left the ship. According to additional reports, Lebanese inspectors also determined that the *Rhosus* was in serious disrepair. The *Rhosus* was doomed to stay put, tied to a Beirut dock. She would never sail again.

...

The *Rhosus* and her stockpile of ammonium nitrate were now Lebanon's problem.

Red flags were raised about that warehouse full of ammonium nitrate, but they were ignored by the government and by the port authorities. We are dealing with the most devastating consequences of poor governance and too little care for the people of Beirut by

their government. It is important we acknowledge that corruption in all its forms can have utterly devastating consequences for people.

Our hearts are shattered for the people of Beirut too, and I want to send our love and condolences to the people of Lebanon.

[11.36 a.m.]

Ms OGILVIE (Clark) - Madam Speaker, it is a dreadful set of circumstances and we have seen a devastating blast which has resulted in the deaths of some 180 people and injured around 6000 people. It touches a nerve right around the world because of the deep history of Beirut, which has a 5000-year-old rich cultural history.

Excavations over the years have revealed traces of Phoenician, Hellenistic, Roman and Ottoman civilisations. Lebanon's capital Beirut has a strong cultural history. At the end of World War II, the Lebanese capital became a tourist destination and financial capital nicknamed the Paris of the Middle East. Beirut's affinity with the nickname stems not only from the strong cultural influences, but also from its holdover from its status as a French colony during World War II. Whilst the end of the war saw the independence of Lebanon, which was welcome, the influence of culture remains.

I will talk a little about that culture because in making a condolence motion we ought to think also of the things that are impacted and can be lost, particularly during the time of a pandemic where we are very close. We can see everything digitally immediately, but we are very separate because we are all effectively stuck in our own places, our own countries, our own states.

Beirut has a strong affinity with the world of fashion. World-renowned designers such as Elie Saab, Zuhair Murad and Reem Acra all hail from Beirut, putting the Lebanese capital on the map. These labels, these people, are the main staples of Paris Fashion Week.

I worked in Paris with UNESCO after I finished my degree in archaeology at Melbourne University and my law degree here in cultural heritage and international cultural heritage law. I have a strong passion for history, so that is how I ended up working in Paris during the late 1980s and early 1990s. It was an incredibly interesting time to be in Paris; on the cultural heritage side of things, we were looking quite often at what happens during wartime and when these sorts of blasts and awful explosions happen.

This explosion has not only had a devastating toll on human lives but also on the cultural history of Lebanon's capital, with some 640 historic buildings impacted by the blast. There are currently 60 at risk of collapse. UNESCO has mobilised to support a longer term response to address the damage caused by the blast. I quote from part of a UNESCO media release on 13 August -

UNESCO, responding to the Directorate-General of Antiquities of Lebanon's call for support, will lead the international mobilization for the recovery and reconstruction of Beirut's culture and heritage, based on the Directorate-General's technical needs assessment and the International Action Plan for Culture in Beirut, which UNESCO is currently developing with all of its partners in Lebanon and abroad.

I am truly hoping that includes us. It continues -

Emergency measures were invoked to safeguard Beirut's cultural life through the mobilization of artists, cultural professionals, artisans and custodians of traditional knowledge.

The severe damage to historic neighbourhoods, major museums, galleries and religious sites has come at a time when Lebanon was already reeling from a series of other crises, including the COVID-19 pandemic.

We are very fortunate in Australia to know a great deal about managing cultural heritage. I spoke a little yesterday on what great skills we have in architecture and building and the built cultural heritage. We are well positioned to assist Beirut to rebuild and to ensure there is an ongoing commitment to making sure that Beirut's rich cultural life and heritage can continue to serve as a source of strength and resilience for the Lebanese people.

I will leave it at that, but will just quote from a popular local legend that says Beirut was destroyed seven times and seven times it was rebuilt. I call on Australia and everybody in Tasmania who has the capacity to assist to help Beirut rebuild.

[11.42 a.m.]

Ms HADDAD (Clark) - Madam Speaker, I start by thanking the Premier for moving this motion and for acknowledging the disaster that occurred in Lebanon, and also for acknowledging my family connections. Thank you, Premier, for doing that in this place, and, of course, to the Leader of the Opposition, Bec White, the Leader of the Greens, Cassy O'Connor, and Madeleine Ogilvie, member for Clark, for your kind words as well. I wanted to just add a little from a personal perspective.

Madam Speaker, Lebanon is a tiny country but it has a very big heart. Its landmass would fit into Tasmania six and a half times. The Lebanese diaspora is something like four or five times the population inside Lebanon. That is because Lebanese people have been migrating across the globe for generations, including my family, who migrated to Australia and also to Canada in the 1960s and 1970s.

Lebanon has for years hosted around 1 million refugees. That is about one-quarter of its population. It speaks volumes for the people of this tiny country that they are known the world over for their success in so many areas - business, finance, the arts, food, and for their warmth and hospitality.

Lebanon has a long history of war and struggle over literally millennia. It has been invaded by many colonisers, but never cowered away, always triumphing over adversity, with resilience as the country's trademark. So it is with heavy heart that we today express condolences to the people of Lebanon for this tragic disaster, the explosion that shook Beirut just a few weeks ago.

The explosion was the third most powerful after Hiroshima and Nagasaki in terms of the magnitude and ferocity of the blast. Buildings in the vicinity were completely crushed and destroyed. Buildings kilometres away had windows, balconies and roofs blown off, and walls and structures destroyed. It was felt and heard all over the country and around the region, and was even audible from Cyprus. The blast has been described as 15 years of war in 15 seconds, a comparison to the destruction of the civil war that ravaged the country for 15 years from the late 1970s to the early 1990s.

Before this tragic event, Beirut was a thriving, modern international city. The port area where the blast took place was a bustling neighbourhood with popular restaurants, shops and bars lining ancient streets. Those ancient streets now lie in piles of rubble and destruction, with hundreds dead, thousands injured and thousands still missing. Houses, buildings and whole neighbourhoods have been blown apart. The blast really did not discriminate at all. Hospitals have been shut down and are out of action, and hundreds of thousands are now homeless and in desperate need.

The tragedy has, of course, touched the lives of every person inside Lebanon and all Lebanese abroad. My family counts itself incredibly lucky that no-one in our family was badly injured or killed, but some of my cousins have had their homes destroyed and a menswear shop that a cousin owns and runs was also destroyed, along with her home, which is devastating.

It has been heartening to see that the magnitude of this tragedy has not just been felt by Lebanese people there and abroad, but also by non-Lebanese people all around the world, including people who are acknowledging the disaster today in this parliament. It was moving to see that both the City of Melbourne and the City of Hobart chose to light up their monuments in recent weeks in the colours of the Lebanese flag of red, white and green. Countless Australians have been raising money to send to the many NGOs working to provide urgent healthcare, food and shelter to everyone displaced by the tragedy.

I pay my thanks and respect to Mr Faddy Zouky OAM, the Honorary Consul General for Lebanon in Victoria and Tasmania, and to the Australia Lebanon Chamber of Commerce and Industry for leading both those initiatives locally but also for providing enormous support to people here and in Lebanon. I also thank the City of Hobart for taking part in what might seem like just a gesture, but it was incredibly heartening to see our monuments in Hobart lit up in the colours of the Lebanese flag last week. I drove around on a rainy night and took some snapshots I have shared with my cousins overseas and they too were really moved to see from a city this far away. It is a sign of the diaspora really that Lebanese people have made it as far south as Tasmania and are living right here. To see that respect shown for what has happened in their city was really very moving and heartening, so thank you to the cities of Hobart and Melbourne for doing that.

As others have said, Lebanon is a country that was already dealing with financial crisis, political turmoil and, of course, the coronavirus, and now this tragedy on a massive scale is added to what they were already dealing with. While Lebanon is not unfamiliar with rising from unrest, this will be a recovery effort like one never seen before. I have no doubt that the Lebanese will triumph again with their characteristic resilience, as they have done so many times before. It is heartening to know that we all stand with them as they do the hard work ahead.

Members - Hear, hear.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER - I too offer my condolences to Ms Haddad and her family and friends as well as to the Lebanese diaspora living in Australia, but also to the family of Isaac Oehlers as well and his family and friends and to the Lebanese people. I now ask members to please signify their support for the motion by standing.

Motion agreed to *nemine contradicente*.

MATTER OF PUBLIC IMPORTANCE

Budget and Financial Management

[11.48 a.m.]

Mr O'BYRNE (Franklin - Motion) - Madam Deputy Speaker, I move -

That the House take note of the following matter: budget and financial management.

We saw with the recent economic and fiscal update report released last week by the Premier that the State of the State's finances are in dire straits, in significant trouble. That is in some respects due to the work of the Government over a number of years and its management. I will pull that apart in a few minutes, but obviously the economic and social impacts of the pandemic have put an enormous amount of pressure on the budget. We acknowledge that and all members of this House should be cognisant of that in terms of our responsibility to ensure we respond to the needs of our community with the maintenance and delivery of good public services in health, education and housing, and across the gamut of services delivered in Tasmania.

It is also important we acknowledge the role the state budget and the state books play in supporting the Tasmanian economy. The role of the public sector is far larger in the Tasmanian economy than it is compared to other states, so there is a dual responsibility, not only to provide high-quality public services, but to play a role in the economy, providing jobs and economic security for our citizens. There is a task ahead, and I think we all acknowledge that it will take a number of years and a number of tough decisions to get us to that point.

The commentary from the Premier/Treasurer following the release of this report was that it was a slight improvement on the report that was released in May. The May report was really a document in two halves. It was the March quarter report - reporting on the facts and figures of the performance of the budget, nine months to the end of the March quarter - and also the predictions moving forward. We do not believe that is the point of reference or the point of comparison for any improvement or deterioration in the state of the books.

The Treasury made it very clear in the May document that the figures were very unreliable and were hard to pull together, given the fluid nature of not only the state and the national economy, but also the various expenditure items and revenue items for the state budget. We do not accept that the May document is the point of reference.

Also, in the narrative, the Premier/Treasurer has often repeated often that the state Government's budget is in good shape, heading into the coronavirus period. We do not accept that is the case. We think we are nowhere near as prepared as we should have been for the pandemic. In the March quarter report, the net operating balance was \$100 million in deficit - so that is the nine months to the March quarter, \$900 million in deficit, with a trajectory of \$1.5 billion of net debt. That is a trajectory that no government wants to be on, particularly heading into a pandemic.

The only time that we can compare the state of the books, heading into a fiscal and an economic crisis, was the state of the budget heading in the global financial crisis. The Tasmanian Labor government, in the 2008-09 budget - the budget heading into the global

financial crisis - had \$100 million in surplus in the net operating balance, and we were \$1.1 billion negative net debt - so that is in the positive.

We had a balance sheet that could respond to the needs of the community in delivering those services. Over that budget management and over that period of time, a number of stimulus packages were embarked upon, to save as many jobs as we could to deliver sustainable public services. At no stage did the state government under Labor - after we paid off the debt of years of the Rundle and Groom Liberal governments, after the hard work Labor did of paying off the debt - we headed into

Ms O'Connor - When was that?

Mr O'BYRNE - That was in the 1990s.

Ms O'Connor - When did you do the hard work of paying off the debt?

Mr O'BYRNE - I am talking about the Labor government of the time. We as a Labor government paid off the debt of the mid-1990s of the Groom and Rundle governments, and put ourselves into a position heading into a global financial crisis to respond.

No-one predicts a crisis like the global financial crisis. No-one predicts a crisis like the pandemic, but you need to have the books to respond. Heading into the global financial crisis, we were \$1.1 billion negative net debt, and \$100 million in the net operating balance. That is the 2008-09 budget. At no stage did we head into net debt.

Yes, we acknowledge there were a couple of deficit budgets to get us through what was a very tough economic time, but we were able to provide a platform for the Hodgman government, because they were net debt free to build, and they took advantage of significant uplifts in revenue that were predominantly beyond their control - GST and also stamp duty. These are things beyond the state government's control, and they took advantage of that. If you use the analogy of a car, we left the incoming Liberal government in 2014 with a car with half a tank of fuel. Fair enough. We acknowledge that we went through a tough time through the global financial crisis.

Here we are, saddling up for another race. We are saddling up for one of the biggest shocks to the state budget and the economic impact, and the car is on empty.

The March quarter report shows \$100 million in deficit, and a trajectory towards \$1.5 billion in net debt. That is an unsustainable position in good times.

This was predicted, but it was in a report dismissed by the Treasurer - the Fiscal Sustainability Report released by Treasury last year. He damned that document with faint praise. It is an interesting document, and the scenario that painted low revenue, high expenditure which the Treasurer dismissed is now in place.

We are not in shape to respond to the pandemic.

[11.55 a.m.]

Ms O'CONNOR (Clark - Leader of the Greens) - Madam Deputy Speaker, I waited during Mr O'Byrne's contribution for a potential path forward, a proposal to parliament about

how we might work together to get Tasmania through, not only the pandemic, but also the difficult financial circumstances we will be in.

Mr O'Byrne - Are you giving a free pass for the last six years?

Ms O'CONNOR - I am not giving anyone a free pass, but as it is, each year when the alternative budget comes out, this parliament waits to hear from Labor what they would do differently.

Mr O'Byrne - You are using the Liberal alliance - good. Yes. Nice.

Ms O'CONNOR - I have raised the issue that Labor does not prepare an alternative budget, unlike the Greens. We have fewer than half your staff; we do put the work in and we take an alternative vision to the people. If you are going to have a matter of public importance debate about budget management, it would be constructive to help parliament understand how Labor would do things differently. I think that is a fair observation.

There is no question - we too had a briefing from Treasury - that Tasmania's finances are in a very difficult situation. There is no question we will have to borrow to get through this difficult period, and be able to respond with decency to the Tasmanian people's more difficult circumstances as a result of the pandemic.

Now we need to take stock and work together on recovery, and identify what recovery should look like. Unfortunately, it was really disheartening to receive the interim report of the Premier's Economic and Social Recovery Advisory Council - PESRAC - because while there were a number of good recommendations, there was no mention of climate, and the opportunity that is presented to us, as an island community, to deal with the twin crises humanity is facing - pandemic and climate - and to invest in green jobs.

Interestingly, business leaders around the country are increasingly calling on the Morrison Government to abandon its plans for a gas-fired recovery and to start focusing on the need to invest in renewables, skills and development.

The good recommendation from PESRAC, which should tie into future recovery, is that we provide free TasTAFE courses. Last week I went to TasTAFE's auto shop in Bathurst Street, and it was excellent to see that they were all young Tasmanian men - I did ask the question, a girl went through the auto course relatively recently - but they were there learning those skills. The issue is that the TasTAFE course is not equipped to teach auto mechanics in electric vehicles and the maintenance of cars that are essentially computers on wheels. There is real ambition within TasTAFE to be able to provide that learning opportunity for young people, and they are green jobs.

Through TasTAFE - that fantastic public education and training institution - we should be reorienting our economy towards green skills.

For example, jobs in aged and disability care are caring jobs, and we classify them as a green job. We have an opportunity here in Tasmania to become a caring centre of excellence for Australia. We can help to train people in aged and disability care so that we are not in a crisis situation again, like Victoria and New South Wales have been, where you have seen coronavirus run rampant through aged care facilities.

Let us invest in age and disability care workforce skill development and make ourselves a national leader. Let us invest in landscape restoration so we are reskilling our people out of those destructive industries like native forest logging, which are leading species to extinction, releasing vast amounts of carbon into the atmosphere in a time of climate breakdown.

Let us reorientate those incredibly skilled people, who now work in native forest logging, to help repair some of the damage that has been done to our landscape and make sure that we leave this beautiful island in better shape when we leave it as individuals than when we found it. Part of that should be investing in skills, in agriculture where we have an advantage because of the quality of our produce, helping our producers to become carbon farmers so that we are not only drawing down carbon out of the atmosphere, we are creating habitats for native species.

As a community, we need to turn our lemons into lemonade and we have an opportunity here - as difficult as the times are - to rethink the way we do business, to rethink the future we are offering our young people, to rethink our approach to budget management so investing much more in the skills and training, particularly young Tasmanians, will need in the future.

We are a resilient and creative island community. We also have the advantage of having vast tracts of beautiful carbon-rich forest and wilderness that you will not find anywhere else in the world. We are a deeply connected community so it makes sense for us to be investing in skills in aged and disability care. That should be a priority investment for Government because we know and you know, Madam Deputy Speaker from your time as minister, that we are entering a period where we have a massive shortfall in the workforce that is needed in aged and disability care and that has been exposed on the mainland.

There are different ways of doing business and I hope we can do some of that together.

Time expired.

[12.02 p.m.]

Mr FERGUSON (Bass - Minister for Infrastructure and Transport) - Madam Deputy Speaker, I look forward to hearing from others. From the outside, I welcome the MPI. It is important. Budget management and economic management are vitally important and that is why Tasmanians have such a great expressed confidence in this Government and in our Premier, with this team to continue to guide economic decisions and budget management.

I welcome the contribution from Ms O'Connor. It was largely a positive and constructive set of suggestions that government should listen to and will, and take on board. I would not describe those jobs as 'green' jobs. You can. I describe them as great jobs and as valuable jobs in the caring industry, and I totally support those comments around valuing that.

We as a state and a country can and ought to value those industries more and not take people for granted, especially the clients, residents and patients they are looking after.

From the outset, this Government has a very proud record of managing the state budget and in turn, getting the Tasmanian economy back on track. We have done it before. We turned the budget around when we inherited the books in 2014, following the disaster of the Labor government which left the economy in bad shape and left the budget in bad shape.

To hear Mr O'Byrne crowing about leaving half a tank of petrol in the car, it is not much good when the gear box is stuffed and it is stuck in reverse. What is the good of that half tank of petrol that you claimed to have left in there. Far from the half tank of petrol, there was no credibility. The budget was in tatters. They reported deficit after deficit: \$289 million in 2011-12, \$426 million in 2012-13 and they budgeted for a deficit of \$267 million in 2013-14 in that financial year which ran over the change of government and this was without a pandemic to manage.

When we came to office, far from the half tank of petrol with the gear box stuck in reverse, the 2014 Risks Report prepared by Treasury, showed that under the Labor-Greens government we were on track, without getting the budget back under control, for a \$1.1 billion cumulative deficit and over \$400 million - yes, if you add them up and why would you not, Mr O'Byrne - after four years is not that where you would end up? Over \$400 million in net debt was forecast and that was not because of an infrastructure investment that was not using the balance sheet to buy assets to make the economy more productive. That was on the current recurrent spending on public servants.

After that we did completely turn around the budget and nearly all of the credit goes to this Government and particularly the former premier and the current Premier, Peter Gutwein. Fantastic heavy lifting and hard work they had to do. Few will forget the opposition that we experienced from members opposite during that time. They fought us all the way but we did return the budget to operational surplus, we did invest in essential services and infrastructure and for four years in a row, the Government balanced the budget.

Now the other thing, I know that we are not agreeing on everything today, but the other thing that Ms O'Connor called out was that Mr O'Byrne has put forward yes, I know you only had seven minutes but you could say what you would do differently and you did not. There are no proposals. There is no alternative budget and I daresay there will not ever be alternative budgets because Mr O'Byrne is not allowed to produce one. The last time the Labor party prepared something with the word 'alternative' in it, you actually overlooked the existing financial year that the budget was all about. The Greens, to their credit, at least go to the effort with far fewer members and far fewer resources and yet they obviously believe that there is an argument for credibility. Where is the alternative government with its alternative budget? Missing, just missing and talking about dreamy ideas like leaving a car with half a tank of petrol.

The COVID-19 impact has been massive. I have often said that the economy has taken a walloping and I do not think that Mr O'Byrne has fairly described what our own Premier has said about the state of the budget. He has been very modest in his descriptions but quite properly saying that we are cautiously optimistic with the green shoots that we are seeing. To hear the alternative finance minister actually mocking the Treasury comparison from the May report to the August report -

Members interjecting.

Mr FERGUSON - when Mr O'Byrne is actually saying he does not think it is a fair comparison. Well, back in May, Treasury and Finance brought forward the update and said, this is what we believe is the fair assessment of where we are at and where we are going. They described themselves as saying, a high degree of uncertainty. With the August update, of course they are looking at the same periods but the numbers are improved. That should be

welcomed. If they had degraded we would have been as disappointed as anyone but they were more favourable and I think that in these times the Tasmanian community looks to us for a little moment of inspiration. If they are better, let us say so.

More importantly than looking in the rear vision mirror in the minute or so I have left is to describe what we are doing. We are doubling down on our infrastructure program; we are building a northern prison.

Members interjecting.

Mr FERGUSON - It will be interesting to see where you vote today, Mr O'Byrne, because your party is all over the show on the northern prison investment, a major investment.

Members interjecting.

Mr FERGUSON - Your own shadow, or at least your most vocal member on this, is now out there saying, 'Very good, just expand Risdon. Very good, move to Rocherlea'. I am not sure what that subtext is about. I query that.

Members interjecting.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER - Order, I ask that the minister be allowed to make his contribution in peace, please. The member for Franklin has already had his opportunity.

Mr FERGUSON - Our construction blitz is underway. Fortunately, from our last budget we actually made that decision to accept some net debt for our investments for our infrastructure program in 2019-20, we got \$520 million out the door and that was while Health and Communities Tas had to actually divert resources to the pandemic response. We are proud of our efforts but we know it is never enough. We will work our guts out for this state. We will work hard to get people back to work and the 13 400 people back to work since May is a further sign to us that things are moving in the right direction. We will continue to put fuel in the tank and keep the gear box moving forward.

Time expired.

[12.09 p.m.]

Ms STANDEN (Franklin) - Madam Deputy Speaker, I rise to contribute on this important MPI on budget and financial management, particularly impacting the affordable housing. Before I go onto that, I note that one key thing that the Minister for Finance could do was deliver on his promise of the corridor highway, Channel Highway Corridor Improvement Plan which would inform the Huntingfield Development in my electorate - and yours, Madam Deputy Speaker - of Franklin. Instead, the left hand of the Finance minister is not speaking to the right hand of the Housing minister, and there is a proposal for a second roundabout south of the Algonia Road roundabout disaster. He could at least deliver on that promise which was due to be released by the beginning of this year.

This morning, the Housing minister provided an update to the House on the quarterly Housing report, and a response at long last to the housing affordability House of Assembly select committee that reported in February of this year, some six months later. I welcome the fact that the minister has provided that response and look forward to reading that with interest.

I was very disappointed to hear him note that the select committee was a waste of time, effectively. There were two Government members, together with the Greens and two Labor representatives on that select committee. We put a power of work into that and the comments the Housing minister makes dismisses the many submissions that were made to that committee and the time that the sector and stakeholders put into that, which at the time was welcomed as a timely contribution to a bipartisan approach to improving housing affordability and availability in this state, acknowledging that after the last five years the prices of private housing and rental affordability has deteriorated significantly in this state.

The Government's budget update for May shows that the Liberals spent \$23 million less than budgeted on affordable housing. This follows a \$16 million underspend last year. Given the urgency, the question has to be asked: why isn't this money being spent to get people into homes? The Government has that blueprint now to do something, and I do hope in reading the Government's response that they will be adopting the 61 recommendations of the select committee on housing affordability, and also Labor's Housing Works policy, which would fast-track the building of 490 more affordable rental homes in partnership with the community housing sector.

For months now, Tasmanians have been told to stay home and to stay safe, but for those Tasmanians without a home, there is no safety. We must do better and we must give all Tasmanians the dignity and safety of a roof over their heads.

Some of the recommendations in that select committee report on housing affordability included a recommendation to increase the capital funding for the delivery of more social and affordable houses. There is a shortfall of some 11 400 social affordable homes across the state and with the Housing Register wait list of over 3500 and declining, that is getting worse. With an incredible waiting time to house priority applicants of 59 weeks, much more should be done in that area. The select committee called upon the minister to tie outcomes within the Affordable Housing Action Plan to reductions in the wait list.

There were recommendations to develop a more sophisticated and flexible approach to regulating short-stay accommodation in areas of high demand for affordable housing, to recognise increased demand for specialist homelessness services and increased funding under the National Housing and Homelessness Agreement. I will come to that in a minute. There was also a recommendation for a long-term approach to establish a third Affordable Housing Action Plan from 2023 to provide clear direction over the next period to 2036. At the moment, this Government and this Housing minister has focused very much on short term measures.

I note that in the quarterly report released today there is a promise to support 400 additional households into safe and secure housing by end of financial year to 2023 under the debt waiver agreement, but 50 of those are in private rentals. How is that safe and secure housing? It might be safe, but is it secure? This minister could be looking at recommendations like inclusionary rezoning and regulating short-stay accommodation to improve the private rental affordability crisis in this state, in order to assist people truly into safe and secure housing.

I wanted to briefly touch on the maintenance liability. It was disclosed last year that there was a current deferred maintenance liability for the social housing portfolio estimated at approximately \$60 million, with Housing Tasmania making up approximately \$25 million of that amount and the balance in the community housing sector.

I understand that \$12 million has been added to the maintenance budget through the COVID-19 public works fund. The question remains, how will that be spent? Will that be in public housing or social housing? Will the community housing providers benefit from this? There have been mounting issues in that sector about maintenance liability.

In the seconds I have remaining I want to talk about the housing stock decline. In August 2019 the minister provided me information that indicated that from the period since the Liberal Government took office there has been a decline of nearly 600 housing stock homes. I asked for an update in January this year and the minister refused to provide that figure, so as fast as we are building homes, how could it be that there is actually a net decline in housing stock? We must move to long-term thinking in the housing space, acting on private rentals. The Safe Night Space is funded only until the end of December and that simply is intolerable.

Time expired.

[12.16 p.m.]

Mr STREET (Franklin) - I have to say, Madam Deputy Speaker, sometimes when you find out what the MPI for the day is going to be you have to check the calendar and make sure it is not April Fool's Day. Quite frankly, whilst budget and financial management is a matter of public importance, the fact that the Labor Party thinks they can come in here and lecture us on it really does beggar belief.

This Government has a proud record of managing the state budget and getting the Tasmanian economy back on track. Prior to the pandemic, our economy was the envy of the nation, leading across a number of indicators and our budget was strong, contrary to what Mr O'Byrne was saying. For the first time in over a decade Tasmania was ranked number one on the CommSec State of the State Report. Our budget was strong, with surpluses forecast over four years and net cash and investments being held.

The update delivered last week by the Premier clearly outlined that the economic impacts of the coronavirus have not been as severe as initially thought. Surely that was a good thing, not a bad thing. We are seeing jobs growth return and we think we can be cautiously optimistic about the future. Last week's ABS job numbers -

Ms Butler interjecting

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER - Order, I ask that the member be able to make his contribution in peace, please.

Mr STREET - Last week's ABS job numbers show that 13 400 Tasmanians are now back in work in seasonally adjusted terms since May, the height of the pandemic impact. The Government knows that the best way to get our budget back on track, grow business confidence and create jobs is to grow the economy, and that is exactly what we are doing.

The Government's construction blitz will deliver building construction projects around the state worth an estimated \$3.1 billion over the next two years. The program builds on our \$1.8 billion investment program already budgeted over the next two years. Our stimulus program will support the creation of around 15 000 jobs, build around 2300 homes and support our building and construction sector and economy statewide.

I want to talk about a couple of projects. One in particular is the \$10 million that is going towards regional health centres and ambulance facilities. I happened to have been lucky enough to spend the day on Bruny Island last Thursday and met with Donna Gallagher, the nurse unit manager at the Bruny health centre. It is a terrific facility but the money they are receiving will go to improving the nurses' accommodation on Bruny Island.

Whilst it is a good infrastructure project, it also will allow them to attract and retain staff. We know how difficult that can be for some regional communities, so the fact that they are going to now be able to offer modern living facilities for nurses who come to work on Bruny Island is really important to them and something they are incredibly excited about.

We have \$55 million in road and irrigation investment and an extra \$7 million for child and family learning centres. The community engagement process and formation of local enabling groups has started and I am particularly excited about the fact that one of these new family learning centres will be in Kingston. It is something the Kingborough community can be incredibly excited about and look to the future.

Our economic performance is because of this Government's management. There is reason for cautious optimism and this has been seen in the commentary. The Sensis Business Index for August 2020 released this week shows that for the eleventh report in a row the Tasmanian Liberal Government has the most popular policies for business in the nation. What was the record in opposition? Mr O'Byrne talked about leaving the car with half a tank of gas. What he actually left was two-thirds of businesses in this state thinking that the policies of the former Labor government were pushing the car off the cliff, not working for them. Tasmanian businesses are also the most confident about our economy in the country, with the report stating that small and medium businesses in Tasmania are the most positive about their state economy. Why is this important? Because when business owners are confident, they are more likely to invest in their business and more likely to employ people and grow the economy.

In such uncertain times it is pleasing that Tasmanian small and medium businesses are more confident than those nationally. The CommSec report for July 2020 reported that Tasmania's economy is the best performing in the nation. We lead the nation on relative population growth, and why wouldn't we? Everybody in this place knows that Tasmania is the best place in the world to live. Our retail trading, equipment investment and our low unemployment rate -

Ms O'Connor - Climate.

Mr STREET - Thank you, Ms O'Connor - are also leading the nation. You can guarantee whenever I stand up here, there will be an interjection about climate change.

The report said Tasmania holds the mantle of the best performing economy in its own right and is ranked first outright on the CommSec rankings. Three months ago Tasmania shared top spot with Victoria.

At the risk of having to agree with Ms O'Connor, she did make the very pertinent point while she was standing that for Labor to come in here and talk about budget management when they are not prepared to cost an alternative budget really does say everything you need to know about this MPI today. Labor has been all over the place during the COVID emergency. They

have chosen throughout to play politics. I accused them of cherry-picking Public Health advice before and they got particularly aggravated about that.

Opposition members interjecting.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER - Order. I cannot hear the member's contribution. I ask members to allow him to make it.

Mr STREET - Madam Deputy Speaker, you know when you are hitting a bit close to the bone because the interjections start to get a little more frequent and a little bit louder.

They cannot be believed or taken seriously until they provide their costings and how they would pay. Can you imagine this group at the helm during a crisis? Mr O'Byrne has talked down the economy and continued to be negative, damaging and hurting the workers and businesses he purports to be supporting just to play politics and get another cheap media grab at the very time Tasmanians need to have each other's backs and work together to restore confidence.

After six and a half years in opposition Labor has still not come up with a properly costed alternative budget and no long-term plan for Tasmania. The best Labor has come up with is its COVID-19 package sham which, as usual, was an un-costed cut-and-paste brochure of other people's projects, including many projects the Government already has underway.

While we have a long way to go to recover and rebuild a stronger Tasmania, these results demonstrate we should be cautiously optimistic as we continue to manage the pandemic. The Government will continue to support Tasmanians sensibly and responsibly through these extraordinarily difficult times, and support our economy with opportunities to grow jobs into the future.

Matter noted.

MOTION

Draft Code of Practice - Fuel Price Reporting - Endorsement

[12.23 p.m.]

Ms ARCHER (Clark - Attorney-General - Motion) - Madam Deputy Speaker, I move -

That pursuant to Section 37 of the Australian Consumer Law (Tasmania) Act 2010, the House endorses the draft code of practice prepared in accordance with Section 37(3) of the Australian Consumer Law (Tasmania) Act 2010.

The Government knows that the cost of living is a real issue for Tasmanians. It is something we as a government have concentrated on in efforts regarding a number of our economic policies and things we are delivering on. We want Tasmania to remain one of the most affordable places in the country to live, work and raise a family, especially for the elderly and those on low and fixed incomes.

Of course the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic and the recovery from its enormous economic impacts highlight the importance of keeping the costs of living low, including the

cost of fuel. We know that the fickle price of fuel is a cause of frustration for many Tasmanians and has been for some time. Previous governments have done very little in this regard.

Motorists want improved availability and clarity of fuel price information so they can make an informed choice when they fill up at the bowser. Difficulty in knowing the best available prices can increase the impact of fuel prices on many Tasmanian household budgets.

In 2017 our Government acted to introduce price transparency requirements so that only the undiscounted petrol prices are displayed on petrol price boards at service stations. Upon becoming the minister responsible, I investigated other options that we can look at in terms of fuel prices to keep them as low as possible. While fuel prices on the mainland reduced quickly in early 2020 in line with global oil markets, the same did not occur in Tasmania.

To help put downward pressure on fuel prices, the Tasmanian Government announced in May this year that it would introduce a mandatory real-time fuel price reporting scheme. That not only became necessary through COVID-19, but was something I had been looking at investigating and discussing with other state and territory colleagues since last year.

As part of this scheme, all fuel retailers will be required to update fuel prices as they occur, providing a vastly enhanced level of transparency. The Government's action on fuel price reporting and introducing an app or website brings the state into line with the approach taken in other jurisdictions, namely New South Wales, Western Australia and the Northern Territory. We have relied heavily on the New South Wales model; I will explain that in further detail, but I take this opportunity to thank staff and personnel in New South Wales.

Many people would like to see this come on line as soon as possible. I too would like that. We have to have this approved by both Houses, but the other issue has been dealing with New South Wales officials who are dealing with a second wave of COVID-19, which has interrupted things in this space as well. I hope political pot shots will not be taken in that regard because this has been taken out of our hands in relation to some of the delay.

To provide access to these real-time prices, a free app will be provided to allow Tasmanian motorists to easily search for the cheapest fuel by location, price, fuel type or brand in this state. I stress this is a free app that the state Government is providing to consumers and we are proud of that. The Tasmanian app will be able to be downloaded to mobile phones using Apple, iOS or Android operating systems. The Tasmanian Government has now purchased the rights to use the FuelCheck app developed by the New South Wales Department of Fair Trading, and I again thank them for that assistance.

The New South Wales Government app has been rebranded as FuelCheck Tasmania. The licensing agreement with New South Wales includes technical support for one year. This app has been operating in New South Wales for over four years and has been extensively downloaded and used by the public with over eight million hits. The New South Wales Fair Trading app is superior to commercial fuel reporting apps which rely on individual motorists to upload details, as prices are often incomplete or quickly become outdated.

Over 2000 New South Wales service stations are using this app in real time. It has a high level of satisfaction reported by users, namely 94 per cent, which is a pretty good statistic in anyone's book. While consumers cannot control the price of fuel at the bowser, the FuelCheck

app lets them decide when and where to buy the cheapest fuel in their area by using this app with real-time updates from all local stations.

Whether it is to help reduce your vehicle's fuel consumption during the daily commute or stretching your holiday dollars further on your next road trip across our state, which we hope to see more of, browsing the app is the best way to be certain to get the best deal at the bowser before you head off.

Provision of price information by retailers will be closely monitored by the Government, with penalties for failing to provide accurate information. In this regard, we have worked very closely with small to large fuel retailers so they not only understand their obligations but also to provide assistance and advice, as needed. That has been particularly evident for some of the smaller operators whereas the larger operators, of course, might already operate under this system in other states.

In the case of petrol prices, we want to ensure that consumers are protected from potentially misleading information on fuel prices. The code will ensure that the prices reported by retailers are accurate and up to date. The code will ensure that the price in the app is the same as the price on the bowser. This code and the associated fuel check app is another step in the Government's plan to reduce the cost of living for Tasmanians. We have worked closely with stakeholders and sought the views of the public in developing the code of practice which has been tabled in parliament.

A draft code was released for public consultation in July 2020. Key stakeholders, including the Tasmanian Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Royal Automobile Association of Tasmania, Tasmanian Automobile Chamber of Commerce and Australasian Convenience and Petroleum Marketers Association have indicated their support for the proposed code.

The Australian Consumer Law (Tasmania) Act 2010 provides the mechanism for Tasmania to create regulations in relation to a code of practice for fuel price reporting. However, prior to making those regulations by the Governor in Council, the act requires that a draft code of practice be endorsed by resolution of both Houses of parliament.

Nothing ever, it seems, is as simple as just producing an app. There are all sorts of things you have to go through, processes of consultation. As I said, licensing requirements. We did not need to reinvent the wheel in relation to this by looking to the cooperation, indeed the assistance, from the New South Wales Government. That is not an easy process to negotiate either because there are licensing arrangements to go through.

COVID-19 has presented issues. It continues to present issues, particularly with our neighbours interstate. Again, I want to stress the importance of thanking New South Wales for their assistance and cooperation, even in difficult times when we have had staff and personnel moved into other departments. At times we just simply have not been able to devote as much time. I thank Peter Graham from the department who has done an enormous amount of work on this with his team.

As I said, on the face of this it looks very simple. It is not and there have been countless hours put into this to get this up and running as quickly as possible. To give members of the House comfort, we have an app and website in its final stages. Testing is currently underway. There was further testing on the weekend. There were a few glitches. We want to get this right

for consumers so they will be ironed out before we go live but you cannot go live until this gets approved by the parliament.

With that, in accordance with the act, I commend this resolution to the House.

[12.33 p.m.]

Ms BUTLER (Lyons) - Madam Speaker, I rise to add to the debate on the Regulation Australian Consumer Law (Tasmania) (Code of Practice for Fuel Price Reporting) Regulations 2020 in accordance with section 37(1) of the Australian Consumer Law (Tasmania) Act 2010. I also thank the minister and the minister's office for organising a briefing with Peter and Dave. It was a good briefing and thank you very much for that information.

Yes, I agree, a lot of work has definitely gone into this regulation. The code of practice set out in schedule one is prescribed as the Code of Practice for Fuel Price Reporting. This regulation is industry led. Labor supports this regulation. This regulation has been consulted widely and drafted in conjunction with the Tasmanian Chamber of Commerce and Industry.

Price gouging has been a problem in Tasmania for decades and we welcome industry-led action to address this problem. The ACCC recommendations from the 2016 report on the Launceston petrol market called for:

- increased transparency and promotion of price competition;
- regular publications of Gross Indicative Retail Differences (GIRD) against other locations;
- the Tasmanian Government to closely monitor GIRDs in the Launceston market relative to other locations and publish information on GIRDs for consumers and industry participants;
- the Tasmanian Government to make companies accountable when GIRDs become significantly higher than usual and also making the price information available to consumers and third parties on a near real time basis to improve the functioning of retail petrol markets; and
- real time information will provide motorists to more easily compare prices across retail sites, particularly through well-tailored apps. It will reward more those companies who discount and it will enable greater public scrutiny of the behaviour of petrol retailers.

That point from the ACCC recommendation has certainly been met with this regulation.

It was Labor who called on the ACCC to investigate the fuel prices in Tasmania, I am led to believe. It was also Labor who called for greater transparency on that pricing. Labor called on the government at that stage to implement the recommendations of the ACCC report and it is a really positive step that motorists will have the information required to reward those companies who discount, providing greater public scrutiny of the behaviour of petrol retailers.

We will continue to promote a competitive market behaviour to keep prices of petrol lower for all Tasmanians.

A quote from the ACCC report:

- ... greater public scrutiny of the behaviour of petrol retailers.

The more information on petrol prices which is available to the public, the better...

From advice we have been provided, all fuel retailers will be required to register their businesses online and report regularly on the fuel website. That site is named Fuel Check Tas. They have to log on to that site within 30 minutes after the change of a retail fuel price. The reporting must include the date and time from which a relevant fuel is offered for sale by the fuel retailer. Notifications are administered in the Department of Justice.

Minister, can you advise the penalties for fuel retailers who do not comply with the reporting requirements? You mentioned in your opening address that there are penalties. Also, how is that compliance monitored? You also referred to that in your opening address.

There seems to be a limitation to protect smaller retailers such as the 'mum and dad' local store holders who provide petrol for retail but are not part of large fuel chains. We have been contacted by a few of those smaller 'mum and dad' style local general stores who happen to sell petrol as well.

Those people are concerned that publishing their pricing on that website could be perceived in a negative way because they are having to compete with large fuel organisations such as Bennetts and United who can pull a larger quantity and have more purchasing power. That is an aspect which is important for us to be mindful of. There are not many of them but those smaller retailers are out there.

Those people are required to register their businesses even if they are not a petrol station. That is in keeping with what the intent of this regulation is, and that is for greater transparency. It is my understanding that there is some unrest within that cohort of retailers, though.

I have also had advice from the briefing this morning that apparently a logo will feature on the app next to the retailers. I was wondering, minister, whether it might be possible for those people who are smaller retailers and not part of those large retail groups to maybe have their own logo. That might be an indication that this could be why their pricing is different to some of the larger groups.

Ms Archer - Do you mean if they are an independent, as opposed to a chain type?

Ms BUTLER - Yes. Another point was about people who do not have access to the internet or data, and how they might be able to access this app, because there is quite a large percentage of people who are not technologically savvy, or might not be able to afford or access data. I do not know whether it might be prudent or even possible to potentially publish the pricings in newspapers or something.

Ms Archer - It is real time, you cannot. It is changing. It could change by the minute.

Ms BUTLER - Yes, that is a problem, but it would be good for us to think about how it could be more inclusive. I know it is a difficult problem.

This app gives the consumer an opportunity to understand who is potentially ripping them off. It does not actually stop the problem of price gouging, but it is a positive start. I would argue it provides the consumer with a guide of how expensive or cheap fuel is, but it does not fix the problem of the price gouging. If a large group of petrol stations is purchasing fuel from a fuel company and potentially adding 25 cents per litre to the price across their fuel outlets, and recording that on the app, it is transparent. It is being recorded, but it still does not fix the issue of the difference between the wholesale price the fuel was purchased at, and the retail price of the fuel being sold to the consumer.

The solution is for the public to gauge how much the actual fuel price is, and how much of a mark-up per litre they are paying, and that app will hopefully be able to provide that information to the public. The app is a start for consumers to choose which petrol outlet they would prefer. We do not know whether this will lead to dealing with the problem of petrol pricing being too high.

We support this regulation, though, and think it is a positive step to give consumers more access to information. We believe that this app is modelled from New South Wales - the minister referred to that as well in her opening address - and it has been running there quite successfully for five years. It is based on transparency, and we have to see whether or not it does help address the problem of bringing down petrol prices.

Tasmanians are still paying too much for fuel. This app is a very positive step. It provides consumers with an informed choice. However, it does not address price gouging and the difference between wholesale price and retail price.

We commend this regulation to the House.

[12.44 p.m.]

Ms O'CONNOR (Clark - Leader of the Greens) - Madam Speaker, I will make a brief contribution on the Australian Consumer Law (Tasmania) (Code of Practice for Fuel Price Reporting) Regulations 2020, and state from the outset that in the Greens' view, this is quite good red tape. It will require fuel retailers to - largely in real time - provide information to motorists about the retail price of petrol through their outlet.

It contains no sanctions, however, other than that the market - hopefully when a more informed customer base is able to choose where they purchase petrol - will have some influence over compliance, I gather.

It is interesting that price gouging for fuel has been a fact of life for Tasmanian motorists, as Ms Butler said, for decades. When I first came here as a journalist in 1989-90, the price of petrol was a regular headline story on the news. They were much more innocent times, of course, but price gouging has been a big problem in Tasmania for the past 30 years at least. It is partly because we are an island, and we are very vulnerable because of our reliance on imported fuel.

However, we are also made vulnerable as a community, because proportionally we have the lowest incomes in the country, and proportionally we are the state with the highest dependence on Commonwealth income support. Even in the *Mercury* newspaper today, we read that Tasmanians are the biggest losers when it comes to transport costs. Hobart motorists are spending 15.7 per cent of their income on transport, and it is about the same for people in

Launceston. We are paying more as proportion of our lower income on transport costs - and that is largely fuel - than other Australians. Over the last four reporting periods, Hobart and Launceston are the least affordable cities, according to the Australian Automobile Association's quarterly transport fuel index.

Of course, it is important that there is transparency about petrol prices but, as an island community, we also need to start thinking about the future with a much clearer eye. We are far too heavily dependent on imported fuel, and that leaves us highly vulnerable. We are far too dependent as an island community on the car, and our government is far too fond of building roads. Even this morning, the land acquisitions that were tabled: there is an area of land at Lovely Banks for road purposes. There is an area of land at the Saltworks Road junction for road purposes. Another area of land at Saltworks Road junction in Glamorgan Spring Bay for road purposes. Another area of land at Spring Hill in the Southern Midlands for road purposes. Yes, here is another one: the Tasman Highway Great Eastern Drive Rosedale road junction for road purposes. Again here is another one at Rosedale Road junction for road purposes.

I hope I am in parliament long enough to sit here when papers are being tabled and hear that there is some land being compulsorily acquired for pedestrian access, or for a bike path, or even land being compulsorily acquired to install more electric vehicle charging stations.

We have to evolve as a community so that we are less dependent on petrol, and on cars. It is a perpetual disappointment under this Government that so much of the infrastructure spending goes into roadworks.

I do not know who has driven down the Tasman Highway towards Sorell lately, but goodness me what a mess. It is very hard to work out what the plan is there, because apparently it looks like we are going to have 10 lanes heading to the airport. It is insane, and you have choke points along the two causeways into Sorell.

There is only so much a government can do with its road infrastructure in order to ease congestion. The best thing you can do is start doing mode shift. That is why the work by the RACT on its mobility vision for Hobart and Launceston is so important, because it focuses on how you get that transport mode shift, and how you basically re-engineer your cities - Hobart and Launceston particularly - so that we have much more public and passenger transport, and much more pedestrian and bike infrastructure. Launceston particularly is really ripe for more cycling infrastructure and pedestrian infrastructure because it is flatter than Hobart, but in Hobart too there is a real shortage of safe bike paths. When I drive home through the city, I see cars turn into bike paths painted on by Hobart City Council all the time.

A few weeks ago I chased a car up Goulburn Street because they cut in on the bike path and did not even look to see whether a cyclist was coming behind them. They cut in on the bike path to get onto Goulburn Street, so I chased them and shook my fist at them. I am always a bit worried because I have Greens stickers on the back, but there is an uncomfortable juxtaposition between car infrastructure that is roads and the really half-hearted efforts that have been made by Commonwealth, state and local governments to improve the cycling infrastructure. Until you have dedicated, safe bike lanes, most parents will not want their children riding to school when they see the kind of behaviour from motorists that some of us see in relation to bike lanes.

Mr Tucker - You should see the investment going into Break O'Day.

Ms O'CONNOR - Is the Break O'Day Council putting in bike lanes, Mr Tucker?

Mr Tucker - Yes, with help from the federal government and state Government funding.

Ms O'CONNOR - That is fantastic, really good. We could have walkways and bike ways that link up this whole island. We could be a global destination once we are through this incredibly difficult period, for people who want to get on their bikes and see Tasmania. At the moment we are missing those opportunities because the capital works budget for your Government, Mr Tucker, is so heavily focused on road construction.

We need to get beyond 'roads, roads, roads'. Of course it is important we have safe roads, but we need to start thinking more clearly about providing choice. One of the benefits of that is the people of Tasmania will have choices to get onto affordable public transport and have a choice not to have to spend nearly 16 per cent on their income on transport costs.

I know we sound like a broken record when we talk about pedestrian and passenger transport, but this is genuinely what people want to see in their cities. Go to the great cities of the world - such as Portland, Oregon, for example - where they decided early to invest in liveability, pedestrian access and getting cars out of their city. That city is so full of life and economic activity because it is a city that is about people and not about cars.

We need to rethink our approach to transport infrastructure. We need to recognise that being so heavily dependent on imported petrol makes us vulnerable. In a COVID-19 recovery framework, we should be investing infrastructure money into broadening out transport choices and into mobility solutions like those proposed by the RACT through its mobility vision work. I commend the RACT for that work, which is essential policy development work. Last week or the week before, other members of the House were briefed or asked their views on the Launceston mobility vision by the RACT. We fed into their work on the Hobart mobility vision. This is critical and it is work that should be coming out of government.

We need government to be driving that mode shift and allocating capital moneys into re-engineering our cities so they are places for people and not for cars. That will help bring down the cost of living for Tasmanians who right now have very little choice but to be so dependent on their petrol-fuelled cars.

We also need, as a state, to be investing in electric vehicle infrastructure and government needs to ramp up its procurement of electric vehicles through the government fleet so that they can go into Pickles Auction House and start reseeded at affordable prices the vehicle mix on our roads. We should be powering our cars with hydropower and not petrol, and the day will come when measures like fuel price reporting are not necessary. In fact, they will come sooner than later because the world is shifting and major vehicle manufacturers are moving away from manufacturing petrol-fueled cars. There has been a very rapid shift towards electric vehicle transport - we need to be on top of that, and the greatest capacity to do that rests with the Tasmanian Government.

This is a good initiative on the minister's part and should help to bring down the cost of living for Tasmanian motorists, but it is a temporary initiative. The best way we can help bring down transport costs for Tasmanians is to provide better pedestrian and passenger transport and electric vehicles powered by hydropower and not expensive imported fuel.

[12.56 p.m.]

Mr TUCKER (Lyons) - Madam Deputy Speaker, the AAA Transport Affordability Index found Hobart and Launceston were among Australia's most expensive cities relating to fuel, with drivers spending \$80 to \$91 per week respectively as at December 2019. I note that this was a decrease from 2018. The Australian Competition and Consumer Commission - ACCC - previously advised that Tasmania is not benefiting from a price cycle that cities such as Melbourne and Sydney and Brisbane enjoy. It is suggested that this may result in generally higher petrol prices in regional Australian areas due to higher costs for transport and storage of fuel.

Lower population and demand can result in fewer outlets and less competition in regional areas. Less demand for convenience sales such as drinks, food and newspapers can enable retailers to add to overall profits and keep their prices lower.

As a tool to help Tasmanian families, the Government announced the introduction of a mandatory real-time fuel price reporting scheme. Transparency of fuel price information is important and follows the introduction of the fuel price board code of practice in 2017 which required that only undiscounted petrol prices be advertised on petrol price boards.

The Australian Consumer Law (Tasmania) Act 2010 provides the mechanism under section 37 for Tasmania to create regulations for introducing a code of practice for fuel price reporting. In order to adopt a code of practice under the Australian Consumer Law Act 2010 both Houses of parliament must pass a resolution endorsing the code of practice for fuel price reporting, and I am pleased to be supporting the Attorney-General and Minister for Building and Construction on this task today.

It allows the Director of Consumer Affairs and Fair Trading to take action if there is an alleged breach of the code under section 39 of the act. The director can apply to a magistrate for an order to stop the breach and to rectify any noncompliance. I think everyone will agree that this is a good thing for Tasmanians.

The two key features of the code of practice are the mandatory requirements of registration of Tasmanian fuel retailers and reporting by fuel retailers of fuel prices for all types of specified fuel they sell.

The Government's fuel track app and website will allow for operation of the code to take place. Price variation reports by retailers will be uploaded to the app and any price variation must be reported by the retailer within 30 minutes of making a change. This ensures that price information is in real time. Those fuel prices can then be assessed by consumers who have downloaded the FuelCheck app. The code of practice ensures that the price charged at the bowser is the same as the price listed on the app. The location of retailers and their opening hours are other advantages to consumers using the app.

A variety of stakeholders have an interest in this important area and the Government has been engaging with key stakeholders and sought the views of the public in developing the code of practice that has been tabled in the parliament. The draft code was released for public consultation in July 2020. Key stakeholders have been consulted on the code, including the Australian Institute of Petroleum, TACC, RACT, TCCI and the Australian Convenience and Petroleum Marketers Association.

The Government has already received early registrations from many service station operators making the necessary business changes to be compliant with the requirements for commencement.

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

MOTION

Native Forest Logging - Motion Negatived

[2.30 p.m.]

Ms O'CONNOR (Clark - Leader of the Greens - Motion) - Madam Speaker, I move -

That the House -

- (1) Acknowledges that the planet is experiencing a human-induced climate and biodiversity crisis and agrees there is no justification for native forest logging.
- (2) Notes that 'Sustainable' Timber Tasmania (STT) continues to clear fell and burn old forests that are critical habitat for rare, threatened and endangered species.
- (3) Recognises STT's second and most recent failure to obtain Forest Stewardship Certification is a damning indictment on logging practices under the Liberal Government.
- (4) Notes SGS Global's audit has shown how far from meeting the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) standards STT are, with 10 major non-conformities identified.
- (5) Recognises ethical global markets and consumers do not want wood products sourced from old-growth forests, nor do most Tasmanians.
- (6) Acknowledges the audit called for all old-growth forests to be protected from logging.
- (7) Recognises the audit was scathing of the Government logging in swift parrot habitat, finding:-
 - (a) STT logged swift parrot habitat despite expert advice warning against it;
 - (b) even with STT's set aside area of less than 10 000 hectares, swift parrot habitat would still be logged within areas subject to the Government's unreleased Public Authority Management Agreement (PAMA);
 - (c) the proposed PAMA does not apply to significant critical swift parrot habitat along the East Coast, South-East and in the North-West.

- (8) Agrees the Minister for Resources, Hon. Guy Barnett MP's claims that STT logging practices are 'world class' is fraudulent.
- (9) Calls on the Government to end native forest logging in Tasmania to protect critical habitat and forest carbon stores.

The world's forests are in extreme distress - in Siberia in the Arctic Circle, in the Amazon, in Brazil and in the Congo, and here, of course, in Australia where last summer vast tracts of forest along the eastern seaboard were torched and burnt.

We are in a climate and biodiversity crisis and the scientists are telling us we have to keep the carbon that is in the ground in the ground, and we have to sequester more carbon in the ground. The scientists are also telling us that around one million species are headed towards extinction. Among them are Tasmanian native animals like the critically endangered swift parrot, the masked owl, the Tasmanian devil and the giant freshwater crayfish. These remarkable creatures are totally dependent on forest habitats. In Tasmania their habitat is being clear-felled and burned by the Government GBE, Sustainable Timber Tasmania, and that clear-fell and burning regime is intensifying under the Liberal Government. We have evidence that native forest logging operations increased during the COVID-19 lockdown. We have had contacts from people all over Tasmania who say log truck movements are increasing and the size of the logs on the back of those trucks is increasing too.

The Government's forestry GBE might have 'sustainable' in its name but its native forest logging operations are most certainly not. You do not have to believe us, or the Wilderness Society, or the Bob Brown Foundation, or the scientists from Forestry Watch. Believe what the auditors are telling you in the audit report into Sustainable Timber Tasmania's bid for Forest Stewardship Certification which was given to Government in February this year, six months ago, and released late last Friday while journalists were in a budget lock-up and three days after we had lodged a right to information request to obtain this audit report.

This audit report is absolutely damning of Sustainable Timber Tasmania's approach to the protection of habitat and the species those habitats sustain, most specifically the swift parrot, which is down to plus or minus only 1000 breeding pairs. Tasmania's blue gum and black gum forests are essential habitat for the swift parrot, and they are forests which Sustainable Timber Tasmania continues to log.

I will give you some of the highlights from the auditor's report. Number 10, major non-conformities. The auditors say -

... observations by the audit team in the field include harvests of potential nesting trees and foraging trees within sight of an identified swift parrot nest site classified as "low density" by STT, or determined "harvestable". For example, coupes BB025A and SO034A were both harvested but were observed to have had potential swift parrot habitat, which was confirmed in consultation with swift parrot experts.

It is the audit team's judgement that the 'low density foraging trees' as determined in these cases by the STT-FPA-DPIPWE framework, are still critical swift parrot habitat.

That was the conclusion reached through the observations of the audit team.

As confirmed by multiple experts when interviewed, that -

... STT is negatively impacting swift parrot habitat through harvest of these areas.

Additionally, expert recommendations against harvesting in these areas were given by a swift parrot expert, as confirmed in documentation and interviews. These recommendations to STT staff, and other relevant Tasmanian agencies, were considered but recommendations for no-harvest were not followed. Again, these areas where it was advised by scientific experts that there were former nesting trees, and it was specifically recommended to retain the large hollow bearing trees that were advised to be the potential swift parrot foraging areas, that were near identified, current swift parrot nest trees.

... the STT approach ... does not protect critically endangered habitat as required using the *Precautionary Approach* and *Best Available Information* as defined in the FSC-Australia FM Standard.

It goes onto say that there was insufficient retention of either hollow-bearing trees or coarse woody debris. They noted the presence of many very large stumps some of which were two or three metres in diameter.

Burning sites, finding number 9, an observation by the editors -

This finding is regarding post-harvest and post-burning harvested sites. In several coupes, streamside buffers were unintentionally burned, either peripherally or completely, during prescribed burning operations.

It goes onto talk about STT's approach to old growth logging, old growth forests -

... STT has not provided sufficient evidence to support contentions that harvesting old growth within the estate is not a threat at the landscape level.

Finding number 13, major nonconformity on the swift parrot -

In the absence of a Swift Parrot Management Plan for the STT estate, or other documentation of the analysis of sugar glider predation and other threats relative to other forest management activities and natural disturbances, the audit team concludes that the requirements this Indicator have not been met. That is, we conclude that STT has not appropriately identified and acted in consideration of threats to the Critically Endangered swift parrot.

Finding number 15, another major nonconformity -

... Interviews with swift parrot experts during the audit discovered several examples of expert recommendations not being taken under advisement or meaningfully applied within the development of strategies for the

management and protection of the swift parrot within the regulatory framework of the State of Tasmania forest practices system.

Finding number 16, major nonconformity -

STT is not sufficiently maintaining or enhancing swift parrot habitat as assessed during the audit.

And that is the nub. The major issues here, and what it boils down to, is that as long as so-called Sustainable Timber Tasmania continues its current logging practices, it will not be eligible for Forest Stewardship Council certification. We are not saying FSC certification is the panacea - we do not support logging in native forests - but it is something.

From STT's point of view and from the taxpayers' point of view, securing FSC certification means access to more ethical and, in fact, more profitable global markets overseas. The GBE is clear-felling and burning the habitat of critically endangered species and therefore cannot get FSC certification. Instead, our Resources minister trundled off to China last December to flog off cheap, publicly subsidised native forest woodchips to companies that do not care where the wood comes from so long as it is cheap.

In order to greenwash the damning report, STT announced as part of its stakeholder engagement correspondence that went out last Friday that it was setting aside 10 000 hectares of swift parrot habitat in order to protect the species. The auditors are really clear. They knew about the proposed Public Authority Management Agreement between Sustainable Timber Tasmania and DPIPW. They knew that fewer than 10 000 hectares was set aside for the protection of the swift parrot, and they said it is not good enough and it will not save the species.

By way of example, and at risk of being pulled up for using a prop, it is really important, Madam Speaker, that members are aware of the actual extent of swift parrot habitat in Tasmania. This is in STT's own High Conservation Forest Management Report, the Sustainable Timber Tasmania HCV Assessment and Management Plan. This map is very clear. There is swift parrot breeding and foraging habitat along the northern edge of Tasmania, and into the north-west, down the entire east coast and into the Tasman forests, and into Bruny Island. What is STT proposing to set aside? This is a map of the Southern Forests. Along here you see a fragmented patchwork of yellow where STT suggests that it will not log in order to 'protect swift parrot habitat'.

There has been much talk by the minister - in fact, the Premier talked about it yesterday - the Public Authority Management Agreement between DPIPW and Sustainable Timber Tasmania. It was referred to in the Friday media release and stakeholder engagement communications that came out of Sustainable Timber Tasmania.

At 9.23 a.m. this morning, the Public Authority Management Agreement between DPIPW and STT was gazetted. We sent our policy and parliamentary adviser, Thomas Whitton, out into the world to try to obtain a copy. He started on the telephone, and this is his contemporaneous file note of his effort to obtain the PAMA:

I called the State Service hotline to request to speak to the Threatened Species Unit. They could not get through and gave me the direct line. I called the direct line and it was disconnected. Then I called Natural and Cultural

Heritage Division. The person who picked up the phone said they did not know about it and would get the document to send through to me. I never received it.

I then called Minister Jaensch's office, and was transferred through to the Parks adviser. The Parks adviser tried to send me to Minister Barnett's office, stating it was an STT matter. I then said the act is administered by the Environment portfolio. I was advised the Environment adviser would call me back.

I then went to the Threatened Species Unit page on the Government Directory. I called three numbers that were disconnected. Then I found a number I could get through to. I was told I would have to speak to the officer's supervisor and they would call me back.

Finally, the Environment adviser from Minister Jaensch's office called me back and told me the PAMA would be released after 3.30 pm and 'after it was gazetted'.

It has already been gazetted, and coincidentally 3.30 p.m. is when our Private Members' time would conclude.

Section 60 of the Threatened Species Protection Act of 1995 requires that:

The secretary must make available for inspection of the principal office of the Department and at such other offices as the Secretary considers appropriate, without charge, during normal office hours.

Since it became clear that the documents would not be published until after the Private Members' time debate, I went to try to inspect the documents in person. I went to DPIPWE's offices at 1 Franklin Wharf, listed as their address on the Government Directory. I was advised it had nothing to do with them and I was referred to 134 Macquarie Street, the Lands Building. There I was advised to go to 59 Liverpool Street, where the Natural Heritage Division is located. There was no reception desk and the elevator would not allow me to go up to the 8th floor where the office is located. I went back to the ground floor and called the number listed on the wall for the Threatened Species Unit. The number would not connect. I then called the Business Services Unit. I was advised I would have to speak to the acting manager and that they were in a meeting. I was advised I would be called back within an hour. Almost an hour later, approximately 1.30 p.m. I called back and was advised the meeting was running over.

I then explained that section 60 of the Threatened Species Protection Act of 1995 requires that the document be made available for public inspection. I was told there was nothing they could do and that they would pass it on to the acting manager. Shortly afterwards, the acting manager called me. He advised the documents would be made available online later today. I explained I needed them before 2.30 p.m. for a parliamentary debate, and that the documents would not be published online until after then.

I advised that section 60 of the Threatened Species Protection Act 1995 requires that the document be made available for public inspection during normal business hours. I was told they have never done that, and he was not sure if they could do that now. We still do not have

the Public Authority Management Agreement, which was gazetted at 9.23 a.m. this morning. What a farce.

Tragically for the swift parrot, the masked owl, the Tasmanian devil, giant freshwater crayfish and every living thing that depends on our forests, the whole management of this portfolio is an absolute farce. We can tell how poor STT's approach to forest management is by the fact that they have twice failed to secure FSC.

It is a damning indictment of the Government's GBE. For members of the community who went up to the Styx Valley last Sunday, or the Sunday before, as we did, if you want to see a graphic example of the reason Tasmania's publicly funded forestry GBE cannot secure certification, have a drive to the Styx, go into the clear-felled coupe that we went past the other day on our way through to the beautiful forest that so-called Sustainable Timber Tasmania thinks of only as Coupe TN034G. When you go past that clear-fell, what was an exquisite carbon-rich, life-filled wet forest is a moonscape, full of charred sticks and muddy, boggy hollows. It is a scene of utter devastation.

Too rarely do Tasmanians really see what is happening in our forests. Too rarely do Tasmanians understand that when STT or its contractors go into forests such as this, the extent of the smashing, the burning and the death and devastation is extreme.

I have spoken to forest activists who have been in shortly after a clear-fell logging operation in the Tarkine, where native animals are screaming on the ground because a bulldozer has gone in there and flattened some trees, and habitat trees come down, and every living thing in those trees is hurled to the ground. This is the reality of what is happening in our forests.

The world has changed, and Sustainable Timber Tasmania and the Government need to change too. Young people no longer accept native forest logging. In fact, an increasing number of Tasmanians understand that native forest logging is madness. It does not pay for itself. It never has, and it never will.

The forestry road we took into the Styx the other day would have cost in the order of some millions of dollars. It was a high-quality forestry road, better than Jefferys Track through Lachlan. Better in fact, in terms of its maintenance and construction, than Nubeena Back Road. Those are two thoroughfare gravel roads that I know of that did not have the same quality of construction as a publicly funded forestry road through to Sustainable Timber Tasmania's logging operations.

Critically, what young people understand is that in a time of climate emergency, there is no justification for clear-felling and burning forest habitats. There is zero. Particularly since here in Tasmania, as a result of a shift towards plantation resources that started happening in the 1980s and through to the 1990s, by STT's own estimation, there is enough timber in the plantation estate to meet all of the industry's needs. All of them.

What we are dealing with here is sheer bloody-mindedness on the part of government - an ideological mindset on the part of an industry that has always access to cheap, publicly subsidised timber.

Mr BARNETT - Point of order, Madam Speaker. I just draw the member's attention to the use of her language with respect to directing certain views and associating certain attributes to the Government.

Madam SPEAKER - Are you referring to bloody-mindedness?

Mr Barnett - Yes.

Madam SPEAKER - I do not think that is a point of order.

Ms O'CONNOR - Just a tiny bit bloody-minded of you, Mr Barnett, to get up and make a point of order about that.

This Government is overseeing a forestry GBE that in fact wrote to it. The board wrote to the Government back in 2016 and put to it an alternative to the increase in native forest logging. It put to them a proposal that the minimum sawlog quota, legislated as it is at 137 000 cubic metres, could be reduced - I think it was to about 96 000 cubic metres. The board of Forestry Tasmania at the time went to the Government and said there is another way here, but this Government, through sheer bloody-mindedness, took no notice of the board's correspondence and carried on regardless.

It is overseeing the destruction of habitat of critically endangered species. It is overseeing the release of masses of carbon into the atmosphere; as we know, that logged coupe in the Styx that we went past the other day will take a century or more for the carbon that was lost in that clear-fell and burn to be replaced. The animals that were there before - well, if we keep logging the forests at the rate we are, the swift parrots will not come back and the masked owls will have nowhere to go.

That might not matter to some people, but it matters to a lot of people. In fact, in last summer's bushfires, what broke people's hearts, almost more than anything else, was the loss of an estimated billion native animals. That diminishes us as a country. It diminishes us and it makes young people terribly sad. We have a responsibility to make sure that the swift parrot does not go the way of the thylacine. We, this generation, in this parliament now, have a responsibility.

We also have a responsibility, as does government, not to expose communities to fire risk. The science from UTAS, the University of Melbourne and Australian National University, which reflects science undertaken by other institutions around the world, was very clear that logging native forests increases bushfire risk in intensity and severity. That is a fact. Established scientific fact.

As this Government continues on its unsustainable logging of native forests, it is exposing communities to risk. There is an argument that it is potentially exposing taxpayers of the future to risk as well, when communities that face these fires after logging operations decide they might take civil action for compensation, given that government knew and had the evidence of increased risk.

I am reasonably interested in hearing what the shadow spokesperson for Labor and the minister have to say about this issue, but I will just make it really clear in closing: we met with the auditors. We met with them last year as part of their consultations around Tasmania as they went through the process of determining STT's eligibility for Forest Stewardship Council certification. We were very straight and clear with the auditors. In fact, I am certain they heard the same story, just slightly different language, from a whole range of stakeholders, and that is partly why they have rejected STT's FSC certification bid.

I promise the minister and the Government this: on behalf of the Greens and the Wilderness Society, Bob Brown Foundation, Tasmanian Conservation Trust and Forestry Watch and every Tasmanian who wants to see a better path forward for our forests, we will continue to talk to the auditors and continue to ground truth - the facts of what is happening in native forest logging in Tasmania. We will not let up on making sure our forests and the life they sustain are protected.

[2.55 p.m.]

Dr BROAD (Braddon) - Mr Deputy Speaker, I will work my way through the Greens' motion blow by blow.

It is pretty obvious that the Greens have been shifting the goalposts over a number of years. They have moved from wanting to protect old growth to high conservation value, and the Greens had a lot of say in defining what high conservation value is. In fact, they keep defining high conservation value to suit their needs. Now they have moved from old growth and high conservation value to all native forests.

Ms O'Connor - You're a scientist, you understand the evolution of knowledge and policy.

Dr BROAD - Could you please let me - I did not interject on you at all -

Dr Woodruff - You probably had nothing to say.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER - Order.

Dr BROAD - Here are the tolerant Greens once again. I have only just started my contribution and already they are shouting me down.

Dr Woodruff - There was nothing you could attack Ms O'Connor's comments about.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER - Order.

Dr BROAD - It is just impractical in a place like this where I cannot even hear myself think. Feel free to use the appropriate forms of the House.

Ms O'Connor - I had to listen to you huffing and puffing all through my contribution.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER - Order.

Dr BROAD - I have not even started and you are getting stuck into me so you are obviously prejudging.

Anyway, it is pretty obvious that the Greens are moving to all native forests. They have dismissed all their previous lines in the sand and now they are moving to all native forests and if, heaven forbid, they are successful in stopping all native forestry, they will move to all trees because that has to be the next step.

We will move to point (1), which acknowledges that the planet is experiencing human-induced climate change. They call it a biodiversity crisis, but they go on to say that

there is no justification for native forest logging. In fact there actually is justification for native forest logging. There are probably three ways to justify that, and they would be concrete, steel and plastic, because that is what sustainable native forestry can replace. It can replace very high carbon-intensive industries and high-carbon materials such as concrete, steel and plastic.

The Greens are very emotive when they talk about forestry. They talk about devastation and black and charred landscapes. Ms O'Connor is very good at that emotional language, which probably goes back to her journalistic turn of phrase.

Dr Woodruff - It actually goes to visiting coupes, Dr Broad, and maybe that is where you need to go.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER - Order, Dr Woodruff.

Dr BROAD - I am not bagging you out for that. You use very emotional language but you do not say what happens when you come back there in 20 years time or 30 years time.

Ms O'Connor - I did. I said the carbon is not replaced for more than a century.

Dr BROAD - A whole bunch of forests in Tasmania are high conservation value that were previously clear-felled. Some of those are even in the World Heritage Area now so that goes to show that forests can be sustainably harvested and indeed retain their high conservation values, so much so that they classify for World Heritage listing.

Another justification for native forest logging comes from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change - IPCC - which, in terms of climate change, says in one of its reports that -

A sustainable forest management strategy aimed at maintaining or increasing forest carbon stocks, while producing an annual sustained yield of timber, fiber or energy from the forest, will generate the largest sustained mitigation benefit.

The IPCC report also states that -

Sustainable forest management aimed at providing timber, fibre, biomass, non-timber resources and other ecosystem functions ... can lower [greenhouse gas emissions] and can contribute to adaptation.

So there is a justification for native forest logging. It has to be sustainable, there is no doubt.

The next point of the motion notes that Sustainable Timber Tasmania continues to clear-fell and burn old forests. I am very interested in the terminology here. It did not say 'old-growth forest', it just mentioned old forests.

Ms O'Connor - Same thing - old forests.

Dr BROAD - There is a technical definition for old-growth forests, but old forests, I imagine, is anything the Greens decide is the line in the sand for what determines what is old and what is not.

Ms O'Connor - Are you going to go anywhere near the FSC audit report?

Dr BROAD - Yes, I will get to the FSC, do not worry about that.

Ms O'Connor - Have you read it?

Dr BROAD - Yes. I will move on to that as the member is so keen.

The motion notes that STT's second and most recent failure to obtain Forest Stewardship Council certification is a damning indictment, et cetera. The member who has resumed her seat gave a hint to the future when she said that FSC is not perfect. I suppose if FSC did grant certification to Sustainable Timber Tasmania, the Greens would simply move to talking about FSC and how bad FSC is.

There is no doubt that FSC is not perfect. This is the SGS Global Services report called *Forest Management and Stump-to-Forest Gate Chain-of-Custody Certification Evaluation Report* for Sustainable Timber Tasmania. This is the consultant who did the auditing process. I note that finding 2019.6 was about the nonconformity about the swift parrot, which the member has gone through in some detail.

Ms O'Connor - Ten major nonconformities.

Dr BROAD - I will talk about one of them, but I know there are 10.

Dr Woodruff - How many were there in 2014? Ten. No change in six years.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER - Order. Warning number one, Dr Woodruff.

Dr BROAD - Let me try to make a point instead of sniping. It is incredible. Every time I get up to talk about this and lay out a series of points to make a point, I get shouted down. You are so intolerant of anybody else's opinion. It is extraordinary for the party of so-called tolerance.

Ms O'Connor - It's just that we can't listen to crap without challenging it.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER - Order, Ms O'Connor.

Dr BROAD - The nonconformity regarding the 2016 status of the swift parrot has changed from endangered to the higher threat category of critically endangered under the IUCN Red List. The swift parrot issues in this nonconformity have meant that it is a precondition for certification. In other words, Sustainable Timber Tasmania cannot get certification because of the nonconformities around the swift parrot.

I note that FSC certifies forests all around the world, including a forest in West Papua, a contested province in Indonesia, which has a pretty horrendous human rights record. I am sure that the member has at times spoken out against the Indonesians control of West Papua.

Anyway, here is an FSC certification audit by SGS Global, the same consultant who did Sustainable Timber Tasmania's audit. It goes on to detail a whole bunch of nonconformities,

including issues with erosion, issues with wages and issues with occupational health and safety. Yet, when we go to one of the nonconformities from this audit from 2015, it says -

... there are no specific actions to conserve the rare, threatened or endangered species. In addition, the activities to protect these species are limited to only species inventory, warning boards' installation -

in other words signs saying 'this is a tree' or 'this is a rare species' -

and the protection of [high conservation] areas.

The corrective action is the FME should consider providing more specific actions to conserve rare, threatened or endangered species.

In other words, there are absolutely no actions in this forest to conserve rare, threatened and endangered species, and what is the action? They have to try to rectify that by the next audit. That was not a precondition of certification; that was simply saying, 'Look, you've got to fix this up by the next audit'. It goes on talking about the corrective action, which is only due by the next audit, and that is FME shall use a basic minimum wage for their employees.

Ms O'Connor - Are you suggesting that the Government should walk away from FSC here because it is discredited?

Madam SPEAKER - Order, Ms O'Connor.

Dr BROAD - I am trying to make a point. You have already made the point that FSC is not perfect and I am just illustrating exactly why.

Ms O'Connor - Do you think it's worth it for the Tasmanian Government to pursue?

Dr BROAD - Yes, it is worth it.

Madam SPEAKER - Order. It is not a conversation between members.

Dr BROAD - I am going to be making a series of points here but I am saying there are obviously issues in this forest in West Papua, let alone all the human rights issues that you champion in West Papua. I know about these issues because my brother worked in West Papua and it is horrendous, so why would SGS Global recommend certification for this forest in West Papua and not in Tasmania? In the past we have had, and the member referred to it again today, campaigning by Bob Brown Foundation and the Wilderness Society to protect certain coupes from logging. The FSC does certify areas of old-growth being logged in places like Indonesia including orangutan habitat, Proboscis monkey, and other rare and threatened species.

Why is it that Sustainable Timber Tasmania cannot get FSC because of the non-compliances, whereas somewhere like West Papua can? We rewind the clock just a little bit and we go back to the Tasmanian Forest Agreement. One of the parts of the agreement was that the Wilderness Society and other environmental groups would support Sustainable Timber Tasmania in getting FSC certification. In a 2018 document, the *Tasmanian Forest Agreement: Your Questions Answered*, from the Wilderness Society website, point 7 says:

Why is this the best way forward for Tassie's forest when it comes to the agreement, the Tasmanian Forest Agreement?

The outcome is not perfect for our forests or the forest industry. Real-world solutions seldom are. But for the first time the forest industry is supporting important forest protection, as the future viability of the industry depends on community support and top-shelf certification from the Forest Stewardship Council.

The Forest Agreement gives us what Tasmanians and Australians have wanted in our forests for decades - a World Heritage Area in the southern forests, an end to logging in 500,000 hectares of our iconic forests, and the best shot we have ever had to protect all forests all over Tasmania.

Ms O'Connor - What is your point?

Dr BROAD - If you behave and listen maybe I can get to that point. This is the Wilderness Society. Part of the agreement was that they would support FSC certification and that has not happened. Now we see -

Ms O'CONNOR - Point of order, Madam Speaker. It is legitimate. He is verballing the Wilderness Society. They supported helping STT to get FSC when the -

Madam SPEAKER - It is not a point of order. He is quoting.

Dr BROAD - Thank you. So tolerant you are.

Ms O'Connor - I want to make sure the record is correct.

Dr BROAD - Your record is always correct, isn't it.

Ms O'Byrne - Unfortunately, *Hansard* does not read sarcasm.

Dr BROAD - No, it does not read sarcasm. Sorry, I was being sarcastic.

Now we see the Wilderness Society actively campaigning in coupes like the one described by the member for Clark that had been agreed to as part of the Permanent Timber Production Zone. We see these little coupes popping up as part of the long-term rotation -

Ms O'Connor - The deal is dead. The TFA is dead.

Madam SPEAKER - Ms O'Connor, please let Dr Broad speak.

Dr BROAD - All these are part of the Permanent Timber Production Zone which the Greens ticked off on, Environment Tasmania did, and the Wilderness Society did, and yet every time there is a coupe -

Greens members interjecting.

Madam SPEAKER - Order, I know you have been given one warning. It is not fair to Dr Broad. He has a turn to talk and I do not want to be asking you to leave the Chamber before your vote, so please.

Dr BROAD - Thank you, Madam Speaker. I note that your entire contribution was heard in silence. I did not interject. I could have when you made errors of fact and so on, but I stood by and thought 'let them have their say'. Obviously my say is not as valuable as yours.

Madam SPEAKER - It is to me, Dr Broad.

Dr BROAD - Thank you, Madam Speaker. What is the difference between 2018 when the Wilderness Society was in support of logging in these areas, and trying to help Sustainable Timber Tasmania to get FSC certification, which is or is not the gold standard? What has actually happened? We know there has been a joint submission put in to the auditors, SGS Global, basically outlining the reasons why Sustainable Timber Tasmania should not be granted FSC certification. That joint submission was from the Bob Brown Foundation and the Wilderness Society campaigning against FSC certification. We know that Bob Brown has never been for the forest agreement. It obviously did not go far enough because every tree was not protected. So he had his campaigning base and he still kept going; the Wilderness Society was part of the agreement and they agreed to help out. Instead, they got a joint submission with the Bob Brown Foundation against FSC certification. Why would that happen? Why would the Wilderness Society turn around?

I will point out an article in *The Guardian* from 5 December 2019 -

Bob Brown leads push for independent review of Wilderness Society after a \$1.7 million deficit.

...

'It's clearly time for a review. The organisation has obviously hit a rut. There has never been a time when the Wilderness Society was more needed to be firing on all four cylinders,' Brown said.

What is the reaction? The Wilderness Society blew all this money on campaigns that were unsuccessful. They spent a fortune supporting the Fenner School of ANU doing their environmental research, which led to a \$1.7 million deficit. Bob Brown has come in - he is one of the original members of the Wilderness Society - together with some of the other original members and, all of a sudden, they have decided their membership is declining. I think it outlines here the absolute collapse of the Wilderness Society's membership, down to 28 000 from 45 000 a decade ago. Also their annuities and people giving them money in their wills completely dried up because they had moved away from forestry, because with the Tasmanian Forest Agreement - and Tasmania is a large base of the Wilderness Society's support - there has not been war in the forests for some period of time, in effect since the Tasmanian Forest Agreement was signed and agreed to by the Wilderness Society.

But Bob Brown comes in on his white horse when the Wilderness Society blows \$1.7 million - and all of a sudden the Wilderness Society and Bob Brown are doing joint submissions to consultants trying to knock off FSC certification. The Wilderness Society has gone back on their previous agreements. The Greens have gone back on their former agreements -

Ms O'Connor - No we have not.

Dr BROAD - You have.

Ms O'CONNOR - Point of order. If you are going to claim, Dr Broad, that we have gone back on our previous agreement, you need to be really clear about what that is, because it is a slur. The agreement was torn up.

Madam SPEAKER - Excuse me, this is not a point of order. Please let Dr Broad finish his contribution.

Dr BROAD - Yes, and I will finish. I would just like to highlight the absolute hypocrisy. Is a deal a deal, or not? The Tasmanian Forest Agreement, despite the protestations of the Government, is still working. It is still in place.

Ms O'Connor - No, it is not.

Dr BROAD - There are no campaigns in the marketplace, so that has not happened.

Ms O'Connor - There are no signatories, and there is no second tranche of reserves.

Madam SPEAKER - Ms O'Connor, I give you the final warning. You must not be baited by this gentleman. Do not take the bait, please, because otherwise I will have to ask you leave, and you will not be here for your own vote.

Dr BROAD - The other point I would like to make is that the Greens are being very clear on where their politics lie. Like the Bob Brown Foundation urging the Wilderness Society to get back to their core campaigning and fundraising opportunities, the Greens, by putting up this motion, are also getting back to their core constituency, by arguing that all forestry is evil, and they have been moving the goal lines over time. Now we are getting to all native forestry needs to be stopped.

That is despite native forestry being able to replace concrete, steel and plastic. It can be good for the environment. It can be sustainably done. It can create jobs in regional areas. Beautiful Tasmanian products line this Chamber, for example. I imagine the blackwood here is ancient. You could use those terms. All the timber here is amazing, and it is locking up carbon for as long as this building stands, and the forest it was cut from is no doubt growing and sequestering carbon as we speak.

All that is irrelevant, because native forestry is evil, apparently, and needs to be brought to a halt straight away. The Greens are getting back to their core constituency, and it seems they are hopefully going to be moving away from the other conspiracies they have lined up, including the surveillance state - like iPhones that are assembled in China. I do not know what the next thing is. You might even crack onto 5G.

This motion is all about the politics. It is all about the Greens singing to their constituency, because they have moved a long way from this, and the Labor Party will not be supporting this motion.

Ms O'Connor - Strangely, I expect you to make more sense.

[3.15 p.m.]

Mr BARNETT (Lyons - Minister for Resources) - Madam Speaker, I thank you for the opportunity to share some -

Madam SPEAKER - Ms O'Connor, I would hate to have name you, which would stop you from voting.

Ms O'Connor - That would be quite an unreasonable response to the interjection.

Madam SPEAKER - I would not like to do it. I know it is your passion, but I ask you to please let the minister speak.

Mr BARNETT - Thank you, Madam Speaker.

We strongly oppose the motion. I want to say at the beginning of my contribution how disappointing, but not surprising, is the use of offensive and vitriolic language in her contribution by the Leader of the Greens, and her reference to extremist measures. That does the Greens no good whatsoever. They are entitled to a point of view, and to express that point of view - but the manner in which it is expressed, I draw that to the attention of the Leader of the Greens, because it does the cause no good whatsoever. And of course, it is not surprising.

The level of hypocrisy that has been expressed by the Greens knows no bounds. We do not want to let the facts get in the way of a good story. That is consistent with Greens' lobbying, and strategy and tactics, as it is with the Bob Brown Foundation.

I note that in this Chamber we are surrounded by wood. Madam Speaker, wood is good. We are surrounded by blackwood. We are surrounded by Huon pine - precious specialty timber, Huon pine. We are surrounded by Tasmanian oak.

The timber harvested in this great state of Tasmania is sustainably managed. It is a renewable resource. In fact, wood is the ultimate renewable.

We are so proud of the industry on this side of the Government. I also recognise my shadow minister for the support he has provided to the timber industry in Tasmania, and opposition to the Greens' motion. I acknowledge and thank him for that.

Let us face it: right now, we are standing here in this state during what is, quite frankly, the most significant health challenge of our generation. We are standing here during this COVID-19 pandemic - one of the most significant economic challenges of our generation. On this side of the parliament we are working to protect Tasmanian jobs, and communities, while sustainably managing our forests. I thank the forest industry for their support, and for their efforts to rebuild Tasmania, in support of our Government's response - and acknowledge again the Premier's leadership, delivered in a most decisive manner in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Out of that commitment, we are delivering more than \$3 billion in building and construction activity throughout the state - and much of that relies on the timber industry. I have had roundtables with the forest industry on a regular basis during the coronavirus pandemic, together with my department and all the key stakeholders. They appreciate the efforts of the Government to provide that stimulus, which will encourage the support of more than 5000 direct and indirect jobs in the forestry sector.

We know that many of those jobs - most of those jobs - are in rural and regional Tasmania, for which we are so thankful, particularly at this very difficult time: jobs supporting their families, and supporting those communities that are doing it tough.

We know that history tends to repeat itself. We do know that under the previous Labor-Greens government, the industry was brought to its knees, with two out of three jobs lost. Four thousand jobs were lost as a result of the lock-ups, as a result of the dreadful policies.

The Tasmanian Forestry Agreement has been referred to again, during the debate today and what we do know is that the timber industry is proud and we have its back and we will continue to do so.

The Greens refuse to accept the findings of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change that sustainable forest management has significant carbon management social and economic benefits. They are questioning this so I will quote the November 2019 report which said:

Sustainable forest management can maintain or enhance forest carbon stocks, and can maintain forest carbon sinks, including by transferring carbon to wood products ...

That speaks for itself. There is another quote:

Where wood carbon is transferred to harvested wood products, these can store carbon over the long-term and can substitute for emissions-intensive materials reducing emissions in other sectors.

Of course, this highlights the hypocrisy of the Greens. Our timber products store carbon. Here we are, stored here, right here. I am tapping it right now and absolutely rapt with that. It is absorbed from the atmosphere, making wood the ultimate renewable.

Our forests are sustainably managed. They are managed in a stringent manner, a robust manner and in a manner that we can be proud, with a forest protection. The forestry industry is delivering particularly over the last 30 years, the forest practice authority. It has been recognised throughout Australia and throughout the world as one of the best: leading. We are aiming for best practice.

Why is it that our environmental protection - and this should be acknowledged - is more than three times the average level of protection across Australia and three times the world average? This is happening in Tasmania, the great state of Tasmania.

More than half of our forest reserve, 87 per cent based on the latest advice I have received, includes old growth forest. That means one-million hectares of Tasmanian old growth forest is protected, never to be harvested. Why is it that the Permanent Timber Production Zone land was specifically set aside by both Houses of parliament following the extensive consultation, with the support of the environmental movement, for sustainable wood production? That has been noted and they do not like it. They do not like hearing it but this was passed through both Houses of parliament, so less than half of that -

Ms O'Connor - As was the second tranche of reserves.

Madam SPEAKER - Ms O'Connor, order.

Mr BARNETT - Less than half of the PTPZ land contains native forest available for wood production and less than 1 per cent is harvested in a given year, around 0.27 per cent.

So, you can see that in terms of what is being delivered, claims that the timber harvesting has escalated during the COVID-19 pandemic are completely false. We have had that discussion, that debate, in this parliament. Just because they say there are more trucks on the road, I say that is good. There are jobs out there. But this so-called harvesting escalation and sending product off to China or elsewhere in Asia, this is again another one of those Greens conspiracies. We heard it earlier in the parliament, in this Chamber, just a few hours ago.

The demand for our high value appearance grade forestry products is important. I have mentioned the building and construction sector and why we are getting behind it with our COVID-19 response in our budget. I have mentioned the importance of timber in this very Chamber. What about our homes? The floors of our homes? The stairs, the construction in architectural uses in our homes and in our kitchens, in our living rooms, tables and chairs. What about the furniture? What about the boat building industry in Tasmania? We are proud of that. It is fantastic, delivering jobs. Sadly, I understand that the Wooden Boat Festival will not happen this coming year, but we are proud of that. The industry is still there and we are operating differently during this COVID-19 pandemic.

Much of our furniture in our offices here and elsewhere around this great state is made from timber. So, you can see, native forestry generates \$150 million annually in sales, 40 per cent of all direct Tasmanian forestry jobs rely on the native forest sector.

This motion calls on the end, the halting of native forest harvesting -

Ms O'Connor - Hear, hear.

Mr BARNETT - We get the hear, hear from the Leader of the Greens. A total cessation. That means bang, bingo in the middle of a coronavirus pandemic - one of the worst challenges of our generation that we have in terms of health and the economy - and the Greens want to put thousands of Tasmanians out of work, bingo. That is the effect of your policy. That is the effect of closing down native forest harvesting. That is the Greens' policy, to destroy jobs and bring the industry to its knees. There is only one way that could ever happen in this great state of Tasmania and that is with another Labor-Greens government and that will not be happening on our watch, not here.

With respect to FSC certification, I have said before publicly, we support the views of the Sustainable Timber Tasmania board, and I thank Rob de Fegely as chair for his leadership and for doing a terrific job. We support their efforts to achieve FSC certification.

It is not good in that audit report. They met 93 per cent of the indicators required to achieve certification. They demonstrated an ethos of responsible management for, and stewardship of, a robust array of values and resources, which is good news. Well done on that progress. They are proactive.

Concerning the swift parrot, the Public Authority Management Agreement - PAMA - for the Southern Forests, that is protecting and excluding a further 10 000 hectares. But no, the Greens will not acknowledge and say congratulations, well done -

Ms O'CONNOR - Madam Speaker, point of order. It is not the Greens who are making these claims, it is the auditors. You can accuse us of not respecting the 10 000 hectares. It is the auditors who say it will not save the species.

Madam SPEAKER - I think I will carry that point of order. Thank you, minister.

Mr BARNETT - It is interesting that the Deputy Leader of the Opposition is fervently protecting the Leader of the Greens -

Ms O'BYRNE - Madam Speaker, point of order. I am being absolutely misrepresented. As you would be aware, during the contribution I have actively supported the member's rights to speak without being interrupted. It is entirely inappropriate for him to mislead parliament and say I am supporting someone who I believe has behaved appallingly throughout the entire debate.

Madam SPEAKER - Thank you. Your point is taken. Thank you, minister.

Mr BARNETT - The *Hansard* will show what the member for Bass has said.

Madam SPEAKER - Order.

Ms O'BYRNE - Point of order, Madam Speaker.

Madam SPEAKER - Order. I have made a ruling.

Ms O'BYRNE - Madam Speaker, you have made a ruling which he is now disputing. He either disputes it formally or he stops saying the things he is saying. He either disputes it formally or he resumes his seat.

Madam SPEAKER - There you go. Minister, I ask you to stick to the facts, please.

Mr BARNETT - Thank you, Madam Speaker. As I was saying, the *Hansard* will show what occurred.

Ms O'BYRNE - Point of order, Madam Speaker. Once again, you have made a ruling. You upheld my commentary. You upheld it a second time and he has again said that *Hansard* will say something that is in fact in contrast with your ruling. He either disputes your ruling or he stops telling untruths to the parliament. He does this all the time. He stands up and says things he knows not to be true to get them on the *Hansard*. He is dishonest, deceitful and should stop.

Madam SPEAKER - Okay. Excuse me; if this continues and the standard of the behaviour, I will halt parliament, we will check *Hansard* and that will hold up all the day's proceedings. I ask you minister, not to go there. Please finish your contribution.

Mr BARNETT - Thank you, Madam Speaker. I was saying, we are proud of the forest industry, proud of the jobs in rural and regional Tasmania that this Government is backing to the hilt and will continue to do so. We are proud of the fact that our efforts are consistent with the PESRAC report and recommendations. That is why we are backing the forest industry, unlike the Greens who want put thousands of people out of work as a result of the implementation of this policy, because that is the effect of it. That is why we are opposing this motion so strongly.

We are proud of the fact that we are the first state that introduced the Wood Encouragement Policy. I have had feedback from around Australia and they are very interested

in what we are doing regarding our Wood Encouragement Policy. The UTAS development in Launceston, wherever possible, is looking at the use of wood. Wood is good.

We are the first state that has delivered the Regional Forest Agreement. These things would not have happened unless we were proactive in backing, getting out there on the front foot supporting the industry. Through those round tables working in partnership with the industry we have and will continue to deliver. I appreciate the most recent round table meeting where they put forward a submission to PESRAC and look forward to developing and supporting that going forward.

In conclusion, we stand on our record of the forest industry growth strategy, which is to double the value of our industry by 2036. We are backing the industry all the way and will continue to do so. We have a long-term plan in place to support the industry and support jobs in those rural and regional areas. I thank the federal government for its support as well.

Time expired.

The House divided -

AYES 2

Ms O'Connor
Dr Woodruff (Teller)

NOES 22

Ms Archer
Mr Barnett
Dr Broad
Ms Butler
Ms Courtney
Ms Dow
Mr Ellis
Mr Ferguson
Mr Gutwein
Ms Haddad
Ms Hickey
Ms Houston
Mr Jaensch
Mr O'Byrne
Ms O'Byrne
Ms O'Connor
Ms Ogilvie
Mrs Petrusma
Mr Rockliff
Mr Shelton
Ms Standen
Mr Street (Teller)
Mr Tucker
Ms White
Dr Woodruff

Motion negatived.

MOTION

COVID-19 - Testing Essential Workers

[3.37 p.m.]

Ms WHITE (Lyons - Leader of the Opposition - Motion) - Madam Speaker, I move -

That the House -

- (1) Notes that not all 'essential workers' exempt from quarantine are required to have a COVID-19 test on arrival in Tasmania.
- (2) Understands that 'essential workers' who are required to have a test do not have to quarantine until they get a result which means they are allowed on the worksite when they could be COVID-19 positive.
- (3) Agrees that a thorough assessment of the local labour market needs to be undertaken before any interstate workers are given permission to come to Tasmania to ensure that Tasmanians are given the first chance to pick up work in our State.
- (4) Acknowledges the sacrifices made by the Tasmanian community throughout the COVID-19 crisis and the importance of making sure we continue to look after the health of our community and our economy.
- (5) Recognises the significant consequences the Tasmanian community would experience if there was another COVID-19 outbreak in our State.
- (6) Calls on the Government to immediately introduce mandatory testing for all 'essential workers' coming to the State who are exempt from quarantine and require all 'essential workers' to quarantine until a test result is known.

This is a matter we have been raising publicly now for close to six weeks. It is something we feel very strongly about because we have a very good situation in Tasmania at the moment where the community feels very safe to move around, businesses are able to operate and people are returning to their work sites. However, there are people still granted exemptions from the mainland to come to Tasmania to do work and that is concerning for two reasons. First, we are of the view that that work can be done by Tasmanians in a large majority of cases. The right to information request we received back from the Government demonstrates the types of skills that have been given exemption for mainland workers to come in and do the jobs of which we believe can be done by Tasmanians. Second, we are concerned because there are people coming from places, including Victoria and other hot spots, who are arriving in Tasmania and getting off a plane and going to a work site who do not have to quarantine while they wait for a test result. Outside of Victoria and the hot spot regions, there is no requirement at all for those workers coming to Tasmania exempt from quarantine to get a test.

We are in a very fortunate position in Tasmania in that we have a border that is water. We are able to manage our ports of entry much more easily than other states and this gives us a significant advantage to ensure that while border restrictions are in place we capitalise on that to make sure we do everything possible to protect the Tasmanian community and economy from a further outbreak of COVID-19.

I have taken a close look at the essential travellers information on the Government's coronavirus website and it is quite clear there that when people are arriving into Tasmania at the moment, if they are from a hot spot or from Victoria, there is an expectation that they will have a test within 24 hours.

I ask the Premier to tell me who checks that? At the moment they are screened on arrival. I have to say I hope the Government can give an update on exactly what screening is now occurring at airports and on the *Spirit of Tasmania*, because when we last had a briefing with the Department of Health, which was three weeks ago - and it is disappointing we have not had much more regular communication than that - it was very unclear what that health check would look like at the airport. The Premier yesterday, and I think again today, indicated that it would be a temperature check and a general health screening. I am interested to understand the detail of that. What exactly are people being required to share with the Tasmanian Government, and if they are not tested on arrival and are required to get a test within 24 hours if they are from one of those hotspots or Victoria, who is following up to make sure they do that? How many times has that occurred, and is the Government satisfied that is being adhered to in every single instance?

There are flaws in the process here, gaps that need to be fixed, and they can easily be fixed. We are not talking about large volumes of people who will be required to go through a process to have a test. The Premier himself gave an indication of the number of exemptions that have been granted for Victorian workers coming into Tasmania. It is entirely manageable for us to test those people on arrival and require them to quarantine until they get a result for their test, which is exactly what Tasmanians have to do. There is one rule for Tasmanians here, who are required to isolate until they get a test result, and one rule for mainlanders who are coming in on an exemption as an essential worker, who do not. I argue they are a greater risk than people in the Tasmanian community and they should be required to quarantine until they get a result.

Businesses can work around that. We know we can have processing of testing done quite quickly in Tasmania, particularly for workers who need those results soon. I know it has been done for health workers. It could be done in cases where it is critical that these workers get to the worksite within a time-sensitive period but, alternatively, that could be built into their travel arrangements so they understand, when they make an application for an exemption, that there will be a 24-hour period where they are required to isolate while they await a test result, and that would be entirely reasonable.

Madam Speaker, we would also like to see this expanded to everybody who is granted an exemption from quarantine as an essential traveler to make sure we are picking up on anybody who might be travelling here from any part of New South Wales, Queensland, South Australia, states the Premier himself has named as some of the reasons he has extended the border restrictions until 1 December. He is not confident they have got on top of the cases they are seeing there, not confident that there might be community transmission, so how can he be confident that workers coming from those jurisdictions to Tasmania are COVID-19 free unless they are tested and unless they are required to be put into quarantine until they get a result from that test?

The consequences to the Tasmanian community and to our economy if there is a breach in border controls like this, that was foreseeable and could have been avoided, will be detrimental and devastating for our community. The Government has a responsibility to fix

these holes. You are well aware of the problems. We have been raising it since the first weeks in July and I cannot understand why it has not been done. It cannot be a problem with resourcing because we are not talking about significant numbers of workers. While the Government makes the argument that the Public Health advice is not supportive of the approach we are putting to you, I would query the logic of that, when Public Health advice requires Tasmanians to isolate until they get a test result, so what is different between the Tasmanian and a mainlander? The consequences of not doing this could be catastrophic.

I note that on the coronavirus website Freight and Logistics Operators Tasmania have adopted a nationally consistent approach which means that freight transport and logistics operators all need to undergo a test on arrival. They all do that, so this would not be an incursion on those particular operators.

We are talking specifically about those people who have been granted an exemption to come into Tasmania under the Government's essential worker scheme, and I will just remind the House of the types of workers we are talking about. We are talking about roofers, bricklayers, construction workers, cladding workers, flooring contractors, joiners. These are the types of professions that have been granted exemptions from quarantine to come straight off a plane and straight to a work site and in some cases, as was reported last week for the Dominos fit-out at the Rokeby store, working alongside Tasmanians. These people have not had a COVID-19 test and they have not had to quarantine but they can come straight into our state from areas where, in those states they have active cases, and work alongside Tasmanians.

It is questionable whether those skills could not be sourced in Tasmania, given the fact that we have had over 1000 construction workers in this state lose their jobs as a consequence of coronavirus and nearly 20 000 Tasmanians who have lost their jobs across the broader economy. There are enough workers in Tasmania who could do these jobs. Where there is a legitimate exemption required for somebody to come in because we do not have those skills, test those workers and make them isolate until they get the results. It is as simple as that. That is the best way we can make sure our border controls are stringent enough to protect our community and our economy.

The issue that was raised yesterday by the Premier is how you would force people to be tested and he made some, I think, inappropriate remarks at that time and brushed it off like it was a laughing matter. It is not a laughing matter. Even on the Government coronavirus website they say that anyone refusing to be tested will go into quarantine in a government-designated accommodation for 14 days and be required to pay the accommodation fee or they can leave Tasmania at their own expense. The Government already has processes to deal with people who refuse to be tested. You require them to quarantine at their own expense or they have to find their way back to their place of origin at their own expense. It is pretty simple.

We are in a state of emergency, which gives the Government extraordinary powers to require people to comply with the different rules we have in place to keep the community safe. If they refuse to comply with those rules then you have the ability to require them to quarantine or to send them back to where they came from. That is in black and white on your own website.

The question I have, which really bugs me about why the Government is not doing this, is what is really behind their refusal to test these workers? There is not a significant number of them so it is not going to be a significant resourcing issue and it just puzzles me why the Government is not doing this when there is quite a level of anxiety in the community about

what is going on with these border requirements and the failure of the Government to make sure essential workers are tested before they come into our state.

I was looking back through some of the media reporting of essential workers who have been granted exemptions by this Government under their scheme to come into this state and trying to understand myself how it could be that some of these workers have been allowed in, given the skills that are available here in Tasmania, but also to demonstrate to the Premier that the fix he proposed yesterday of now having State Growth involved in that process does not address the underlying issue, which is that there needs to be a robust labour market testing process but, critically, there has to be testing and quarantining until a test result is known.

It was named up very clearly by the editor of the *Mercury* in her editorial on 28 July where she said in relation to closing skills gaps and ensuring Tassie workers are first:

Readers have expressed their astonishment and anxiety at the system. They're worried about any potential public health ramifications and confused about the process being transparent and fair.

The point about being fair is also incredibly valid. I am sure each of us in this place have had representations from members of our community or others who are living interstate who would like to come home for personal reasons to see a family member or attend a wedding or, sadly, attend a funeral and have been unable to do so, yet they see stories in the newspaper of people coming across to fit out a supermarket or a Domino's pizza shop or to attend an opening of a hotel. They wonder how it can be fair that those people are granted an exemption from quarantine, can come straight off the plane, straight to a work site in Tasmania, but they cannot come home to their loved ones and help them grieve, or be by the side of their mother or father or their sister through some of the most difficult times in their life.

And then there are FIFO workers in Tasmania, families who have separated for eight months in some cases, families who have not seen their children for a very long time. They are asking for the Government to treat them the same way as the Government is treating essential workers. If they are going to give essential workers from mainland states the rights to come here, not even be tested, not quarantined and walk straight onto a job site, why are they treating FIFO workers the way they are where some families have not seen each other for months?

They do not have the capacity with their roster arrangements to come home to quarantine for that two weeks in some cases. Even if they do that, because of the construct of some families they still will not see their children. They might have a shared custody arrangement and they might be living with their new partner but their children are with the other parent. They might have two weeks where they can be here in Tasmania and they can isolate in the family home with their new partner but they cannot see their children for that entire time. And because of the roster that they have, because the job they do as a FIFO worker, they will not get to see their child while they are in Tasmania, and even though they could live as close as next door to one another they still cannot give them a hug.

Those are the families and the stories that are referred to when questions are raised about the fairness of this process, let alone whether it is robust enough to protect the Tasmanian community and keep us safe from the risk of importing the virus if one of these essential

workers who is coming into the state, coming off a plane going straight onto a work site, and in many cases, not even required to have a COVID-19 test.

In the editorial in the *Mercury* on 28 July it goes on to say:

Their immediate concerns are fair given how quickly we've seen coronavirus spread in Victoria - which yesterday recorded 532 new cases of COVID-19 and six deaths.

But there is another issue related to the prolific use of out-of-state workers that should leave us all troubled.

Why are companies bringing in interstate workers? What is the government doing to deter this practice? Why do we have so many skills gaps in our Tasmanian workforce?

We have been talking for a very long time now about the skills gap, the opportunity for free TAFE courses to be utilised to match up those who are looking for work with employers who are looking for skilled staff, to make sure that we are training Tasmanians so that they can have career in some of our fastest growing industries, like aged care, disability care, construction and building. In many cases, the exact trades that have been granted exemptions for workers to come here to do that we should be training Tasmanians for, especially now with nearly 20 000 people are out of work. Critically, because of the impact that this is having on our young people and their prospects for employment and their opportunities for a job in Tasmania, free TAFE is a clear pathway for us to provide hope and opportunity for people to get a foot in the door to a job in Tasmania. That would help to fill the skills gap that we know that we have and take the pressure off those businesses who at the moment feel they have got no other choice but to bring in workers from the mainland.

Many stories were shared about different work sites that have brought workers into the state. One of them, notably being the Royal Hobart Hospital, where a roofing contractor was brought in from Victoria to fix the roof at the Royal Hobart Hospital's new K Block, apparently to apply silicone to the roof. Surely there is a Tasmanian worker who can perform that task? This worker - and my colleague, Jen Butler will probably speak about this in her contribution - but this worker said that there were plenty of Tasmanians who could have performed the work they did when they were flown in to fix a leaky roof at the new hospital.

This is why we have grave concerns about the process. The process is undertaken to provide advice to the State Controller who is making decisions, and we are not reflecting on the State Controller, Darren Hine. He is an outstanding individual who is working under extraordinary pressure and he has our full support.

It is the process that provides him with the information upon which he has to rely to make a determination that is very questionable. Now, with the inclusion of State Growth, it might improve. However, it is still questionable as to what the criteria are and what testing of the local labour market will be required to be undertaken and whether you will still only be relying on the employer to provide the advice that there is no local labour to do that work or whether you will seek more information from a broader range of sources to prove that point.

It beggars belief that there was not a roofer who could put silicone on the Royal Hobart Hospital when there was a leak there. It beggars belief that there was not somebody who could help with the fit-out of a supermarket, that there were not joiners available in Tasmania who could assist with that job, that there were not Tasmanian tradies who could help to fit out the Domino's pizza store on the eastern shore.

Those sorts of trades are available in Tasmania. We have heard, only as recently as in the last few days, the Master Builders Association talking about their concerns for a local workforce, for the activity in that sector and the need to ensure there is continued stimulus provided by the Government to keep those people in jobs. This is an issue that needs to be fixed.

To speak about the process again, there is another story that caught my attention that raises questions about how the process is managed. This is the situation of the White Rabbit Tattoo Removal business. A Hobart business owner who had sought three times to fly an engineer over from New South Wales to fix equipment that was critical to her work spoke to the media about the fact that, despite applying on three occasions to have this particular engineer flown over from New South Wales to fix the piece of equipment so she could keep her business open, keep operating, had been rejected on three occasions. This business operator spoke to the media about her frustration with the process she was required to go through. The media was then contacted by her and I will read into *Hansard* the exchange because to me, it speaks of concerns that we have with the process and why.

Over the course of the month, she was rejected three times and this is an article from 15 August in the *Mercury*. Speaking to the *Mercury* on Wednesday, Ms Threlfall said she was unable to reopen her business until the exemption was granted as no-one in Tasmania was qualified to fix the equipment. She said:

No-one can tell us why we are being rejected. I do not understand why a business is being pushed aside.

Soon after speaking out about her struggle, an inspector from the State Control Centre got in touch. She said she had seen the story and would be happy to review the application, Ms Threlfall said. Within an hour, she had reviewed the application and there was sufficient evidence and it was accepted. She said she could not see why it had been rejected in the first place.

It is amazing that it all happened but it is concerning that it took so much effort for doing something that simple that must really be affecting a lot of people.

It is amazing how it all happened and amazing that it was fixed because it hit the media. It is amazing that she applied three times and it was rejected. This is a legitimate case of someone trying to get an essential worker into the state because there was nobody here to do it. It speaks to a flawed process that is not working for anybody.

It is not working for businesses that legitimately need to access it and it is not working for the community of Tasmania because the protections are not there to prevent somebody coming into this state and moving from the plane to the worksite before being absolutely certain they do not have COVID-19 because you do not test them.

It worries me that businesses might see this story and think, 'Oh well, that is what we have to do. We have to go to the media because someone from the State Controller's Office will then give us a ring and within an hour it will be fixed'. That is not a way to run a critical program like this which goes to the heart of one of our key border protections, which is the essential worker scheme. This is a critical program that is necessary for the Government to get right to keep the community safe, but also to make sure our economy can continue to operate.

Businesses such as White Rabbit Tattoo Removal have found it frustrating and had to go to the media to get their issues resolved but they should not have to do that. More alarmingly, it seems that there are process issues here which means that some necessary essential workers have not been granted exemptions to come to this state who should have been and that is putting many small businesses under a lot of pressure.

I am sure there are others who want to speak on this and given our limited time I do not want to speak for my full allocation, but I will go back to the points of the motion. This is about making sure that anybody who is granted an exemption from quarantine is tested and that they wait in isolation until they get the result of their test. Public Health advice and the Tasmanian Government says that any Tasmanian who is tested has to be in isolation until they get the results. Those mainland workers should be treated in the same way.

It is also about making sure there is a thorough test of the Tasmanian labour market to see whether there is somebody here locally who can do these jobs before an exemption is granted to fly someone in from the mainland. We need to make sure that we back Tassie workers and Tassie jobs. It is critical now, more than ever before, given the fact that nearly 20 000 people have become unemployed as a result of COVID-19.

This motion is very straightforward. It calls on the Government to immediately introduce mandatory testing for all essential workers coming to the state who are exempt from quarantine and require them to quarantine until a test result is known. It is as simple as that and we hope the Government is able to support this motion. We know the Tasmanian community feels very strongly about this because they care very deeply about their safety and they care very deeply about our state. They also care very deeply about their fellow Tasmanians who are out of work right now or struggling to find enough hours who they think would be able to perform some of the jobs the Government has granted exemptions for mainland workers to come in and do. They are very confused and anxious about the approach the Government is taking around this process and it does need to be fixed.

[4.02 p.m.]

Dr WOODRUFF - Madam Speaker, I thank the Labor Party for raising this issue. It is important that Tasmanians can see there is an opportunity for their parliamentary representatives to scrutinise the Government and to be very clear about the decisions that have been taken that affect people's lives and have a profound impact on people's job opportunities and the fabric of Tasmania.

The economic and social fabric of Tasmania is being altered beyond a state that any of us could have predicted a year ago. We are in a very different place than anyone could have imagined. My heart goes out every day when I think of young people in their last year of college in year 12. What a year they have had. The one they were expecting to have is not the one they are having by any stretch of the imagination.

My heart goes out to all the people who were in a job this time last year and were in a thriving business who were looking forward to the summer season, whether they were preparing for festivals, Dark Mofo that did not happen, and all of the exciting things over summer that will not be happening. We are all affected. Some people's lives are more than affected. They have been seriously damaged. They have lost people they love, either the 13 people who have died in Tasmania from coronavirus disease and their families and friends, or people who have not been able to attend funerals and say goodbye to people they love on the mainland or have members of their family come to funerals that have occurred in Tasmania.

It is very important that we are able to understand what is behind the decisions that are taken and the recent decision that has been made to keep the borders closed until 1 December 2020 is one that the Greens support and we understand the reason for that. As an epidemiologist I am keenly looking at what is happening in other countries, in other states, and it is really clear that we simply do not have a choice because things are changing so quickly. I remember I was asked questions of the media after the Premier made the announcement - it seems like years ago but was only four or five weeks ago - that we would probably be opening up on 7 and 14 August to Western Australia, South Australia and the Northern Territory.

Very sensibly, the word 'probably' was in there because what happened was that Victoria got bigger and bigger and low cases appeared in South Australia. That is not surprising; the borders are pretty porous on the mainland and despite the best efforts, when at the peak of the restrictions in Victoria you had 180 000 people movements a day between Victoria and New South Wales, you can understand the challenges that are placed on other states and why, despite the horrendous impact on our hospitality and fruit harvesting industries and agriculture in Tasmania generally, we cannot do other than keep our borders closed for the time being.

This is about people who are coming into the state. We still have a porous border and even though the Premier talks about 'fortress Tasmania' we are not a fortress. People do come and go from Tasmania. If they did not we would not be going to the local supermarket and eating food. We would not be filling up petrol and putting it in our car, despite the price. We have to keep an exchange of import and export for our island state to function and that requires that a level of risk is taken at every interaction. We still do not know what has happened in New Zealand. Their outbreak is hopefully coming to a place where it is under control but I do not yet know if they have got to the bottom of the outbreak. I might have missed something in the recent moments but I do not think they have. They have the genetic connection between the four people who were infected but they have not found the index case. They have not found exactly where it came from. There are suggestions that it could have been from a hard surface that came from cold freight storage. It seems unlikely but it is possible. It is more likely that there was a breach in quarantine that still has not been tracked down.

These are the fine-grained issues that Public Health and contact tracing have to go to in order to keep New Zealanders safe and keep us safe here in Tasmania. At every point we are making decisions based on risk and the Director of Public Health in Tasmania has that responsibility for Tasmanians. I know people would like to believe that we can eliminate risk but as I have just outlined, it is not possible to do that. If we did that we would not be importing anything or allowing anyone into the state and no one could leave and ever come back. There is always some risk in life. Getting out of bed and coming in to work involves risk on the roads, but that is the basis of life. Life is beautiful and life is exciting and life is risky and we all want to be alive and well for as long as possible. It is our job as members of parliament to

look after the conditions and to create as safe a place as we can for people so that we can all live our lives as best we may.

This motion really reflects concerns that people have about the fact that there is not a requirement to have mandatory testing for people coming to Tasmania as so called essential workers and for the people who are essential workers who do not have to enter into a period of quarantine.

We do agree with point 2 that essential workers who are required to have a test do not need to quarantine until they get a result, which means that they are allowed on the worksite when they could be COVID-19 positive. That is theoretically possible.

I had a meeting with the Director of Public Health - and I believe members of the Labor Party were also at that meeting; it would have been a month or so ago now - and I asked questions in relation to that. I was informed that people who come into the state as essential workers, who do not have that test, are required to take certain safety precautions - including wearing a mask on a worksite, and including I understand - and perhaps the Premier could provide more detail on this - they are not allowed to circulate in the community. They are basically here to do work. They go to the worksite, and they go back to the place of residence, and a number of other precautions about how they move around that worksite were mandated.

I would like to hear whether this is still the practice, or whether there has been more tightening of that practice. Essentially, as I understand it, people are not coming into the community and circulating at will, without a level of restriction on their physical movement.

We thoroughly agree with the third point of the motion, that there needs to be an assessment of the local labour market, so that we understand, and Tasmanians understand very clearly, why some interstate workers are given permission to come to Tasmania, when many people might look at the trades that people are coming to work within and think, why aren't we employing Tasmanians to do that work, given that there is an extra risk with people coming in from interstate.

We would like to see an audit of the people who have been granted essential worker exemptions. This is appropriate work, and something like the auditors' office could provide that oversight. We would like to understand which trades and activities are being considered essential work. Tasmanians would feel more comfortable if there was a level of clarity about how those decisions were being made, to make sure that when there are thousands and thousands of people without a job, there is not a prospect that those jobs could be filled by Tasmanians.

We know that when employers ask for an exemption, they are required to provide evidence that it is essential that someone is brought in from out of state, but people will always paint the best picture. If they have had an arrangement with someone from Queensland, and they just want to keep that going, they are always going to say it is not possible to get it here. Why would you not want to go with the standard person you have worked with if it has happened to be someone from interstate? Nonetheless, it is the job of government to probe a little bit more and make sure employers are not always going to the 'easy' source, given that there is an extra risk, unless that worker is going to be coming in and quarantining for two weeks.

An audit, or a demonstration from the Government of some evidence about the criteria that are being applied when exemptions are granted, and who has been granted - not people's names - and for what trades and activities, would be good.

We acknowledge that there have been enormous sacrifices made in Tasmania through the COVID crisis, and that we have to continue to look after the health of our community and our economy. There is a great deal of concern in Tasmania about what is happening on the mainland and in New Zealand. Everybody I speak to is unanimous in the view that, despite the hardships people are experiencing with not being able to visit people they love interstate, or their businesses not being able to open because there is just not enough tourists around - despite that, people would rather, on balance, keep the borders closed for this period, because we just do not want to be in the same situation as Victoria. More than anything, people do not want that.

We are concerned that the Labor Party thinks that it is appropriate to come in over the top of the Director of Public Health and give direction to the Government about how these decisions need to be made. We have always supported the position that the Government is taking - of taking the advice of the public health experts in this situation. We wish the Government had that practice on other matters.

We wish the Government also had the practice of listening to people who understand that we are in a climate crisis - listening to the climate scientists; listening to the bushfire experts; listening to those people who are talking about the grave loss of our rare, threatened and endangered species in Tasmania. We wish the Government was also so respectful of those experts, and also so keen to listen to them, because we are in three crises: we are in a global health crisis with the COVID-19 pandemic; we are in a climate crisis; and we are in a wildlife extinction crisis.

However, we accept the principle of listening to the experts. We commend the Government for doing that. We do not think the Labor Party has credible form in this space. The Labor Party has changed its position so many times. They were calling for the Director of Public Health to close schools; they were calling for the Director of Public Health to open schools; they were being pushed by the racing industry. On regular days in a row during the height of the crisis, when they should have been supporting the community and bringing unity in decision-making about how we were responding to the crisis, they were seeding anxiety in the community by calling for the racing industry to be opened. They were baying on behalf of their political donors.

We do not find the Labor Party credible in this space. We do not think they have always put the interests of the community before their own political point-scoring. It is very disappointing, given the seriousness of this situation and how much people have lost.

We have an amendment to move. If the Clerk would not mind, I will read it to the House; I have just written it, so I do not have copies for other members.

We move -

That the motion be amended by replacing part 6 with -

"(6) Calls on the Government to acknowledge the community concerns about the risk of a COVID-19 outbreak in Tasmania and table the advice

of the Director of Public Health that outlines the rationale for not requiring mandatory testing of all essential workers coming into the State under a quarantine exemption".

We agree there is a level of anxiety in the community about this issue. We think it can be ameliorated to an extent by more communication. It is definitely the case. The Director of Public Health has made statements at press conferences about his reasons for not requiring essential workers to come in and have mandatory testing.

However, I think people forget, or do not hear, these things - or need to hear them multiple times. It would be very helpful if the director could lay out, and the Premier could table before the House, the reasons for the thinking at this point for not requiring essential workers to have mandatory testing. Some states do; some states do not. There are differing positions on this. It is location-specific, so we would welcome some more information on this matter. I think it would be helpful for the Tasmanian public as well.

[4.20 p.m.]

Mr GUTWEIN (Bass - Premier) - Madam Speaker, I will clean up a couple of matters as we work our way through this motion.

I acknowledge the member for Franklin, Dr Woodruff's contribution, and her support for following Public Health advice. At times, it would be fair to say that it has been difficult in some of the things Public Health has recommended that we do but, in the main, the circumstances the state finds itself in at the moment is testimony to the fact that Dr Veitch and Dr McKeown have been very sage, very wise, and have been exactly the type of Public Health officials you want at a time like this, and that is conservative and sensible.

Every step of the way we have taken Public Health advice on matters, and it has worked. Tasmania is one of the safest places in the world right now. We have needed to be proactive, agile and responsible, and we have had to make tough decisions.

I realise I am supposed to be speaking to the amendment. I will, at this point, indicate that we will not be supporting that amendment because I intend to move one myself. I will move mine once I have finished my contribution in terms of that current amendment.

Public Health advisers are an important part of our strategy to prevent COVID-19 from being introduced into Tasmania and to continue with our strong border measures, with quarantine policies a key safeguard. In fact, it is becoming well understood that the single most important step you can take is a 14-day quarantine. It has been widely acknowledged around the world now that regardless of testing, a 14-day quarantine period is the single most important matter to work towards.

In Tasmania, people going into hotel quarantine are currently recommended by Public Health to be tested on days 5 and 12. In regard to essential travellers, the Labor Party knows full well that there are strict conditions imposed on those arriving in our state, especially those coming from high-risk areas. I understand they have been briefed by the State Controller and Health officials on the process of managing risk in regard to essential travellers. I think those briefings have been made available.

Currently any person granted essential traveller status who has spent time in a high-risk area is required to have a COVID-19 test and health screening on arrival, wear a face mask and limit their movements when not in the workplace. They have strict requirements regarding their movements, largely between their accommodation and the worksite. They are allowed to go out and purchase food and other essential requirements but they have strict requirements wrapped around them.

Regarding the health screening, some may be quarantined on arrival, if instructed by the State Controller, on a case-by-case basis. For example, someone who is symptomatic would be picked up in the health screening and would be required to test and quarantine until that result was provided.

The Public Health advice is clear as far as mandatory testing is concerned for all essential travellers. There is not the health advice to support that need. Second, the Government cannot force anyone to undergo a COVID-19 test. No government can. However, there are levers that we can use, it was pointed out this morning, to ensure testing, and we use them already. All freight drivers arriving in our state are currently tested under the national guidelines, and we can reject an application from an essential traveller if they refuse a test before arriving. We can and do impose restrictions on people when they arrive by restricting their movements and wearing masks. We can impose quarantine following a health check.

Similarly, if people refuse to have a test on day 5 and day 12, they are quarantined, and if there are concerns about their health we are able to extend their period of quarantine accordingly. Anyone who reports symptoms during their quarantine is strongly recommended to be tested. We have been strong on our measures and the border restrictions are to ensure we keep Tasmanians safe.

I will not go to the politics of this this afternoon, but you have had a range of positions on the other side of the House. That is perfectly clear to everyone. What is concerning is that we have been very clear that we will be following Public Health advice and what this motion seeks to do is to sideline Public Health officials. The Leader of the Opposition has form on that, two months ago calling for opening dates to be set concerning borders, while other members at the same time said they would follow the health advice, which is interesting.

There are a number of *Mercury* quotes that the Leader of the Opposition mentioned. I will read one myself which I thought was quite interesting. It is from a *Mercury* editorial; I do not have the date but I recall reading it not all that long ago:

Open the borders, close the borders, lock down the state, ease restrictions.
Labor is working hard to undermine the Government's coronavirus response,
but instead of showing the voting public how it could be a credible
alternative, the party shows a lack of resolve and a lack of consistency.

I think that has been quite evident for people to see.

On the matter of essential travellers coming into the state, while we would love to have available all industry-critical skills and services to keep critical business going and to keep people in jobs, there are times when we need people from interstate. It is worth pointing out that there are not tens of thousands of people coming in. I make this point regarding essential workers: if you look at South Australia, they have issued, as I understand it, 110 000 essential traveller exemptions. They are a state around three times larger than us, so on balance, if we

were in line with the exemptions that have been handed out in South Australia, we would have issued over 34 000 exemptions.

Ms Butler - At least they're transparent. You will not tell us exactly how many you have put out.

Mr GUTWEIN - This has been put on the record a number of times - 1600 exemptions.

Ms Butler - No, because one exemption does not equal one person. You know that.

Madam SPEAKER - Order, Ms Butler.

Mr GUTWEIN - There have been 1600 exemptions, as I understand it, that have been provided in total.

Ms Butler - One exemption equals one workplace.

Mr GUTWEIN - Six thousand requests have been made and broadly speaking, three out of every four are knocked back.

Ms Butler - How many people, not exemptions? You have never answered that.

Mr GUTWEIN - You were provided with a list -

Ms Butler - We were provided with a list of which work professions you have let in. You know you've been playing semantics on this.

Madam SPEAKER - Order, Ms Butler.

Mr GUTWEIN - of around 200 professions, a little more than that. The 1600 figure has been put out publicly before. To date, 1644 essential traveller exemptions have been granted. Interestingly, since the middle of last month, only 11 Victorian exemptions have been granted for industry-critical work since the Good2Go app was introduced in July.

In respect of the number of individual exemptions, that has been talked about at media conferences, I am certain of that; I have been there when that has been raised. I think the member is getting confused between the list of industries, several hundred, and the 1600 exemptions.

I want to touch on a couple of matters that were raised. One was in relation to the White Rabbit tattoo parlour and the other was in relation to the roof plumber. I sought some advice without getting names and details of individuals concerned but obviously the Royal Hobart Hospital is a project of the Government. What I have been advised is that there were two subcontractors that John Holland Fairbrother JV required to undertake urgent roofing, windows and façade rectification work for components of the construction of K Block. This was work they were engaged to deliver before the pandemic and to have any other organisation do this would have voided the relevant construction warranties. They supervised local resources engaged to undertake identified works and both complied with Royal Hobart Hospital COVID-19 entry procedures in place at the time, wore masks when they were on site and did not interact with patients and the public.

Essential traveller exemptions were sought by John Holland Fairbrother JV; both workers were supervised by local representatives of the managing contractor to minimise direct

interaction with hospital staff. Dedicated access paths between side entry and worksite - the route was created so workers did not interact with patients and the public. Only one individual from each organisation entered the state; they then supervised local resources engaged to undertake other identified works.

One such the contractor was onsite in the state for one day only, and wore a mask the entire time he was onsite. The other site contractor wore a mask at all times while onsite for the first 14 days after arrival.

Ms Butler - Two hours he said he was here -

Mr GUTWEIN - So what?

Ms Butler interjecting.

Madam SPEAKER - Order, Ms Butler.

Mr GUTWEIN - That was a \$600 million build project, with a roof that was covered by warranty. It made sense to bring somebody in who was able to do the work and not void the warranty.

Ms Butler - Really? You'd prefer to avoid voiding a warranty -

Madam SPEAKER - Ms Butler, that's stretching.

Mr GUTWEIN - My other point relates to the White Rabbit Tattoo Removal parlour. The advice I have been given is that there was an application for a worker from New South Wales requesting entry to Tasmania as a specialist worker. That was rejected on three occasions as a result of failing to submit sufficient evidence with those first three applications. On each occasion of the rejection, further evidence was requested to be supplied. The application was finally submitted after it appeared publicly and an inspector rang them. The application was finally submitted with evidence provided from the Aesthetic Laser Centre, Cynosure and White Rabbit laser tattoo removal, advising that there was no person in Tasmania qualified to complete the work, et cetera.

That was granted. I have not been in contact with the person involved, but the advice I have is that with the three rejections, they were notified that further information was required and they did not provide it. Seeing that, someone in the Control Centre, without interference from me or any of my ministers or anyone in government, picked up the phone and contacted them. I am pleased that they did, but, again, this was not a matter of rejecting somebody in that circumstance. It was a matter of not having the evidence to actually enable them to be granted their exemption.

My point is that it is very easy in this for people to play politics, to seek to gain a political advantage. Public Health has been incredibly wise in the way it has gone about this. Public Health has been firm, but it has made its decisions based on risk.

Regarding what you are asking for, and suggesting in point (6) of your motion, we cannot support that because you are asking us to override Public Health, and that is not appropriate. Public Health looked at these circumstances and made decisions that have stood Tasmania in good stead. To be frank, I think it is irresponsible in the way that you seek to interfere in the role of Public Health.

Ms Butler - Other states are doing this, Premier.

Mr GUTWEIN - I have made the point before: we are not Victoria, we are not New South Wales, we are not South Australia, we are not the Northern Territory, we are not Queensland, we are not Western Australia - we are Tasmania, and we follow our Public Health officials' advice. That advice has stood us in good stead. Out of all the jurisdictions, it would be fair to argue that, as a state, we are probably in the best position in this country, so I am very thankful and appreciative of the work Public Health has done.

I will be moving an amendment, but I want to touch on a measure that was announced in July about the 7 and 14 August proposed openings. As members will recall, on 7 August, we were proposing that subject to Public Health advice at the time that we would be opening up to South Australia, the Northern Territory and Western Australia and then a week later to look at Queensland.

At that time the proposal was that if we were to do that we would introduce screening for all passengers, and all persons arriving in Tasmania would receive a clinical health assessment. They would be asked health screening questions and a temperature check done. If assessed as symptomatic, a COVID-19 test would be undertaken and the person would be held in quarantine until the result of the test was known. By quarantine we are talking about Government hotel quarantine.

In terms of 31 August 2020, which is the date that we proposed that we would open up our borders to or remain closed to, that process was moved forward to then. In ensuring that we are ready for an opening to safe jurisdictions on 1 December 2020 we will be continuing with that process at our border that was originally announced for 7 and 14 August and due to begin on 31 August. On 31 August that process will be in place for anybody coming into the state.

From 31 August 2020, the following will apply for all persons arriving in Tasmania whether they are an essential traveller or a Tasmanian coming back. It does not matter. Everybody coming into the state from 31 August 2020 will receive a clinical health assessment, the health screening questions and a temperature check. If they are assessed as symptomatic, a COVID-19 test will be undertaken and the person will be held in quarantine until the result of the test is known, and so it goes on.

That will help build confidence for when we open the borders. It was put in place initially for 7 August 2020 when we would have opened our borders. So, anybody travelling in whether they be an essential traveller or a visitor from South Australia or the Northern Territory or Western Australia, would have been asked to do the health questionnaire, would have then been tested if they were symptomatic would have been held in quarantine. That is what was announced about a month ago.

Carried forward to 31 August 2020, we are obviously not opening our borders on that date but that process will be in place to ensure that Tasmanians have the confidence in the system that we are working through for 1 December 2020.

As I say, it will also provide us with an opportunity between 31 August 2020 and 1 December 2020 to ensure that the system works, that it is doing exactly what we want it to do and that Tasmanians have confidence in it.

I will be moving that amendment. Copies are there for the Clerk to hand around. I will read the amendment in full:

Leave out part 6 and insert instead:

- (6) Acknowledges that the Government follows Public Health advice and will be further strengthening measures to minimise the risk of COVID-19 importation, by reducing from 31 August the following for all persons arriving in Tasmania: a clinical health assessment (health screening questions, temperature check); and if assessed as symptomatic, a COVID-19 test will be undertaken and the person will be held in quarantine until the result of the test is known. Arrangements are already in place for any essential traveller that presents with symptoms to be tested and placed into quarantine.

I hope that members of the House would support the new paragraph (6) that we are putting in place. I believe that is being circulated now.

That will strengthen the test for all people entering the state at that particular time. It will help to build confidence in the system for Tasmanians who, as Dr Woodruff I think rightly acknowledged, many people are feeling anxious at the moment. Many people are quite fearful of both the disease and also the prospect of opening borders and what that might mean.

One of the key reasons we extended the date to 1 December 2020 was to ensure that we can run a public information campaign through that period that takes people with us on the journey. Public Health is very interested at the moment in what happens in South Australia, the Northern Territory and Queensland especially, as states and territories that border Victoria and New South Wales.

There is very little evidence, if any, of community transmission in South Australia - and so, on balance, that looks like a relatively safe jurisdiction to open up to. But what it does have is a porous border with Victoria. I made a comment earlier today that the advice I have is that about 1000 Victorians a day travel into South Australia - mainly for health reasons, because South Australia provides health services for the north-western part of Victoria. You also have the border towns, and you also have significant freight routes. We have the benefit of our ships, with very little transporting in of anything other than containers or trailers with only some drivers that come through - in fact less than 20 per cent, as I understand it. More than 80 per cent of our freight is driven on and then driven off by drivers at each end.

In South Australia, up to 500 truck movements a day are travelling into South Australia, out of Victoria. Public Health, quite rightly, is quite cautious, because they want to understand whether that community transmission occurring in Victoria is going to impact South Australia.

Likewise, regarding the movement across the New South Wales and Queensland border. From memory, in the first 48 hours, there were something like 600 000 cross-border movements. It was substantial. In about a 14-day period, something like 1.2 million exemptions were granted. That is a significant amount of travel across those borders. At the time, we also understood that when Queensland first opened, which was early in July, it was also the first week of the Victorian school holidays, because Victoria has school holidays a week ahead of Tasmania. There was a concern that we would see significant travel and mixing of people from around the country in Queensland.

Fortunately, they have managed without community transmissions to this point. They have had risks, and obviously those two young ladies who lied at the border have created issues, which they have subsequently got on top of but it demonstrates how quickly and how easily issues can occur.

One other point I wanted to make comes back to the issue of local restrictions, and it is something I hope this House can support the Government on. There is obviously a push by some businesses to reduce the restrictions from 2 metres down to 1.5 metres, or remove the 2 square metre rule completely. First, if you look at what is happening around the country, we are quite liberal at the moment in that regard. Western Australia has a 2 square metre rule, and South Australia a 2 square metre rule, but they are now considering whether they go back to 4 square metres. Victoria obviously has a 4 square metre rule. New South Wales, I understand, has a 4 square metre rule. Queensland has a 2 square metre rule for small premises, but a 4 square metre rule for large premises.

The restrictions that we have in place at the moment are quite liberal. The concern Public Health has, and I think it is a valid concern, is that if somebody were to lie coming into Tasmania and bring the disease in, and they were not to quarantine, and they were to go to a nightclub, for example, where there were no social distancing rules in place, and in the nightclub they would be mixing with dozens of other people, and would wake up on the Sunday - and so would those dozens of people - not being symptomatic. The disease takes four to five days to manifest itself before you demonstrate symptoms. By Thursday of the week after that Friday night out, dozens of people have gone back to work in their healthcare settings, their residential aged care settings, they have gone back to work in their forestry business or the meatworks - and all of a sudden on Thursday you have a handful or more of people feeling a little bit ill. They have got the sniffles. They still go to work because it is nearly the end of the week - and community transmission begins.

We have to be so careful and so disciplined regarding our messaging to Tasmanians about the reasons for social distancing. People are champing at the bit to have more than 20 people at their home. Nightclub owners would like to have full dance floors, but this disease is highly infectious. We have to be cautious, we have to be sensible. We need businesses to follow their COVID-19 workplans, and we need the patrons and the staff of those businesses to continually do the right thing.

As we know, in Victoria, it appears that what was a quarantine breach in a hotel then took the virus into the community and has now led to hundreds of deaths, about 7500 positive cases in that state being detected - and they are not on top of it yet.

I mentioned this morning that yesterday the Victorian Premier was talking about the level of testing falling by about 30 per cent. Today he said with yesterday's numbers it was a fall of about 17 per cent.

Ms Butler - It is because they are at home quarantined.

Mr GUTWEIN - It is, and that is a part of it. I understand that, but again, anybody who has symptoms can get a test. That has always been the case, but people are not. I hope they can find ways to encourage people to undertake the test to keep their tests high, and to ensure they understand exactly where the disease is.

There is another member who wants to speak.

Madam SPEAKER - We are going to move Dr Woodruff's motion.

Dr WOODRUFF - We are happy to withdraw our motion, because it is effectively covered by what the Government has provided in their motion.

Madam SPEAKER - Thank you.

Amendment, by leave, withdrawn.

Mr GUTWEIN - Madam Speaker, I move -

That the House amends the motion by striking out the current item 6 and replacing it with the proposed amendment as new item 6 -

which I have circulated.

- (6) Acknowledges that the Government follows Public Health advice and will be further strengthening measures to minimise the risk of COVID-19 importation by introducing from 31 August the following for all persons arriving in Tasmania: a clinical health assessment, (health screening questions, temperature check); and if assessed as symptomatic, a COVID-19 test will be undertaken and the person will be held in quarantine until the result of the test is known. Arrangements are already in place for any essential traveller who presents with symptoms to be tested and placed in quarantine.

Madam SPEAKER - We will now speak to that.

[4.48 p.m.]

Ms BUTLER (Lyons) - Madam Speaker, I appreciate the Premier's movement, to a certain point, on this area of mandatory testing of essential workers. First I would like to talk about the fact that over 50 per cent of cases in Australia that have been tested as positive have tested as asymptomatic. Also, why are we waiting until 31 August to introduce this quarantining of essential workers?

Mr Gutwein - Because that is the Public Health advice.

Ms BUTLER - That is your Public Health advice. There has been quite some movement in relation to this area. About four or five months ago, the fabulous work of the CFMEU and CEPU highlighted the fact that, especially in commercial building and construction in Tasmania, there was an influx of interstate workers who were not quarantined or tested. They started to highlight the inequities in the system.

It is very interesting that in your address - and I could be wrong - I did not hear you talk about Tasmanian jobs at all. I know it is a balance between health and the economy, but I thought that was very interesting. We have been standing up for three things: jobs for Tasmanians, the health of Tasmanians, and making sure we can keep Tasmania as safe as we possibly can. COVID-19 is going to be with us for quite some time. We all know that. We are looking at a good 18 months to two years probably, and we need to make sure that we have

processes in place in our economy, in our workforce, that monitor capacity and whether we have the skills in Tasmania to conduct some of these jobs.

At the moment, it has been so fly-the-sky, pie-in-the-sky - we have had such inequities in how essential workers status has been granted. I know firsthand, from speaking to the roofer in Victoria who contacted us to suggest that the role he was required to undertake was not specialised at all. In fact, he said to the contact, 'Anyone could have undertaken the role that I undertook. I flew in; I got on a plane in Melbourne that morning and I flew in and went straight to the Royal Hobart Hospital.' He mentioned that he had worn a mask - initially when I was speaking to him, I mentioned, 'Are you working in the helipad area?' because I figured that must have been the specialised area, but, no, this was K Block and the task was to fix a leaking roof. Now his comment to that was, 'It was not specialised; anyone could have done it.' He said, 'Even you could have done it', which made me think we could have actually brought down half of Tasmania's parents who are living in Victoria, or brothers or sisters who are living in Victoria, to undertake that specialised/not specialised task because, really, if you are putting one contract ahead of the whole, that is a major health asset. That is our most major health asset. The Royal Hobart Hospital - it does not get any more major health asset than that.

It highlights that your process is incorrect. You have this process at the moment that does not test for capacity at all. You just do not know. It has probably been for five months now that it has gone like this.

The Greens can hang us out to dry and say that we are in contravention of health advice, but if we had not kicked up the fuss that we kicked up over the last four to five months - also with industry backing us - we would not even be in this position now where we are trying to move amendments. That is what you said. Nothing would have happened. Time and time again you would have allowed people to fly in from interstate, unquarantined and untested.

The Labor Party, the CFMEU and CEPU stepped up and highlighted this problem. I could not believe the Government's form trying to throw the State Controller under the bus. You knew very well, because we knew very well from briefings with the State Controller, who has done an outstanding job, that his job is solely to check that the paperwork is in order. You knew when you were saying that was where the decisions were being made that he was not responsible for the capability testing or the capacity testing within the industry.

Building and construction has been hit really hard here. You have roofers, plasterers and carpenters coming in to Tasmania to do jobs such as a Domino's Pizza shop. We also had fit-outs of petrol stations. That is one that we have not actually even raised yet because we were concerned about the petrol station about half an hour out of Hobart CBD which has had interstate workers there from 'day dot', staying at the local pub as well. They are carpenters. That is their job. They are probably really good at what they do, but we have to make sure we have a robust process in place for the next 18 months to two years to monitor our capacity in our workplace. We need to know if Tasmanians can fill these jobs before we sign off on interstate people coming down.

The crane behind us here on Parliament Square at the moment is a massive crane. They have tried three times, I believe, to get people from Queensland to bring down that crane. The problem is they have been rejected three times. There are only two people in Australia who can undertake that task. They are in Queensland. They have been told, no. It is holding up a whole workplace. They are potentially having to look at laying people off because the crane is sitting there, yet you have allowed a consultant to come down to open up a hotel.

There is a real lack of equity here. There is a real problem with your process, so fix the process. Why would you allow people to fly in and test at the airport upon arrival? It just does not make sense process wise. Why would you allow them to come in, test, and then go straight to their workplace and, work shoulder to shoulder with Tasmanians? They might have a mask on. Oh, that would be lovely. But why would you do that when you have the opportunity to just put them in quarantine until they find out if they are negative or positive?

I got a call from a workplace the other day where some Queenslanders came down to provide information at a workshop. When they arrived in Tassie they had quite a few of their top executives around the table for this workshop. When they walked in, they said to them, 'Oh, where did you stay last night?' They said, 'we did not stay anywhere last night. We have just come in today'. They had to send home all their top executives, fully paid, for two weeks because their workplace policy was that they could not be around people from interstate.

Our own laws here in Tasmania were not compliant with our own workplace laws, so Premier, there is a really big problem here. Overall, it is nice to see that there has been some change and that you are starting to move. You did introduce mandatory testing after we jumped up and down. You have never talked about the exemptions that you grant on the borders as well. I know from a Right to Information that we put in, that you of course rejected, and then it went back and we had to change the wording around. Then, I think, it was the Ombudsman issued the Government with a Direction to Comply to answer our RTI because you were outside of the legislative guidelines by that time.

On that rejection of the RTI, there is a section at the bottom that states, 'significant paperwork which is generated from exemptions granted on the border'. That is not the same as 'special exemptions', is it? So, if there is a significant amount of paperwork that is generated from those exemptions on the border -

Mr Gutwein - I have not seen that document.

Ms BUTLER - I can forward that document to you because it is in the RTI.

What we would like to know is, how many exemptions have been granted to people on the border? Not special exemptions. Exemptions granted on the border because apparently it has generated a significant amount of paperwork and that significant amount of paperwork was the reason why they could not forward it to us. It was too significant.

If there has been five or 10 people, that would not be a significant amount of paperwork. It made me think whether there is something more in this. There seems to be something more in this every time I look at it.

So, 1400 building construction jobs have been lost in Tasmania. They are not just a job. They are a household. We have to make sure we protect Tasmanian tradies as much as we can. In speaking to industry leaders, we know the weak spot very much is commercial building and construction. That is when we seem to short-change them a bit.

I know we have to find a balance between economy and health interests and I know that is always a difficult thing for governments to manage, especially in light of a pandemic such as COVID-19. No-one was expecting this and I do understand we need to find the balance. But if the balance is full of holes, as I always say, when there are holes, when it is messy, that

is when mistakes happen. When mistakes happen here in Tasmania that is when we lose our status as being safe and COVID-19 free.

We need to make sure that we have all these potential risks eliminated. Why would you not make sure that the people find out whether they are negative or positive before they go to their workplaces? We are told 50 per cent of people in Australia who are testing positive are asymptomatic. Would you not make sure that we had that check and balance in place? Would we not also make sure that we did proper industry-led capacity testing to make sure that if we do have the skills here those people are employed?

Actually, if we do not have the skills here, how do we upskill our workers? We are going to have a problem with unemployment. Apparently, we already have more than 20 000 people who have lost their jobs. Yes, new jobs are being created but still there is a very big deficiency. Why would we not make sure we get this right? This is going to be the new now for a very, very long time.

Time expired.

The House divided -

AYES 15

Ms Archer
Mr Barnett
Ms Courtney
Mr Ellis
Mr Ferguson
Mr Gutwein
Mr Jaensch
Ms O'Connor
Ms Ogilvie
Mrs Petrusma
Mr Rockliff
Mr Shelton
Mr Street (Teller)
Mr Tucker
Dr Woodruff

NOES 9

Dr Broad
Ms Butler
Ms Dow (Teller)
Ms Haddad
Ms Houston
Mr O'Byrne
Ms O'Byrne
Ms Standen
Ms White

Amendment agreed to.

Motion, as amended, agreed to.

MOTION

COVID-19 – Economic Recovery

[5.06 p.m.]

Mr TUCKER (Lyons - Motion) - Mr Deputy Speaker, I move -

That the House -

- (1) Acknowledges that, while the COVID-19 pandemic emergency has presented a global health crisis, it has also delivered significant economic and social challenges here in Tasmania.
- (2) Notes the recent positive Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) labour force data which showed Tasmania had the highest employment growth in Australia, and the lowest unemployment rate of all the states for the recent reporting period.
- (3) Further notes that the ABS data also showed 7000 more Tasmanians back in work in July 2020, and that 13 400 Tasmanians are now back in work in seasonally adjusted terms since May 2020, the height of the pandemic.
- (4) Supports job-creating infrastructure projects like the Government's Northern Regional Prison project at Brushy Rivulet, which will underpin more than 1000 jobs and deliver an economic boost of \$500 million to northern Tasmania at a time when they need it most.
- (5) Further acknowledges the most recent CommSec State of the States analysis reporting Tasmania with the strongest economy in the country, and this week's latest Sensis Business Index report for August 2020, which shows Tasmanian businesses are the most confident about our economy in the country.
- (6) Recognises that, as public leaders, we have a responsibility to do everything we can to help improve confidence levels in the market, and in our community, to support job creation and job security and to help Tasmania rebuild and recover from the pandemic emergency.

The pandemic has had a devastating impact on the world, with significant impacts in Tasmania. Thousands of Tasmanians have lost their jobs and, sadly, some Tasmanians have lost their lives. We now need to get on with the job of rebuilding and recovery across the state, focused on job creation and job security and supporting Tasmanians, while working to prevent the possibility of a second wave.

We have faced the biggest economic shock in our generation. The pandemic has cost lives and livelihoods and we are now in arguably a harder fight to reboot our economy while we work to prevent a second wave. The Government has stepped up.

This Government has provided an unprecedented support package in both its scale and breadth, valued in excess of over \$1 billion. The Grattan Institute and the Australian Institute in recent ANZ research have identified that this has been the most generous support package in the nation as a proportion of our economy. It is nearly two times larger than other jurisdictions at over 3 per cent of our economy, but from David O'Byrne's questioning of the Budget this morning, the question remains: what part of the support package does Labor not support? What would they not fund?

It is important to note that last year the shadow treasurer, Mr O'Byrne, indicated Labor was open to a review of state taxation. This is code for tax increases. Will Mr O'Byrne finally commit to bringing down Labor's first costed alternative budget in over six years this November? Tasmanians deserve to know how Labor will fund their free thought bubbles. Would they cut services, like when Mr O'Byrne sacked 108 police officers, or when Ms O'Byrne sacked a nurse a day for nine months, or sneakily jack up car rego, just like Labor did in their 2012 state budget? Is Labor's pathway back from the coronavirus emergency higher taxes for all Tasmanians? What is Labor's secret tax plan?

The fact is we have spent the winter parliamentary recess getting on with the job of rebuilding Tasmania, whereas Labor has just kept complaining. On this side of the parliament we are cautiously optimistic, with some positive news filtering through in recent weeks about jobs and our economy.

The Government is working to keep Tasmanians safe and secure during the COVID-19 pandemic emergency. We are being vigilant and are well prepared should another outbreak occur. It is about providing as much certainty as we can in the most uncertain times. Recent reports confirm the Government's approach to rebuilding confidence is working. The latest Sensis Business Index from August 2020 shows that for the eleventh report in a row, nearly three years, the Tasmanian Liberal Government has the most popular policies for business in the nation. Tasmanian businesses are also the most confident about our economy in the country, with the reporting stating that small and medium businesses in Tasmania are the most positive about their state economy. Importantly, in such uncertain times it is pleasing that Tasmania's small and medium businesses are more confident than those nationally, with nearly half extremely or fairly confident about their future.

We all know that confidence leads to jobs and recent positive announcements like securing the ongoing operation of TEMCO, mine restarts and looking locally for the TT-Line vessels are rebuilding confidence. We know job security is top of mind for most Tasmanians and the latest jobs news is encouraging. Tasmania recorded the highest monthly employment growth in Australia, according to ABS labour force statistics. Seven thousand Tasmanians returned to work in July. In seasonally adjusted terms that is 2.9 per cent growth over the month. This follows 6400 Tasmanians returning to work in June. Since the height of the pandemic's impact on jobs in May 13 400 workers have returned to work. At the same time the unemployment rate is now at 6 per cent, the lowest of any state in Australia. These results are far better than were forecast in Treasury's May economic and fiscal update which predicted an unemployment rate of over 12 per cent.

While we have a long way to go to recover and rebuild a stronger Tasmania, these results demonstrate that we should be cautiously optimistic as we continue to manage the pandemic. The key point is that we entered the pandemic from a position of strength. Prior to the pandemic our economy was the envy of the nation, leading across a number of indicators, and our budget was strong. In July, for the first time in over a decade, Tasmania was ranked number one in CommSec's State of the States report. The CommSec report confirms Tasmania entered the pandemic from a position of strength as the strongest economy in the nation. The report said:

For the first time since October 2009, Tasmania holds the mantle of the best performing economy in its own right.

It is ranked first outright in the CommSec rankings. Three months ago Tasmania shared top spot with Victoria. Tasmania has the strongest job market in the most challenging times, demonstrating our responsible glide path approach to recovery is working. The report highlighted that despite the COVID-19 shock the Tasmanian unemployment rate is only 7.4 per cent above the decade average. Now our employment rate is the lowest of any state at 6 per cent.

Tasmania ranked first on retail trade, relative population growth, equipment investment and second on dwelling starts, construction work and new automobile sales. Other key statistics just prior to the pandemic included state final demand in the March quarter, which showed that Tasmania was one of just two states to see growth, growing 0.6 per cent over the quarter while national GDP declined.

The fact is before the pandemic 23 200 jobs had been created under this Government and we had the highest annual job growth of all the states. Our budget was strong, with surpluses forecast over four years and net cash and investments. Since coming to office, the Government rebuilt our economy to be number one in the country, and we can do it again. We will recover and rebuild a stronger Tasmania.

We know the best way to get our budget back on track and grow business confidence and create jobs is to grow the economy and that is what we are doing. The Government's construction blitz will deliver building construction projects around the state worth an estimated \$3.1 billion in value over the next two years. The program builds on our record \$1.8 billion investment program, already budgeted over the next two years.

The Government's stimulus program will support the creation of over 15 000 jobs and support our building and construction sector and our economy statewide. We are giving people the helping hand they need to get into a home. In fact our construction blitz will lead to 2300 more homes in Tasmania.

Ms O'Connor - Promises, promises.

Mr TUCKER - We heard from the Greens yesterday, Ms O'Connor, with Dr Woodruff with the architects bill, and we know that will lead to more difficulty for people to build a house.

Regional economies will benefit from building and maintenance programs across government buildings and facilities with \$70 million. We recently strengthened our Buy Local policy to give our local businesses and manufacturers the best opportunity when they compete for government work and we are supporting more Tasmanians to get a job in their local area with the skills they need.

Our \$40 million allocation for road safety upgrades is progressing with tenders for the Apsley River bridge and upgrades of local road connections associated with the duplications of East Derwent Highway to be released in coming weeks. This is securing many jobs in the civil construction industry and associated businesses. Tenders have already been awarded for improved turning facilities at Boat Harbour and the Highland Lakes upgrade at the 'Pub with no Beer' corner. These are two of the 12 projects that will be advanced under the accelerated \$40 million of road procurements.

Our planning for the \$12 million Wynyard coastal pathway between Cooe and Wynyard is well underway and yes, Ms O'Connor, we talked about this earlier. This will be another part of our bikeway commitment around this state, so this Government is doing its bit towards that. A corridor notice will be tabled in parliament in September to establish a strategic rail corridor for the pathway.

The \$10 million program to upgrade regional health centres and ambulance centres has commenced, supporting regional jobs, especially tradies and maintenance workers. The program will deliver more than 100 specific projects across 50 separate sites. These projects will include replacing the switchboards, improving the hot water pipe, fixing box guttering and upgrading the flooring at Scottsdale District Hospital; replacing roofing at the Campbell Town District Hospital; upgrading the security system and improving the laboratory area for Oral Health Services at the Devonport Community Health Centre; upgrading the flooring and delivering a new storage shed at the West Coast District Hospital; and renovating the nurses accommodation on Bruny Island.

Our \$55 million roads and irrigation investment will secure many jobs in regional Tasmania. An amount of \$15 million has been prioritised for the \$28.5 million Don Irrigation Scheme which is on schedule and will commence the permits approvals design phase in coming weeks. The Don Irrigation Scheme will deliver 5000 megalitres of reliable irrigation water for high quality agricultural land in Don, Farrington and the Sheffield area. The scheme is expected to deliver 130 direct and indirect jobs. These projects will create a massive flow-on effect to small and larger businesses.

We know we have a long road ahead of us and many Tasmanians and Tasmanian businesses are facing tough times. We will continue to help Tasmanians wherever we can. We know that Tasmania entered the pandemic from a position of strength and we know that we can rebuild that position of strength.

Labor has been all over the place during the COVID-19 emergency. They have chosen to complain and play politics at every opportunity to politicise the pandemic emergency. Throughout the pandemic emergency where the Government has sought to be clear, consistent and provide certainty to Tasmanians, Ms White and Labor have done the opposite. You have no credibility on the matter because you have constantly changed your position and you have questioned the Public Health advice on a regular basis -

Mr O'Byrne - Hang on, didn't the Premier say we are going to open up a bubble and he did not. Did he not change his mind?

Mr TUCKER - Labor's prophets of doom have consistently scaremongered on jobs and employment at a time when so many Tasmanians are worried about job security.

Mr O'Byrne - Absolutely they are.

Mr TUCKER - 'Doomsday' David O'Byrne, who is making the comments over there, is continually talking Tasmania down rather than supporting it at a time when we should all be working together, just to play politics and get another cheap media grab at the very time Tasmanians need to have each other's back and work together to restore confidence.

Let us not forget Dr Broad. 'Dr Doom' was at it again during question time today -

Mr O'Byrne - I thought I was the doomsday guy? You cannot use 'doom' twice.

Mr TUCKER - talking down the Government's plan to replace the *Spirits of Tasmania*. The Tasmanian Government is supporting local and Australian jobs as we continue to recover from COVID-19 pandemic. The proposed replacement of TT-Line's passenger ferries represents a significant investment by the state which will provide opportunities for Tasmanian and Australian businesses to play a role in the construction of the new vessels.

Mr O'Byrne - It is going to be a millstone around your neck, that one.

Mr TUCKER - Here we go again, 'Mr Doomsday'.

In order to investigate this opportunity, the taskforce has now been established to identify local procurement, purchasing and manufacturing options for the new vessels to ensure we can maximise the benefits for Tasmanians and Australian businesses and the people they employ. Why wouldn't we? Why does Dr Broad and the Labor Party oppose the Government trying to find as much work as possible for Tasmanian businesses on this project? This is important for our manufacturing sector and we are proud to explore the option for this significant investment to support Tasmanian businesses.

Labor has no plan, no policy and consistently talks down and opposes significant job creating projects like the northern prison, the Burnie court, the new TT-Line ships and the Bridgewater Bridge and Macquarie Point, for example.

The best Labor can come up with is their COVID-19 package sham; just an uncosted cut and paste brochure of other people's projects, including many that the Government already has underway. After all, everyone knows the only jobs plan the shadow treasurer, David O'Byrne, has is to take Ms White's job.

Yet another senior Labor figure has been forced to give Rebecca White advice via the media, revealing the divisions and discontent inside Tasmanian Labor. The damning assessment from Labor stalwart, Dick Adams, that Labor is neglecting northern Tasmania follows previous public criticism from former senior Labor identities, Paul Lennon and Harry Quick. Labor is divided. It is out of touch with the community and should focus on better policies. Labor's desperately poor result of only a 9 per cent primary vote in the Rosevears poll backs up Dick Adams' claims.

Why is Labor opposed to the northern regional prison which will not only support more than 1000 jobs and deliver an economic boost of \$500 million to the region but will improve prisoner outcomes?

What is Labor's record on jobs? Labor's job-destroying forest peace deal with the Greens cost thousands of jobs and damaged hundreds of businesses and families across Tasmania, especially in rural and regional areas like in my electorate of Lyons and they would do it again given the chance.

You cannot trust Labor with the Greens. Tasmania rejected the instability of another Labor-Greens deal at the election in 2014 and they rejected it again in 2018. They were worried about the massive risk of a job-destroying, economy-crippling Labor-Greens government. Given half a chance, you would do another Labor-Greens deal.

In conclusion, while the COVID-19 pandemic emergency has presented a global health crisis it has also delivered significant economic and social challenges here in Tasmania. On this side of the parliament, we are cautiously optimistic with some positive news filtering through in recent days about jobs and our economy. We saw the recent positive Australia Bureau of Statistics labour force data which showed Tasmania had the highest monthly employment growth in Australia and the lowest unemployment rate of any state.

The CommSec Report ranked our economy as the strongest in the nation before the pandemic. The Sensis Business Index ranked Tasmanians as the most confident in our economy in the nation and the most supportive of our policy in the nation for the eleventh report in a row, nearly three years of reports. We have a responsibility to do everything we can to help improve business confidence levels in the market and in our community to support job creation and job security and to help Tasmania rebuild and recover from the pandemic emergency.

We have strong border control protocols, a rapid response capability and our tracking and tracing is ready should we require it. We must continue to follow the Health advice, to be sensible and responsible in our management of the virus in our gradual recovery process.

We should be cautiously optimistic that our plan is working, focusing on job creating investment and job security for Tasmanians. I support the motion.

[5.27 p.m.]

Mr O'BYRNE (Franklin) - Mr Tucker, member for Lyons, I think your heart is in the right place. We spend a bit of time in the Public Accounts Committee and you turn up, put in the hours and the time but you do not have to read what they write for you, mate. Brooksie made the mistake of doing that and he got himself into trouble.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER - Order. Mr O'Byrne, please refer to the member by his name and not 'mate'.

Mr O'BYRNE - Sorry, that is an important correction. Mr Deputy Speaker, the former member for Braddon made the mistake of reading out what the Media Office would write for him and you saw the trajectory of his career. I suggest independent thought, that is what the Liberal Party stands for, independent members' thoughts and striking your own path within your system. I would give you the best advice to do that.

There was a fair bit of drivel and rubbish in that contribution but here is the thing we do agree on, Mr Tucker: jobs are important for the Tasmanian community; secure jobs; jobs that provide food for people, a roof over their heads and jobs that are not only in one or two sectors but across the entire economy and across the entire state.

Everyone in this House should be united in fighting for a bigger private sector in Tasmania, a bigger jobs market. Also, a jobs market that produces good, decent and secure jobs, not casual jobs and not jobs on short-term contracts that do not provide people with the economic security to get a home loan or a car loan, to make their way forward in life.

Unfortunately, one of the features of the Tasmanian labour market is that too many people do not have that job security and under-employment is a massive issue. We are seeing that as

a response to COVID-19. A lot of people who are on casual employment and employment that was not secure have felt the brunt of this pandemic.

Mr Tucker, we broadly agree that jobs are important for the Tasmanian community and that a government that acts, not just lists things in glossy brochures, as the Liberal Party is very good at doing, but acts in terms of investment as a government that supporting and creating an environment for investment in Tasmania, is crucially important.

You love to quote the CommSec report. There is no doubt that the CommSec report is a good report for what it is. I am not denying it is a good report, but let's not confuse it for what it is and what it is not. What it is not is a point-to-point comparison with other states of the indicators that the CommSec report uses. What the CommSec report uses is effectively an internal state comparison of change over the last decade. It is not a point between Victoria and New South Wales and Tasmania on a single economic indicator. It is the change of that indicator within that state.

There is no doubt that if the CommSec report was not as good as it is, it would be an absolute indictment on this Government, because for the first four or five years of that 10-year period we were still feeling the impacts of the global financial crisis. Both the federal and the state stimulus packages have come off the boil in Tasmania, so the first half of that reporting period was impacted by the global financial crisis. So if that CommSec report did not look good it would be an indictment on your Government.

It should not be something that you sit back and say, 'Well, we've done the work now, let's put our feet up. We have a CommSec report which backs us in', because we know - and you repeated it and the Premier repeats it in regards to the state of the Tasmanian economy heading into the COVID-19 period, which is essentially around March of this calendar year - in the December quarter state final demand was negative 1 per cent. We know two consecutive negative quarters is a technical recession, so that 1 per cent was not just a negative quarter, it was the worst result by a country mile across every state and territory.

The other closest states may have been South Australia, which was a 0.02 contraction and three or four states were in positive growth. So with the Tasmanian economy and state final demand the Premier and Treasurer have been on the record many times saying that is the indicator of the health of the Tasmanian economy, and that is state final demand.

You only just got into the positive zone in the March quarter by 0.06 per cent. You just avoided a technical recession and the growth figures that the Premier and Treasurer quote are gross state product figures which is an annual figure from mid-last year.

Mr Tucker - Give us something of substance.

Mr O'BYRNE - By interjection, the member for Lyons has said state final demand is not a proposition of substance. Goodness me. What an appalling comment to say. In your contribution, Mr Tucker, you said that the Tasmanian economy was strong heading into the pandemic, but the stats indicate otherwise. Take some time and have a look at it. They are publicly available. The state final demand for the December quarter was negative. Two of those in a row and we are in a technical recession. So the economy was softening. Let us not say something that was, when it is not.

In the 12 months to March, there was a 31 per cent decrease in mining, there was a 28 per cent decrease in job vacancies, and this is the concerning fact, there was a 17 per cent drop in business investment. What that means is that the industry and business community is concerned about the future.

Heading into COVID-19 a number of indicators were heading down. The only indicators that were heading up were retail turnover and property prices, both things that have been impacted significantly by COVID-19. Heading into COVID-19 there were significant issues.

There is no doubt that the Tasmanian economy, like other economies, is being hit by COVID-19. Every piece of good news we acknowledge, but we are not going to sugar coat it. We are not going to give you a free pass to say you have done your job. Yes, there are some glimpses of hope in some of the stats coming through, but let us be honest about it. Let us not sugar coat the situation that we find ourselves in.

Tasmania has lost 5.8 per cent of all jobs that existed in mid-March. We remain the second-worst affected state behind locked-down Victoria, the second-most impacted state behind locked-down Victoria. We have not had the restrictions that the Victorian economy has had on them here in Tasmania since April effectively. We started to open up so we are the second-worst impacted state in terms of jobs lost and 5.8 per cent equates to almost exactly 15 000 jobs. Total wages are down 5.9 per cent, again the second worst in the country.

Mr Tucker, if you think it is acceptable to get up here and pat yourself on the back about how well we are going, walk in the shoes of those people who make up those statistics. Walk in the shoes of those people in hospitality, in retail, and across the economy who have lost their jobs because of the pandemic. What they do not want is a government patting themselves on the back and saying how good things are and how well they have performed and playing politics in the way you did across this Chamber in your contribution. What they want is a parliament and a government that gets on with the job that actually tries to make a difference in their day-to-day lives.

You have talked about this building blitz of around \$130 million which ironically is about \$70 million short of your underspend from last year. You have a credibility problem. You talk about your plan but you do not have a plan. All you have is a series of lists of projects that you hope will get up. In the March quarterly update the report was that you budgeted \$700 million to invest in infrastructure - roads, bridges - the hard stuff that you constantly parrot on about the fact that the Liberal Party is good at dealing with these things. So you budgeted \$700 million and guess how much you spent? Do you know? Guess how much you spent? You want to play politics. You spent \$300 million and so you were unable to get \$400 million out the door to support the economy. You dare get up here and ask us to say we have credibility and believe us with this building blitz when heading into COVID-19 you could not build a thing. You could not build a roundabout out at the Hobart airport. That has been talked about since 2015. You have barely broken ground.

Mr Tucker - Who wrote this for you?

Ms O'Connor - With respect, the difference is someone wrote yours and nobody wrote Mr O'Byrne's. There is a difference. He's doing it off the cuff.

Mr O'BYRNE - Let us have a look at all the major infrastructure projects that you announced in the 2018 election and think you are going to deliver beyond the horizon, whenever that may be. You have the Southern Outlet, the fifth lane. How is that going, Mr Tucker? How about that mythical Hobart underground bus mall? What about the new bridge over the Tamar? That was a cracking idea of Mr Hidding's, wasn't it? What about the upgrade to the Burnie port? What about the Hobart rail corridor? What an absolute disaster that is.

Ferries on the Derwent? Still waiting for those. The duplication of the south-east corridor down at Sorell? The northern prison? You have gone to another site and there is a whole lot of work to do about that and that is going really well for you. As for public housing, there is a chronic underspend in public housing. Marinus? You have no idea who is going to fund it. You have no idea who is going to pay for it and what it looks like. You can talk about it. You are spending everyone else's money, the federal government's money, on getting the business case up and you have no idea who is going to pay for it.

What about Macquarie Point? We succeeded in getting \$50 million from the federal government in 2012 to redevelop Macquarie Point. By the time we left office and went into caretaker mode in early 2014 we had moved TasRail up to the Brighton Hub, which we built just next to the Brighton bypass. We moved TasRail out to Brighton, we moved Toll out to Brighton, we moved SeaRoad out to Brighton and we basically left you with an investment-ready site. Here we are six and a half years later and you have had about four or five resets. You have the vision of MONA, which was probably the only time you had most of the Tasmanian community agreeing on a plan for that site, and now you have commenced something which will be a mixed-use development site that will make Docklands look like New York. Docklands is a wasteland, and you have completely blown what could have been a once-in-a-hundred-year opportunity to create a special place and a special precinct for Tasmania. You have blown it because you are a mediocre government, at best.

It takes a special sort of talent to lose the gateway to Melbourne's Station Pier and fumble the replacement program for the vessels. At the last election, you said they would be on the water and on the Strait by late 2021/early 2022. You have lost the contract with FSG; granted, that was a tough moment. Now, when the TT-Line was working to sign contracts, you pulled the rug out from under it.

You know very well the politics around local content. Everyone in the industry knows what is going on. This is more about your budget than delivering. The Labor Party purchased those two vessels and in doing so helped transform the Tasmanian economy, not only in terms of tourism, but in time-sensitive freight.

If you talk about hope and the future, many tourism businesses on the north-west coast are looking for increased capacity on the two new replacement vessels. Where is their hope, Mr Tucker? You have betrayed them, absolutely betrayed them. Instead of having increased capacity for tourism and freight in 2021-22, we will not see them before 2028, based on the way your Government has been handling the most significant infrastructure investment in the state's history.

You chronically underspend in infrastructure. You are good at very narrow and very small stimulus activities. A school upgrade here, a school upgrade there. We cannot criticise

you for that. It is very narrow, but it does not actually build or diversify a Tasmanian economy. Essentially you have no economic strategy apart from listing projects.

I noticed the head of Infrastructure Tasmania, Rene Hidding, said it was the best money ever spent by a senior bureaucrat. He has quietly left the stage, with no fanfare and with no thanks, because essentially your pipeline document is a piece of paper with a list of things on it. That does not equate to a strategy: chronically underspent in infrastructure and showing an inability to get the money out the door. If you were strategic about an infrastructure spend in Tasmania, a capital works program, you would get TasWater, TasNetworks and all the key GBEs and civil construction companies around the table and build a 10-year strategy about how things are going to be delivered. You have not done that. All you are doing is listing projects that people of Tasmania have little or no confidence you will deliver on.

If you wanted to talk about measures of success, we could look at unemployment. If the participation rate for unemployment had stayed the same, instead of the 6 per cent we are at now, the unemployment rate would be double digit and over 10 per cent - if the participation rate had stayed the same from the beginning of COVID-19 to now. You get up here and say we have 6 per cent unemployment and we should pat ourselves on the back. I acknowledge the words of the Premier and Treasurer by saying that any person unemployed is a tragedy - we agree with that - but in your contribution, Mr Tucker, you say how good 6 per cent is when the real unemployment rate is double digit. That is what you should be working on.

If you want to talk about measures of success since you came to government, the elective surgery waiting list has blown out by 48.6 per cent.

Since you came to government in 2014, Mr Tucker, the public housing waiting list has blown out by 63.9 per cent.

Since you came, Mr Tucker, the outpatient waiting list has blown out by 55.8 per cent.

Here is the thing that demonstrates the future, and it is a heartbreaking statistic regarding school leavers engaged in work, training or further study: when you came to government, that was at 79 per cent. Do you know what it is now? It is 48 per cent. That is the future of Tasmania. That is the future workforce, and this is an indictment of your government, and these kinds of motions where you try to wedge people on small projects, where you get up and play politics around internal politics of the Labor Party.

We are not immune to criticism. Anyone who wants to criticise us, go for your life. But on our side, the document we put forward to the Premier's social and economic recovery council floated many ideas of infrastructure job creation - not just about capital works and building infrastructure, but jobs across the entire sector in terms of the service sector, the university, the diversification of the Tasmania economy. It was a substantial document, and remarkably, the council welcomed and adopted a number of those propositions.

Madam Deputy Speaker, these kinds of motions do the Government no good, and do this House no good. We should all be committing to being honest about the current stats and the current circumstances we find ourselves in, and engage in a positive debate about how we can make a difference for Tasmania.

[5.46 p.m.]

Ms O'CONNOR (Clark - Leader of the Greens) - Madam Deputy Speaker, I will only make a brief contribution to this notice of motion, and indicate we cannot support a motion that has clause (4) in it, which is that the House supports the Westbury prison site that has been chosen on Birralea Road. We cannot do that, Mr Tucker, because we are prepared to stand with the community which is really concerned about having a massive prison on their doorstep - 5 kilometres from the centre of Westbury - and a site that has very significant natural values.

Dr Woodruff and I went there three weeks ago and walked over that beautiful little patch of bush with the field naturalists and Di Robertson who does so much work on the Westbury Common. It is a beautiful little patch of bush.

For the *Hansard* record, Mr Shelton just scoffed when I said that.

This is work that Sarah Lloyd, OAM, who is a member of the local field naturalists group, has been studying from a bird lover's and field naturalist's point of view for about 30 years, as I understand it. The natural values and native species on that patch of bush are recorded and well known. They include a whole range of bush birds, yellow-tailed black cockatoos, wedge-tailed eagles nest nearby, there would be habitat there for masked owls - and if Mr Shelton wants to choose to remain ignorant about things, or not to place any value on remnant bushland which was set aside under the regional forest agreement for protection, that is on him.

I do not know if Mr Shelton has been for a walk through the proposed prison site, but it is teeming with natural values. You do not have to be a qualified field naturalist to know that. It contains a number of large nesting trees, good habitat trees, and it is really clear that it is part of remnant bush, because very vast tracts of that kind of woodland in the north of Tasmania have gone to agriculture, other primary production, or to other forms of development or roads. We are talking about an ever-diminishing area of habitat for Tasmania's beautiful little scarlet robins or splendid wrens, the grey shrike thrush,; all those beautiful birds that bring so much joy to our lives are running out of habitat. It was interesting that Sarah Lloyd OAM talked about how she has been visiting that particular informal reserve for many years.

Mr Shelton - Informal reserve, thanks.

Ms O'CONNOR - It was set aside under the Regional Forest Agreement, Mr Shelton. It is in the Tasmanian Reserve Estate. Sarah Lloyd was talking about how bereft she feels when she stands in a place like that and realises that the birdsong is diminishing. She has seen changes because habitat, particularly along the north and the north-west, is increasingly fragmented.

After visiting that particular site we went to visit some of the locals. A local farmer lives just near the site and as I was chatting to him with Dr Woodruff, I was doing a little video talking to him about the place and a pair of wedge-tailed eagles appeared behind his shoulder just over the proposed prison site. It looked to me like it was a courting display. Most Tasmanians value those birds. The vast majority of Tasmanians recognised the importance of protecting habitat so that our beautiful endemic birds have a future.

We cannot support the motion while it expresses support for a prison site which really has all the signs of a panicked brain burp on the part of the Premier and the Corrections minister

who was under intense pressure from Westbury residents against the prison over the site right on the town boundary. I do not know how this was cooked up, but this Birralee Road site was chosen. Even if protecting bushland habitat for our endemic bird species is not your thing and you do not value birds and birdsong, even if all you value is the dollar- and we know there are people like that in here - it would become very plain to you that that site is going to be hugely expensive to develop because of the slope. The amount of excavation that will be required to install a prison down Birralee Road on that informal reserve is very significant.

Just on the informal reserve question, Mr Shelton, 356 000 hectares of informal reserve that Sustainable Timber Tasmania - so-called - is included as part of the Tasmanian Reserve Estate in the high conservation values assessment report that it presented to the auditors. On the one hand you have a government GBE desperate to get FSC certification, even though it is working through a government that is making it impossible, pointing to these 356 000 hectares as part of Tasmania's reserve estate to try to persuade the auditors that everything is peachy here in the forests, and then on the other you have the local member for Lyons and Minister for Local Government denigrating the natural values of that site.

Mr Shelton - It is 15 hectares out of 70.

Ms O'CONNOR - You tell that to the flame robin. You tell that to the birds. It makes me sick that people who have so little regard for the natural environment can be elected to the Tasmanian Parliament.

Mr Shelton - That's an inner city approach.

Ms O'CONNOR - Did you just say I am an inner city person?

Mr Shelton - I did not say that. I said it is an inner city approach to the country.

Ms O'CONNOR - What a load of crap - pardon me, Madam Deputy Speaker. I grew up on a little island in Queensland, Stradbroke Island. I understand rural and regional living and being remote from the big city. As often as possible I am in Nubeena, so do not patronise me, Mr Shelton, with your apparently unique insights into rural living.

Mr Shelton - What about the opportunity of taking public servant jobs into regions?

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER - Order, I ask the member be allowed to make her contribution.

Ms O'CONNOR - Madam Deputy Speaker, I will cut to the chase now. It appears I went on a little bit longer than I intended but you have to challenge people who have so little affinity with the natural world when you are on your feet in this place.

My amendment to this motion is to delete paragraph (4) which says -

Supports job-creating infrastructure projects like the Government's Northern Regional Prison project at Brushy Rivulet, which will underpin more than 1000 jobs and deliver an economic boost of \$500 million to Northern Tasmania at a time when they need it most.

We do not support that clause. The rest of the motion is supportable in broad terms. There is nothing too much to disagree with there, although when they are creating jobs we should be future-focused and making sure we are doing that by applying an economic and social recovery lens to a climate lens as well, which would certainly send a very strong message to young people about how much this parliament values their future. We move -

That paragraph (4) of the motion be deleted.

We so move because there is a significant community in and around Westbury that does not want that prison in their backyard. They are confused about where Labor stands on it now because before the prison site was moved up Birrale Road, Labor was all over it but ever since it was moved to a bush block with natural values and endemic bird species on it, they have evaporated and people in the town are quite confused about it.

There is not much more I can say about that except to reassure the people of Westbury who are concerned about having a prison in their backyard and to reassure the field naturalists that the Greens will stand with them. We will not let them down.

The House divided -

AYES 2

Ms O'Connor
Dr Woodruff (Teller)

NOES 22

Ms Archer
Mr Barnett
Dr Broad
Ms Butler
Ms Courtney
Ms Dow
Mr Ellis
Mr Ferguson
Mr Gutwein
Ms Haddad
Ms Hickey
Ms Houston
Mr Jaensch
Mr O'Byrne
Ms O'Byrne
Ms Ogilvie
Mr Rockliff
Mr Shelton
Ms Standen
Mr Street (Teller)
Mr Tucker
Ms White

Amendment negatived.

Motion agreed to.

ADJOURNMENT

City of Devonport - Scout Group Peak Award Presentation

[6.04 p.m.]

Mr ROCKLIFF (Braddon) - Madam Deputy Speaker, recently, I had the honour of presenting awards to some of the north-west's future leaders at the City of Devonport's Scout Group Peak Award presentations.

Acknowledging his dedication and hard work, I presented Jackson Dickinson with a top award for scouts, the Australian Scout Medallion. It was a great honour of which he should be very proud. Jackson was awarded the Australian Scout Medallion after achieving several goals aimed at developing a scout social and character potential for a young person in Australian and global society. Jackson undertook the core scouting values of camp craft, citizenship and leadership taking a first aid course elective and gaining proficiencies in outdoor and information technology.

On the same evening, I had the honour of presenting the Greywolf awards to Amity Brimfield of the City of Devonport Cubs and Charlise Gabb from the Rubicon Sea Cub Scouts. I congratulate both those individuals as well. It was great to be at the event that night. It gave me cause to reflect on my time as a cub and scout at 1st Latrobe Cub and Scouts in the late 1970s and early 1980s, which I enjoyed and learned a great deal.

I also mentioned, in the few short words that I had on that evening, that I knew a wonderful chap called Peter Cross. Peter was a scout leader when I was a young cub and scout in that particular time. I want to acknowledge Mr Cross's recent passing. He was a wonderful community contributor, a great local identity and really gave a lot of his life to support our young people in the region. The Latrobe Council recently had a tribute to him on social media. I will quote from their Facebook post:

Council takes this opportunity to acknowledge the passing of a true community servant of the Latrobe Municipality, Peter David Cross. Peter will be a familiar face from his long employment with the Mersey Community Hospital. He also held many leadership roles in the scouting movement in the Mersey district and the state over a great many years. This resulted in Peter being directly being involved with the development of youth for over 30 years, and receiving life membership of Scouts in 2013.

Many joeys, cubs and scouts will recall Peter's positive and encouraging influence which has no doubt contributed to who they are today. Peter was recognised for his contribution to the community -

this is the Latrobe community -

in 1990 when the Latrobe Council awarded him citizen of the year. He was further recognised for his ongoing achievements when selected to participate in the Sydney Olympics torch relay in 2000.

For not quite two years, Peter has been a resident at Rubicon Grove in Port Sorell, where he continued his community connections being part of the

welcome committee that supports new residents adjust to their new living environment in aged care.

As a result of that post by Latrobe Council, there are a lot of other people who supported and endorsed the Latrobe Council's recognition of Peter. A number of people commented and spoke of Peter and described him in a number of ways including: well loved; a wonderful gentleman; a beautiful man; Peter a remarkable contribution and always full of encouragement. I reflect on that and Peter, and he was always full of encouragement for me personally as well. I have no idea what his political persuasion was at all but we had a connection with cubs and scouts. I always felt encouraged when I saw him in the community over many years and so, I pay tribute to him and indeed the scouting movement more generally.

As we all know, COVID-19 has presented many challenges that we have had to deal with before not the least of all, our connection with each other and its organisations such as the Scouts which have become vital in helping keep people and everyone connected. We often talk about the importance of maintaining a daily routine, engaging in activities, hobbies, and exercising in a safe and secure way is important to keeping our community healthy, and mental health is so important.

This is where I believe our scouts can also shine. They have a vital role now and into the future as we all work together to realise an even better Tasmania. Looking around the room that night in Devonport I saw many future leaders and many future mentors, as well as existing mentors of young people. I saw scouts who are thankful for the skills that have been taught - resilience, resourcefulness, leadership. It is a wonderful institution, and with education gives our next generation the opportunity to start their journey of learning for the rest of their life.

Scouts create building blocks to help them to become the person they want to be; to learn by doing. I am certainly thankful for the skills that I have gained over the few years as a cub and scout for 1st Latrobe and I wish to acknowledge and congratulate the City of Devonport Scout Group for their awards night, their invitation for me to present the awards and say a few words and the scouts for their dedication and participation in their community. Thank you.

COVID-19 - Mersey Community Hospital and Devonport RSL

[6.10 p.m.]

Ms DOW (Braddon) - Madam Speaker, first, I will speak about the Mersey Community Hospital and reflect on a recent visit to the hospital campus with our shadow Health minister, Sarah Lovell. I want to place on the record my sincere thanks and acknowledgement of the hard work of the staff at the Mersey Community Hospital, particularly over the course of the last few months with the COVID-19 outbreak in the north-west and the pressure it put on that hospital facility with our other two major hospitals in the region being closed at that time. I was really impressed by the measures they put in place around their response to COVID-19, the changes in practices and the like. I extend my thanks for the generosity of their time for providing that tour.

I also wanted to mention representatives from the Health and Community Services Union whom we met afterwards, to thank them for sharing their experiences as well, particularly around some of the pressures of currently working in the accident and emergency department and the pressures around changes in operating hours, which we have provided some advocacy

around. I thank the staff for their ongoing work but also to reflect on the tremendous contribution they have made to the health and wellbeing of the people of the north-west coast, and continue to do so, but more particularly during the COVID-19 outbreak.

Many community organisations, in my experience, have stepped up and changed the way they do things a little bit to support their volunteers and their communities. I want to reflect on two community organisations I have had recent contact with. The first is Grow, Gather, Give, which operates out of Burnie High School and has the school farm there. I was fortunate enough to work with them to provide some home delivery services of baskets for emergency food relief for local families, and I really enjoyed the opportunity to do that. During COVID-19 we have been very busy answering a lot of questions over the phone or in Zoom meetings and the like, but there is nothing better than getting out and doing something practical to assist in your local community at a time like that. I welcomed the opportunity to work with them and provide that service, and I enjoyed the conversations I had with people on their front doorstep. For them it was nice to have a chat with someone from a distance. I got a good and clear picture of the important work that Grow, Gather, Give is doing in our community and I thank and congratulate its members for that.

The other organisation I want to mention - in particular around their response to COVID-19 - is the Devonport RSL. Recently I met Bianca Jubbs, the coordinator there, and learned more about the great programs the RSL has been providing in a time of need, not only for the veteran community but also for others in the community as well. They have been providing the simple gesture of a roast meal for people, something that when you live on your own you do not often enjoy because you might find yourself eating it for a week. It is something that typically a family would enjoy together, so they invited people to have a roast lunch and they also delivered roasts in the community as well.

They had a cupcake drive as well, offering someone a little brightness in their day by providing cupcakes to the local community. They are doing a number of veteran welfare programs out of the RSL in Devonport, and it is wonderful to see a local RSL club reinventing itself and providing invaluable services to the local community. They are not only providing those services to the veteran community, they are also extending into the local community and providing a valuable service.

Encouraging Tasmanian Tourism

[6.14 p.m.]

Mr SHELTON (Lyons) - Madam Speaker, this evening I will talk about a great Tasmanian business and the opportunities people in Tasmania now have after yesterday's announcement of the policy to assist people in travelling around Tasmania and staying in regional communities to enhance the economy of those communities and to get out and about and experience Tasmania for people who have not been on the west coast or the east coast or down to Bruny or the peninsula.

I wish to talk briefly about a couple of days' break I had on the Tasman Peninsula. My wife Merrilyn came with me. Because we have not been able to get around that much over the wintertime we took the opportunity to go down the peninsula. We had half a day to ourselves and we took a Pennicott Tasman Island cruise. What a fantastic and wonderful cruise it was. It was in the middle of winter and we had to book prior. You always wonder about the weather

and how cold it will be, but we rugged up, and they looked after us and it was a fantastic cruise. Plenty of photos were taken and I will highlight one in just a moment. The Pennicott Wilderness Journeys is a highly acclaimed tourism operation that has won over 28 Tasmanian awards and 12 national awards. It is a fantastic operator. I congratulate the crew we had and Rob for re-establishing the business after COVID-19 and getting up and going again.

The tour goes out of Port Arthur round to Tasman Island and up the east coast. On the Tasman Island cruise, it goes around the corner and travels beneath the highest vertical sea cliffs in the Southern Hemisphere at Cape Pillar, with amazing waterfalls, rock formations, archways and deep sea caves. The coastal area down there is part of the Tasman National Park and is home to a variety of wildlife, including hundreds of seals, migrating whales, an abundance of seabirds in their thousands and, of course, dolphins. I was lucky enough to go on a fishing trip with some mates from TAFE college a number of years ago now, but Merylyn had not been. I have always said we needed to look at that marvellous coastline you see as you travel up along the east coast.

Of course, as you do, you have your camera with you. I was lucky enough to photograph a dolphin with Tasman Island on the left, lucky enough to snap that shot, which I have handed around to my colleagues on this side. I was very pleased with my shot. Merylyn was also rapt in the very exciting trip.

Not many people were on the trip. The boats hold 43 and numbers have been substantially down. I encourage anybody in the House who has not been on a Pennicott tour to get out and experience one, but in general terms those in the community who have the ability to get out of a weekend, or now through the week, with some support from the Government to support these tourism businesses which are doing it pretty tough. They need numbers there and, of course, it is not just the Tasman Island cruise you can do. Rob Pennicott tours go out of Bruny Island, they have an Iron Pot cruise and a Wineglass Bay cruise as well. It is a fantastic opportunity and not crowded at this time because we have no mainland people. The boat holds 43, and we were on a trip with only eight people on it so you can imagine we were not too packed in there.

The staff on the cruise looked after us marvellously well and their knowledge of the area is fantastic. A cruise operator like that cannot possibly be making too much money out of that. They are doing it for the community and the local economy. Without that cruise operating, there would have been eight people who were not on the Peninsula for a night or, in our case, two nights. There would have been a number of meals that were not eaten and fuel would not have been purchased. One person putting their front foot forward helps everybody else out. We need to support those businesses that are open so they can continue and help stimulate the Tasmanian economy.

Cultural Heritage Management

Edna Florence Pennicott, OAM - Tribute

[6.20 p.m.]

Ms STANDEN (Franklin) - Madam Speaker. I will conclude my contribution from last night on a matter of cultural heritage management. I was nearly finished that contribution, and I will take it up where I finished.

In a post COVID-19 world, we will need the staff of Heritage Tasmania to engage with the building and construction industry, to stimulate the economy. They will play a vital role in guiding and supporting developments big and small, right across the state.

The hardworking, decent staff at Heritage Tasmania should be able to do this without the ongoing cultural problems hanging over their heads. I believe this is a government that is not committed to Tasmania's heritage sector. It is only interested, it seems, in ribbon-cutting and good news stories, rather than fixing the cultural and technical problems that have beset Heritage Tasmania since 2014.

Madam Speaker, onto a much brighter point: I wanted, tonight, to speak about an inspiring and true hero of Kingborough. I am really proud to say that this person is not only a community hero, but she has become a good friend of mine.

Her name is Mrs Edna Florence Pennicott, OAM, awarded in the Queen's Birthday Honours announced in June this year - the latest in a string of well-deserved accolades recognising an extraordinary woman, and over 40 years of volunteer service to her community. Known fondly as the Queen of Kingborough, despite being short of stature, she is fierce, passionate and determined in every endeavour. It takes a brave person to dare to say no to this woman. Just ask the Mayor of Kingborough, Dean Winter.

In May last year, I had the pleasure of attending a ceremony at Government House at which Edna was presented with a Lifetime Achievement Award in the 2019 Tasmanian Volunteering Awards.

The Lifetime Achievement Award recognises exemplary long-term commitment to the volunteering sector. It is an award given to someone with a history of distinguished service, who has made a lasting impact, who has exhibited community spirit and provided inspiration to others, and has positively influenced the community or communities that they have volunteered in. To receive this award, you must have had a minimum of 25 years service.

In addition to this award, Edna has previously been acknowledged with the Pride of Australia Medal, and the Kingborough Council Senior Citizen of the Year Medal.

Edna Pennicott has dedicated her life to serving her community. She established and is the driving force behind Kingborough Helping Hands, now a registered local charity delivering food and household necessities to people in need. She has been President of the organisation since its incorporation in 2013, and she has been running this service out of her home for over 40 years.

Every Thursday night, a team of volunteers leaves her home with food, hot meals and other goods for those in need, such as blankets, beanies and toiletries, to take on Loui's Van - which is organised by Edna, and I think leased through Kingborough Helping Hands - on the weekly run, making three stops around the Kingborough area, assisting dozens of people on any one night.

Edna has also organised a team of volunteers to assist in cooking and organising the food, and other goods for the van run.

In any given year, Kingborough Helping Hands distributes upwards of 75 hampers valued at least \$100 each, on average, comprising food and essential household items donated by local businesses and community members, all purchased with funds raised by Kingborough Helping Hands themselves.

Then at Christmas, another 200 to 300 hampers and hundreds of gifts to children who would otherwise miss out. Putting together the Christmas hampers requires a heap of coordination of the dozens of volunteers who eagerly fall in behind Edna to sort, wrap and pack the gifts and the goods. It also takes phenomenal effort in the preceding months to collect the items for the hampers, all organised by Edna.

Edna's home is the home of Kingborough Helping Hands, and though modest, her rooms and hallways overflow with food and goods for others, especially at Christmas. To raise funds for Kingborough Helping Hands, Edna facilitates a Christmas fundraising luncheon, which pays for the toys, goods and hamper items.

Last Christmas, there were 300 children who received toys, who would otherwise have missed out. We are talking good-quality, decent toys - toys those children would otherwise not have had.

Over 200 people attended the event which is a wonderful demonstration of how much Edna's community support and appreciate her wonderful work.

The Annie Kenney young women's refuge also benefits from support in the form of hampers from Kingborough Helping Hands, which Edna organises. Throughout the year, Kingborough Helping Hands also donates practical goods to the refuge, such as new linen and pyjamas for the young girls in need.

Usually in July, there is another fundraiser, the Soup and Sandwich Kitchen. While volunteers spend the morning making sandwiches, Edna prepares quiches, sausage rolls and delicious cakes and slices for this event for weeks, and her freezers are absolutely chockers. She also organises Bunnings barbecues.

Just a couple of years ago, Kingborough Council granted permission for Edna to establish the Kingborough Helping Hand Sharing Tree with Christmas trees displayed in two local shopping centres throughout the month of December. I have been thrilled to support her for a few years running now in helping to volunteer on that tree. Volunteers happily accept gifts and vouchers, which are then distributed directly to people in need in the local area.

She has been part of the Kingborough Tigers Football Club for over 45 years, raising over \$200 000 for that club, which has obviously helped enormously.

Just to list a few other things, she has been involved in the Kingborough district cricket club for many community functions, supporting the canteen and so on. She just gets things done.

On Anzac Day this woman, who is in her seventies, got up at 3 a.m. to help cook the breakfast at the local Anzac Day ceremony. She has done catering for Guides and Scouts functions. She always helps Senator Catryna Bilyk at the Walk for Brain Cancer Tasmania, raising funds and awareness for that important cause.

In closing, Edna is a stalwart of the Kingborough community. She always thinks of others before herself. She is always on the lookout for ways to help others who are less fortunate. She has never been paid one cent for the work she undertakes - and in fact I know there are times when she has gone without to help others.

She has not had an easy life, but she is a prime example of how one person can make a massive difference to another person's life.

Kingborough Helping Hands and Edna Pennicott are an icon of the community. She is selfless and an inspiration. She is truly a remarkable woman, and the recognition of her service to the community as a member of the Order of Australia is more than well deserved.

Northern Regional Prison - Location

[6.27 p.m.]

Dr WOODRUFF (Franklin) - Madam Speaker, the Government has mishandled the decision-making process around the choice of the northern prison from the very beginning, and it seems as though they are determined to make a bad situation even worse. There has never been any proper consultation for the choice of the northern prison, and the conversation - the *faux* conversation - about consultation for a preferred site is widely believed by residents in the Westbury area to have simply been about the site.

For some reason the Government has a fascination for Westbury. The initial decision to put the Westbury prison right in the middle of Westbury met such community backlash when the community found out what the Government was on to late last year. A big petition that was delivered by the community to council, and a number of community meetings, led the Premier to make a snap decision, and instead of admitting there was a *mea culpa* and coming open with northern Tasmania and being clear about a consultation process for which communities might want to have a second prison, the Government doubled down in typical fashion, and have created even more problems for themselves with the choice of a 5-kilometre shift of the Westbury prison into Birrallee Road - just as close to Westbury as the residents do not want it to be.

There has been no consultation process about the seemingly random choice of this second location, and the whole process from the start to where we are now is totally opaque. We have heard a number of mistruths from the Minister for Corrections about this site, and the choice of the site.

The Government has never released the full list of what were meant to have been the preferred sites, and I have written to the minister about this fact. They need to release the report on the choice of preferred sites and the criteria, and in all likelihood we will find the community believe that Westbury Reserve on Birrallee Road was never on that list.

It could not have been on that list, because it has nothing that is needed for a prison to be built. It does not have any power. It is interesting to hear Ms Butler chiming up from the Labor Party. Ms Butler was so well known and present in Westbury until the Government made the decision to move it to the Westbury Reserve and I have not seen or heard of Ms Butler since then. Every time in parliament Ms Butler was making adjournments and MPIs on the Westbury prison.

It has gone completely silent from the Labor Party about the issues to do with the other Westbury prison site. I wonder why.

Ms Butler - Where were you?

Madam SPEAKER - Order, Ms Butler, you are being a bit defensive.

Dr WOODRUFF - Maybe the reason the Labor Party has dropped this is because it is on a listed reserve which is known for its natural values and is part of the Regional Forest Agreement. It is an important place as a bird haven and we know this from the respected naturalist, Order of Australia medallist Sarah Lloyd, who has written extensively about this, including books and creating a radio series of bird songs. It is very well known for its natural values.

The \$270 million that was already a massive amount to sink into a prison, is likely to be far more than that with the choice of this new site. There is no power and they will need to extend transmission lines to the site from both directions. There is no water and there will be hundreds of metres of piping that will be needed. There is no sewerage, no gas pipelines, the road will need to be extensively upgraded and there is a \$40 million grant hanging around from the federal government that has never been taken up.

Mr Shelton - Are you saying go back to the original site? No gas, no power, no sewerage.

Madam SPEAKER - Order, Mr Shelton.

Dr WOODRUFF - If the Government likes to pretend that has anything to do with the prison, they can think again because the community is on to that. The road needed that \$40 million upgrade before it was slated to be a prison.

Mr Tucker - I thought the Greens fully supported upgrades of road as well as pipelines.

Madam SPEAKER - Order, Mr Tucker.

Dr WOODRUFF - Instead of having had one community group that was outraged about Westbury being chosen as the prison, there are now two more groups that have established. There are three groups in Westbury now, vocally against this: The Concerned Residents Opposed to the Westbury Prison, the Westbury Residents against the Prison and the Local Field Naturalist Group, which is very well credentialled.

The bushfire issue is massive and the bushfire prone mapping that has been done by the TFS for this site shows that. Department of Justice officials told the community that the bushfire plan for the site would involve somehow evacuating 250 maximum security inmates south to Risdon Prison.

When the residents asked how was it possible to transfer these people safely and quickly and where would they go when they go when they got to Risdon, the response was that they would get put in tents in the Risdon Prison. Would that not really help the situation in the Risdon Prison? We have already got a powder keg situation in Risdon Prison. Imagine trying to evacuate 250 inmates from a high-risk bushfire environment in the middle of a bushfire on

a site which gets north-west winds directly onto the site, in the middle of a forest. It is not only the flame risk, it is the smoke inhalation risk for those people.

The site was set aside as a reserve under the Forest Agreement and important species have been documented, threatened and rare species. It is estimated that the clearing for the prison itself is 16 hectares, according to the Government, but the bushfire buffer will add 19.5 hectares in addition to that 16 hectares, most of it coming from the surrounding residents' land. They are not happy about it.

The Government's tough on crime approach has been failing since they entered office and rescinded the policy position of the previous government that was effective. The community will keep fighting this and the Greens will keep speaking on their behalf.

Neighborhood Houses

[6.34 p.m.]

Mr TUCKER (Lyons) - Madam Speaker, I have a positive topic to speak about tonight, Neighborhood Houses. Neighborhood Houses are places where people come together and find support, belonging and purpose as they work together to support their local community and make a real difference in people's lives.

The 35 houses located around Tasmania are run by the community, for the community and offer a wide range of programs and activities for local people. The achievements of the houses are an understatement and the changes in people's lives and communities is overwhelming. Year after year, Neighbourhood Houses grow stronger, pulling in resources from wherever they can, staying in tune with their communities, responding to their needs, coming up with great ideas and constantly supporting people to do things that make their community a better, safer and more enriching place to live.

Neighbourhood Houses help to create networks to support individuals and families. They provide a place for people to go and feel part of the community, where everyone is welcome and where people can learn new skills, be part of a group, meet new friends, volunteer and give back to their community.

Neighbourhood Houses are run by the community for the community. They work from a community development framework which essentially is about people coming together, uniting around a concern or an opportunity in their local community and working together to act. Houses work with their communities to create community gardens, community men's sheds, food relief programs, literacy and numeracy support programs, community lunches and events. They are also agents for no interest loan schemes, playgroups, parent support groups and so much more. These are all the things that bring people in the door and then they are pathways to so much more.

In my electorate of Lyons, the Dunalley Neighbourhood House identified a need for healthy and affordable local food options in the Dunalley region. They partnered with Okines Community House to develop a co-op. The aim of the project is to deliver good quality food as well as to educate family members about healthier options and provide opportunities for people to engage with their community by volunteering. The enterprise remains community driven. As well as social inclusion, it provides people with opportunities to gain experience in

customer service, general social interactions, handling of goods, pricing, labelling, signage and money handling. The co-op has become a focus point which people from all walks of life contribute to and enjoy. This is a clear demonstration of how people will get involved and take ownership of a project if they are allowed then encouraged to direct the difference they will make in their community.

Crunch Meals was introduced offering free frozen homemade meals made by local chefs and volunteers to their community. The Tasmanian Government was able to assist in this program supporting the community house to allow continuation of Crunch Meals, with volunteers delivering meals to those in need as far as White Beach, Port Arthur and Saltwater River.

During COVID-19, our Neighbourhood Houses have become a vital asset to Tasmanian communities and I thank all the Neighbourhood Houses, staff and volunteers for their exceptional dedicated commitment to all Tasmanians.

Bus Shelter - Mangalore

[6.38 p.m.]

Ms BUTLER (Lyons) - Madam Speaker, on the Monday just past, at 7.15 a.m., I was at Mangalore near the Black Brush Road intersection on the Midland Highway. It is an area where community members drop their children to catch school buses on school days. The students are there from 7.20 a.m. on school days. Between eight and 20 students use the bus stop every day heading south.

The community has lobbied the local council and local members of parliament for a bus shelter to be built to provide the school children with shelter against the elements. A few years ago, there was a bus shelter on the site which provided some protection for those school students against the elements. Apparently that shelter was destroyed when a four-wheel drive ploughed through it some years ago and it was never rebuilt. There is an actual concreted space where the students stand.

Since then, there has been upgrade to the Midland Highway and a crossing point has been installed for the public to stand in the middle of the Midland Highway. There is a clear pathway which leads to that crossing of sorts and that is where the students can catch the school bus to head south.

There is a large rotunda style bus stop shelter on the corner of the Midlands Highway and Black Brush Road intersection and that is on the opposite site of the highway, some 100 metres from where the students catch the bus to go south. When you next drive past it, you will understand what I am referring to.

I have written to the Minister for Infrastructure and Transport on behalf of the community, asking for a shelter to be installed for the school students. I also suggested to one of the local community members, Mrs Marie Luck, that she also write to the minister and contact the Premier's office.

Mrs Luck's letter from the minister, Mr Ferguson, says -

Thank you for your email of 13 July requesting installation of bus shelters at bus stops on the Midlands Highway in Mangalore. The Department of State Growth has advised me that the Mangalore to Bagdad stage 2 safety upgrades project for the Midlands Highway 10-year action plan did not remove any bus shelters as part of the project. However, as part of the roadworks undertaken the upgrade formalised and sealed two bus stop laybys at the Black Brush Road junction in each direction of travel of the Midland Highway. Concrete footpaths were constructed at these locations to benefit all bus users and to insure accessibility in line with the Disability Discrimination Act 1992.

I am advised that the shelter located on the corner of the Midland Highway and Black Brush Road is not a designated bus shelter although I understand that students may use it for this purpose. State Growth is in the process of developing a framework to prioritise upgrades at bus stops. The framework will take into account patronage and safety concerns to determine where the bus shelter should be provided at particular bus stops.

Michael Ferguson
Minister for Infrastructure and Transport

Clearly that advice from the department is incorrect and a quick visit to the area would see that is actually not the set up. I suggest that someone from the department should do that quickly so they can resolve the issue and dispel that misinformation.

Mrs Marie Luck also received a lovely response from the Premier's office when she wrote to the Premier, which says -

Dear Marie,

Thank you for your emails regarding the need for a new bus shelter at Mangalore. I will provide them to the Minister for Infrastructure, Michael Ferguson, as he is the minister responsible for bus transport issues and I will ask him to follow up on this.

I am hopeful that this can be resolved soon so that students are able to be protected from the weather when waiting there. Thank you again for writing to me.

That is a much more human response to the problem so I suggest that the Minister for Infrastructure and Transport and his department officers revisit the Mangalore bus shelter. Between eight and 20 schoolchildren use it, some of whom are primary school students, while some are older. At the moment parents pull up in their cars on really cold, wintry days when often it is quite dark at that time. It is quite cold along there - it can be about zero degrees with a lot of fog. People sit in their cars, often clogging up the traffic as well, because it is too cold for the kids to wait in an unprotected area. It would be really good if they could put their heads together to solve this.

Obviously the Premier's response shows he has quite a human response to this so I suggest a solution should be found soon. Minister, could you please build the children of Mangalore a bus shelter? Thank you.

COVID-19 - Essential Services - Relief Measures

[6.43 p.m.]

Mr BARNETT (Lyons - Minister for Energy) - Madam Speaker, it is really good to be able to share a few remarks tonight with respect to electricity, water and sewerage costs. During these unprecedented times with the coronavirus pandemic, health is a top priority. The challenges are significant. Running our economy and giving it a boost are significant, and as a government we have delivered unprecedented levels of support for our community and our businesses to cushion the blow of COVID-19. Our Government recognises this in so many ways - electricity, water, sewerage, all essential services.

We understand that with the restrictions imposed during COVID-19 many people have been working or have been schooling from home throughout winter so power bills have been significant, as have water and sewerage bills. That is why we have delivered this \$1 billion of support to households, individuals, communities and businesses. Frankly, it is at unheralded and record levels of stimulus and support. These are records I wish we never had to break, but we have been hitting a record.

From 1 July there has been a 1.38 per cent reduction in regulated power prices. That is very good news. We still have a plan to deliver the lowest regulated electricity prices in the nation by 2022 and of being fully self-sufficient in clean energy by 2022.

Since forming government, power prices have only increased by around 2.2 per cent in nominal terms, compared with the 65 per cent hike Tasmanians had to endure during the seven-year term under Labor's watch. In real terms, residential prices have actually decreased by 12 per cent, with small business decreases of about 19 per cent. Quite significant.

I want to say thank you to Aurora Energy for investing \$5 million to assist customers with bill relief, waiving fees or charges, and a range of other support measures in the winter bill campaign through Aurora Energy - a great thing. Interestingly, based on that policy of support, there have been no disconnections of electricity or gas customers during this time, as per the commitment of Aurora Energy and TasGas Retail. The Government is cautiously optimistic that these relief initiatives are working well to support Tasmanians. There is always still more work to do, and we keep it under review.

Since the pandemic began, the number of customers on a payment plan has reduced, down from 3313 at 30 March to 2503 as of 20 July. That is 1.02 per cent, and that compares favorably to the National Electricity Market, which is an average of 1.36 per cent. All that is on top of the \$46 million concession scheme we have for those doing it tough. That is one of the most generous schemes in Australia.

We have the \$1 million into our nation-leading Energy Saver and Subsidy NILS Scheme to help eligible families invest in energy-saving measures. There have been questions in the parliament today from my counterpart with respect to the idea we are not doing enough. We

are doing a huge, unprecedented amount to support families and businesses in need, so those allegations are unfounded. I wanted to respond to that.

I note that 34 000 small businesses are benefiting from the electricity bill waiver at a cost of \$27 million. With respect to water and sewerage, \$25 million of support has been delivered through TasWater for the price freeze and water waiver. That is through TasWater, but frankly that is actually through local government. I acknowledge local government in that regard. That is a \$25 million commitment to the people of Tasmania. That is in addition to the freezing of rates and the many other direct relief mechanisms put in place by councils. I just want to put my thanks on record to those councils for that support and contribution. This is Team Tasmania working together to help Tasmanians through these tough times, whether it be small business, residential, customers, families, and the like.

While I am here, Madam Speaker, I want to thank the leadership of the Local Government Association of Tasmania, particularly its president, Mayor Christina Holmdahl, who I have known over many years and who does a wonderful job, not just for her council, but also for the LGAT, and for Tasmania. Thank you for that support. Their aim and objective is to work, support and protect the interests and rights of councils across the state. Thank you for that work, and likewise to Katrena Stephenson, the CEO and her team.

National Science Week

[6.49 p.m.]

Mr FERGUSON (Bass - Minister for Science and Technology) - Madam Speaker, far from wanting to give a science lesson tonight, as Minister for Science and Technology, I want to encourage members of this Chamber to support in their local community and on social media the fact that right now this is National Science Week and in fact, as we are speaking, you can learn how to train an AI, an artificial intelligence. The Ferginator made an appearance this evening and is available on your YouTube channel.

In all seriousness National Science Week this year sadly and unfortunately right now tonight we would have been having Science Meets Parliament but we have not been allowed to do that event and for good reason. It is all gone online, almost all of it, and it is really at home.

National Science Week is, as always, celebrating talent and achievement in the fields of science, engineering, technology and innovation. It shows to Tasmanians, young and old, how science is interesting, it is challenging, it is important and it is directly relevant to our daily lives.

State-based science week events are curated by the Tasmanian National Science Week organising committee. I give a shout out to Dr Ben Arthur, the Tasmanian Chair. He does that for our community, he does a great job with his team and they are curating those events. Members of that committee are drawn from broad sectors of the state's science community including the university, industry participants as well, and science teachers. It is a great committee.

I also say remotely to her, thank you to our Patron for Science Week, Tasmanian Nobel Laureate Professor Elizabeth Blackburn. She is someone we are very proud of from our home

soil here in Tasmania and is one of the great scientists of our generation. She has achieved so much and got her start here in Tasmania.

The Science Week program of events this year is different because of COVID-19 restrictions. I say to people here in the Chamber and who may be listening that the program booklet is freely available online. Put into your search engine 'Science Week Tasmania' and it will come up. There are over 100 events. They include Beaker Street, which is going online with Sci Art Walks, an innovative series of audio escapes that will encourage listeners to get out into Tasmania's stunning natural environment. They will also host the 2020 Beaker Street science photography prize which features an exhibition at TMAG later on as well. So get into that. Ferment-Home-Station is an online only event, to explore the science behind fermented foods like sourdough and sauerkraut. We will have a Ted talk speaker and a madam, the world's only sourdough librarian. Yes, you heard it first. The world's only sourdough librarian, Karl De Smedt. Science Made Beerable is on tonight from 7 p.m. It will hear from Tasmanian craft brewers about the science behind the beer and are selling an exclusive four pack to be tasted during the event. If people have not had time to buy that you can still log in and enjoy that through the Facebook page. Tackling Misinformation - a panel discussion and series of podcasts hosted by nationally syndicated radio program, That's What I Call Science.

Also importantly to members here, some more than others, the 2020 schools' theme which I love especially given the innovations that we are doing as a state, as a Government, but together around our oceans here in Tasmania. The theme this year is Deep Blue, innovations for the future of our oceans, exploring the economic, the environmental value of Australia's vast oceans. Teachers and their students are being encourage to learn about the science conducted on ships, marine based industries and how our seas contribute to the energy, food and the economic future of Australia. I reckon Mr Barnett will be right into that one.

Mr Barnett - I am into it.

Mr FERGUSON - You are, because the work you have done with the Blue Economy CRC is truly phenomenal. I personally feel very grateful for what you have been doing.

Here is the printed program. It is available online. It is not too late for mums, dads, kids, anybody really, to get involved.

In conclusion I encourage nominations which are now open for our fifth annual Tasmanian STEM Excellence Awards. We are doing that in partnership with the university. It is funded by the Tasmanian Government. It is sort of our innovation and something we are proud of. Nominations are now open for the Premier's Tasmanian STEM researcher of the year award. That is a \$10 000 prize. The minister's STEM innovation of the year award, the Tasmanian STEM primary teacher of the year, secondary teacher of the year, the Tasmanian young STEM researcher of the year and the Tasmanian STEM communicator of the year. Nominations are open. They are open until 18 September through the State Growth website.

In conclusion, science, technology, engineering, and maths are vital for the future of our state. They are vital to provide an evidence base for good policy. It is vital to enable our economy to grow as we want it to and to flourish so that we can have the workforce capability that our growing state needs. It is also wonderfully, an enabler for people to have a better life, a safer life, a better environment and opportunities for career progression which can take you anywhere in the world, not the least of which is our beautiful island of Tasmania.

Food Insecurity and Foodbank Tasmania

Show Hope

[6.55 p.m.]

Ms HADDAD (Clark) - Madam Speaker, I am going to make a brief contribution tonight to talk a little about food insecurity, which is a huge issue in Australia and to recognise many of the NGOs that are working in this space. Food insecurity is a huge issue that has been made dramatically worse during the COVID-19 pandemic as thousands of people in Tasmania and around the nation and the world have lost their jobs.

Each year, five million people in Australia experience food insecurity. One in four are women and three in 10 people suffering food insecurity go whole days without eating any food at all. The most common reason given for going hungry is an unexpected bill or an expense, a bill like having to have your car repaired or an appliance needing to be repaired or replaced.

Foodbank Australia, specifically Foodbank Tasmania, works with hundreds of organisations around Tasmania to support thousands of people every day. They provide not only 3000 school breakfasts every year, but as people have been suffering more financially during the pandemic, they have also been providing many school lunches as well.

In addition to that, they help more than 13 000 people every month in Tasmania with food relief through agencies across the state. They experienced a big increase in demand at the start of the pandemic.

They have said that has eased off a little while JobSeeker and JobKeeper have been in place but they are preparing themselves for another massive increase in demand if those payments are reduced before time. They will see an increase in demand as they did at the beginning of the pandemic as people struggled to put food on the table. It is a huge encouragement for the federal government to consider extending those payments for as long as they possibly can.

They work with hundreds of agencies around the state. One new organisation that has started up since the pandemic hit is an organisation called Show Hope, which is being run by Wellspring Anglican Church in Sandy Bay. I commend the organisers of Show Hope who have pulled it together; Paul Shantapriyan and Sam Gough. Back in March, they recognised that many international students were stuck here in Tasmania with their studies disrupted but also with no source of income or social support.

They started providing food bank hampers as well as fresh food donated from other sources and also prepared meals that have been provided at very low cost by many local restaurants in the area.

They pulled together a really huge community of people around that international student community which has been growing increasingly week on week since they began back in March. For example, one of their members put out a call on Facebook saying they needed warm blankets. Within a very short period of time, they had 500 woollen blankets donated, partly through the generous support of the ABC who promoted it and many Tasmanians who knitted squares and knitted together the blankets to be distributed through that community.

I volunteered at Show Hope last Sunday afternoon. They operate on Thursday nights and Sunday afternoons. On that day we happened to be distributing the same food hampers that I had helped to put together when I was volunteering at Foodbank last Friday. There were hundreds of people there, all very well organised and socially distanced in terms of people being able to come into the building and collect the support they needed.

I went there expecting it to be direct delivery of food relief but it was much more than that. They have built a community with a huge feeling of support and connectedness and kindness amongst the people who were volunteering for Show Hope, which is something that I hope will be retained across our communities once the pandemic comes to an end.

They are looking at new ways of training volunteers and providing people with work skills that will set them up for jobs in the future.

Both those organisations are very keen to have as many people volunteer as can, so if you have any spare time, I encourage anybody in the area to volunteer at Foodbank. Just get in touch with them online. They are always looking for people and there is always something different to do when you turn up and volunteer at Foodbank and at Show Hope, which operates out of Wellspring Church in Sandy Bay on Thursdays and Sundays and you can contact them online as well.

They are two of the organisations who are doing the hard yards of supporting our communities across Tasmania, as all of us are aware: a small snippet of the work they are doing.

Madam Speaker, I commend all those organisations, NGOs and new organisations that have sprung up since the pandemic began that are supporting our community.

The House adjourned at 7 p.m.