



PARLIAMENT OF TASMANIA

HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY

REPORT OF DEBATES

Tuesday 1 December 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

Launceston General Hospital - Child Abuse Claims - Actions of Minister, Mr Shelton

Ms WHITE to MINISTER for POLICE, FIRE and EMERGENCY SERVICES, Mr SHELTON

[10.02 a.m.]

Launceston General Hospital nurse, James Geoffrey Griffin, died last October two months after you now admit you were first given information about his alleged horrific acts against children in his care. We now know that Griffin also worked at the Ashley Youth Detention Centre, in the student accommodation areas of the Newnham UTAS campus, and was involved with at least one sporting group involving children.

Once Griffin passed away the police investigation into his alleged activities became inactive. At that point why did you continue to withhold important information about alleged paedophile activity from other Government agencies, effectively preventing them from investigating immediately to ascertain whether Griffin had offended against children in their care?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I thank the member for her question. There is no more important task for any government than to ensure the safety and wellbeing of our children. While we cannot change the past we are committed to our Government taking and making a difference for the future.

This is why last week the Premier announced that he would move to establish a commission of inquiry to investigate the responses of Tasmanian Government agencies in relation to the management of historical allegations of child sex abuse. Through the inquiry, and as the Premier has said, no stone will be left unturned as we deliver on our commitment to make Tasmanians safe. At the time that I was alerted to this active, Tasmania Police investigation I received a confidential briefing that this matter was being investigated. The police investigation was then ongoing. Due to the death of the individual who had been charged, a coronial process was followed. The extent of the details of the police investigation are a matter for Tasmania Police.

It is completely irresponsible to suggest that the minister for Police should interfere or disclose matters that are still subject to a serious and ongoing investigation.

Ms White - There is no police investigation.

Mr SHELTON - The fact is that we now have a commission on inquiry -

Ms White - No, we don't.

Madam SPEAKER - Order.

Mr SHELTON - to ensure no stone will be left unturned as we deliver on our commitment to keep Tasmanians safe.

Ms O'BYRNE - Point of order, Madam Speaker, and it is a point of clarification. At this stage we have a press release and a Premier's statement, not a commission of inquiry.

Madam SPEAKER - That is not a point of order, thank you.

Mr SHELTON - As I have said, the police investigation was ongoing. Therefore, that was where we were at. I was aware that the investigation dealt with a nurse from the LGH. I am also aware, at the time of his death that the LGH and the department knew of the allegations.

Launceston General Hospital - Child Abuse Claims - Actions of Minister, Mr Shelton

Ms WHITE to MINISTER for POLICE, FIRE and EMERGENCY SERVICES, Mr SHELTON

[10.06 a.m.]

You have been aware of the horrific allegations involving child sex offences and James Griffin since last August, 15 months ago, but only admitted so last week at Estimates hearings. You claim that it would have been inappropriate for you to speak about or share information about a police investigation. There was no police investigation once Griffin died, a little over a year ago. What possible reason, morally, ethically or legally, did you have to withhold this information? Why did you not do the right thing and act in the best interests of children who were potentially victims of Griffin?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, as I said, at the individual's passing, I was aware that the police investigation was still ongoing at that particular point in time. To speculate on what should or should not have been done, is not for me to speculate. I will leave that to the commission of inquiry. I am not going to speculate on the details of what might have happened from that point on.

Launceston General Hospital - Child Abuse Claims - Police Procedures

Dr WOODRUFF to MINISTER for POLICE, FIRE and EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT, Mr SHELTON

[10.07 a.m.]

As the Premier said last Monday when announcing the commission of inquiry, one of our greatest responsibilities is to learn from the past and commit to not repeating these mistakes. In Budget Estimates last week, Assistant Commissioner Higgins was asked to confirm when

police had told the Launceston General Hospital about the allegations against James Geoffrey Griffin. Assistant Commissioner Higgins said -

In July, whilst a certain CIB became aware that Mr Griffin was employed at the LGH and then at that point made steps to actually brief the hospital at the end of July.

As you know, the first allegation against Mr Griffin was made on 1 May 2019. How can it take more than two months for authorities to realise Mr Griffin worked with children in a highly vulnerable setting?

Since the Griffin matter came to light, have you reviewed and changed police procedures around allegations like this to include employment and Working with Vulnerable People card status checks as a first priority? This is not only a historical question. Mr Griffin was able to continue working with vulnerable children for three months after the allegation was made. That situation cannot happen now or ever again. What have you done now to make sure it will not happen?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I thank the member for the question. As the minister for Police, I do not get involved in operational areas. I take my briefs from the Commissioner of Police and the Commissioner runs the department. I am not going to speculate on what should or should not have been done as far as investigations go. It will be a matter for the commission of inquiry to go back through those things.

Ms O'Connor - It is actually about what you are doing now.

Madam SPEAKER - Order, please.

Mr SHELTON - I can only reiterate what the Premier has said we are doing and there will be a commission of inquiry. The terms of reference are being worked on at the moment. That is as far as I can comment.

COVID-19 - Easing of Restrictions and Rebuilding the Economy

Mr ELLIS to PREMIER, Mr GUTWEIN

[10.10 a.m.]

Can you update the House on the confidence in rebuilding in Tasmania and what others are saying about our recovery? Can you provide an update about what the next steps are?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I thank the member for Braddon for his question and his interest in this matter. The 2020-21 Budget is all about jobs, confidence and our community. Its centrepiece is a landmark \$5 billion infrastructure program, the largest ever announced by a Tasmanian Government which is supporting jobs right now. It is supporting confidence right now and will build the intergenerational infrastructure that we need in this state.

Two thirds of Tasmanians have returned to work, businesses are hiring, people now tell me the hardest part of our recovery is finding staff. We have seen the second highest rebound in jobs vacancies in the country. Tasmanians I talk to are cautiously optimistic about our future. It is not just me saying this; it is Sensis, the ANZ, the NAB, CommSec, and recent ABS data.

To comment on a couple of those, last Thursday Sensis found that half of Tasmanian businesses that were surveyed in November are back to pre-COVID-19 levels or ahead. There are more Tasmanian businesses well ahead of where they were this time last year than anywhere else in the country. The ANZ statometer last Friday found Tasmania is the only jurisdiction to see above-trend growth and our economy is accelerating. The NAB found that Tasmania continues to have the best business conditions in the nation and our businesses are second most confident, just behind Western Australia. Regarding economic growth, despite the largest shock in generations, the ABS also found that our economy was one of just two states to have a growing economy in the last financial year.

We have taken a cautious and responsible approach to opening up to the rest of the country. Currently, South Australia is the only state that we have on medium risk and to which our borders remain restricted. However, as a further sign of confidence that the COVID-19 situation is improving in South Australia, Tasmania will reopen its borders to South Australia at midnight on Wednesday, that is 12.01 a.m. this Thursday 3 December. South Australia will be classified as a low risk area from then, with the exception of people who have been to certain premises or locations that have been identified by South Australian Health as posing high risk. These places will be specified by the Director of Public Health and further information will be released later today.

This is a significant milestone. It will mean that for the first time in nine months Tasmania's borders will be relaxed with all states and territories, as well New Zealand. I acknowledge those who were in Tasmania and affected by the South Australian outbreak appropriately quarantined for 14 days. Thank you to those people who had travelled here from South Australia, whether they were Tasmanian residents or South Australians visiting; thank you for playing your part in keeping our community safe.

As we continue to navigate through COVID-19 we must remain agile and, as I have said before, we will swiftly scale up or scale down in response to cases and outbreaks should they occur. That is why we have our safeguards in place in Tasmania. They include contact tracing, COVID-19 safety plans, testing and rapid response capabilities. We are also working to strengthen our contact tracing efforts and we will deliver a free contact tracing app for venues to be able to use if they wish to move from paper-based systems. To be clear, it is not intended to replace current electronic collection methods which are already being used by a number of venues, but will be there if venues do choose to use it.

From 15 December we will be widening the requirement for contact tracing to be utilised in certain venues. Currently it is restaurants, cafes, pubs and clubs. We will be widening the requirement for places of worship, for cinemas, entertainment venues, casinos, galleries and museums from 15 December. Public Health will provide more details on that.

Over recent days testing has fallen to around 200 per day on average, which is not high enough. I can understand why Tasmanians are not testing at the moment. In many cases, colds and flus have now passed us by. However, I say to Tasmanians, please keep your testing up. If you have the slightest sniffle, please get tested. If you are concerned, turn up to one of our

clinics and get tested. It is important, and even more so, as we continue to move through this, that we keep our testing rates high.

It is important as well for all Tasmanians - and I will remind them once again - please maintain your social distancing where appropriate; cover your coughs and sneezes, if you have them; observe the COVID-19 restrictions and safety plans in place; and stay home if you are unwell. Importantly, do not go to work if you are unwell and do not hesitate to get a test even if it is just for a sniffle.

Port Arthur Events - Proposed Film by Victorian Production Company

Ms OGILVIE to PREMIER, Mr GUTWEIN

[10.16 a.m.]

Tasmanians have learnt through the media that a Victoria production company intends to make a film about the terrible events at Port Arthur, the scars of which still resonate with so many of us today. It does not seem right or fair for the families and friends of the victims that this occur. What steps are you taking to ensure Tasmanians, and our memories of friends and families taken on that day, are protected from commercialisation in this movie? Do you think the movie should proceed?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I thank Ms Ogilvie, the independent member for Clark for that question. I have to say, I feel wholly uncomfortable about this. I believe many Tasmanians will. Even after such a long period of time, this is a raw nerve for many Tasmanians. I noted the comments in the press today from the mayor on the Peninsula in regard to it.

However, whilst being uncomfortable with it, this is a production that is not being shot in Tasmania. From the point of view of what we could do as a state, we have very few, if any options, to limit this production taking place. I note that the Minister for the Arts, when contacted about this made the point and said very clearly that neither she nor the Government would meet or support the upcoming film project, saying that -

There is an understandable and ongoing sensitivity in Tasmania around this subject and it is not appropriate for the Tasmanian Government to lend support or enter into discussions regarding this project. The Government and Screen Tasmania have no involvement with the film that is being shot in Victoria.

It is a difficult circumstance for many in our community and, as I have said, I feel uncomfortable about this film being made. I hope that the film-makers will be sensitive in the way they craft this particular production. However, for obvious reasons, every state has challenges and difficult aspects to their past. It would not be right for this state to attempt to censor what is occurring, although we should place firmly on the record that this is a continuing and ongoing raw issue for Tasmanians and it is one that will make many people feel uncomfortable.

Launceston General Hospital - Child Abuse Claims - Actions of Minister, Mr Shelton

Ms WHITE to MINISTER for POLICE, FIRE and EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT, Mr SHELTON

[10.19 a.m.]

When did you first have discussions with your ministerial colleagues about the alleged crimes of James Griffin, remembering that there have been no active police investigations into this matter since his death in October 2019 and you were advised of these allegations two months prior to that? When did you first discuss this matter with the former Treasurer, now Premier?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I thank the member for her question and her substantial interest in this matter. What I can say, because the Premier has already announced it, is there will be a commission of inquiry. As far as that goes, I am not going to comment any further on time lines or allegations, or what should or should not have been done. That process is now before a commission of inquiry. I will make no further comment on that.

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Ms WHITE - Point of order, Madam Speaker, under standing order 45, relevance. The minister cannot claim this a matter now before the commission of inquiry because it does not yet exist. There are questions that need to be answered. This goes to what he did as minister when he first found out about this matter and when he told the Premier.

Madam SPEAKER - That is not a point of order.

HomeBuilder Grant - Extension of Program

Mr ELLIS to MINISTER for FINANCE, Mr FERGUSON

[10.20 a.m.]

Can you advise whether the state Government is going to extend the Tasmanian HomeBuilder Grant in line with the federal government's announcement on Sunday that it will extend and update the criteria for its HomeBuilder Grant?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I thank the member for Braddon for his question. The answer is yes, but I will come to the detail. The Government is committed to supporting our industry and our working families around our state as we recover from the COVID-19 pandemic. This Tasmanian Liberal Government has been focused on building a stronger Tasmania and growing jobs, the confidence and support that the Premier referred to earlier. This has included ensuring that the building and construction sector was able to rebound and support our economic recovery. The HomeBuilder Grant schemes have proven to be very popular with home builders and I would describe them as a resounding success for the construction sector and the economy more generally with the two governments working closely hand in hand.

The objective of the HomeBuilder Grant schemes was to bring forward residential building projects by providing an incentive to progress building projects, supporting jobs and growing our economy. I can inform the House that as of last Friday 856 applications for the HomeBuilder Grant had been received by State Revenue Office; 736 of those were for new home builds and 122 for substantial renovations. Also, as of that date, 530 applications have been received for the Tasmanian complementary scheme, the Tasmanian HomeBuilder Grant and a further 206 first home builders had applied for the First Home Owner Grant.

On Sunday, as Mr Ellis has referred, the federal government announced that it would amend the national partnership which establishes the HomeBuilder Grant scheme. The key thing it does is extend the end date from 31 December 2020 out to the new date of 31 March 2021. It is tapering the grant to a new amount of \$15 000 for future new contracts entered into for the period 1 January to 31 March 2021 and also replaces the builder registration eligibility date to 29 November 2020 for contracts that are entered on or after that day - great news for some of the newer registered builders.

The Tasmanian Liberal Government has been liaising with the federal government regarding the HomeBuilder Grant scheme over recent weeks. The Premier and I have both made contact and we welcome the federal government's decision to extend. The Housing Industry Association and the Master Builders Association have been very actively advocating. The executive director of MBA Tasmania, Matthew Pollock, welcomed the announcement, saying -

The extension is needed to take pressure off supply chains and make sure prospective home owners do not miss out ...

He goes on to say -

The move continues to put construction at the centre of our post-COVID recovery strategy, recognising the industry a a key economic accelerator and jobs generator ...

I take this opportunity to thank the members of the MBA and HIA who, as we know, have been extremely busy responding to queries from Tasmanians looking to build a new home or renovate an existing one.

We also appreciate that there is heightened activity in the state's building and construction sector. That is exactly what the Government's HomeBuilder Grant scheme was designed to achieve: keeping Tasmanians in jobs and stimulating economic activity. It sits extremely well with the most aggressive construction program in the state's history which is occurring across other departments.

That is why I am pleased to announce that the Tasmanian Liberal Government will also extend our Tasmanian HomeBuilder Grant scheme for contracts for new house builds entered up to 31 March 2021. In addition, the Tasmanian Liberal Government will adapt other criteria in line with amendments proposed for the national partnership agreement. This means that all new home builds will have a period of six months, not three, to commence construction and builders registered up to 29 November 2020 will be eligible under the schemes - very good news.

Up until 31 December this year eligible Tasmanians entering a contract to build a new home may access grants totalling \$45 000 and for those entering contracts between 1 January to 31 March, grants are available under the two schemes that will total \$35 000. First home builders will continue to be eligible for the \$20 000 grant if they choose that alternative pathway.

Collectively, these grant schemes provide a big incentive to Tasmanians who want to build a new home. Importantly, though, these grants support jobs, build confidence and are going to help our community rebound in every community that this House represents. To be clear, with the extended period of commencement and 18 months to complete building, the HomeBuilder grants will ensure a pipeline of building activity in our state through until 2023. I thank Mr Ellis and I thank the House.

Launceston General Hospital - Child Abuse Claims - Actions of Minister, Mr Jaensch

Ms WHITE to MINISTER for HUMAN SERVICES, Mr JAENSCH

[10.26 a.m.]

As a mandatory reporter under the Children, Young Persons and Their Families Act, did the minister, Mr Shelton, report allegations about James Griffin to the Child Safety Service and if so, when?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I thank the member for her question. Mr Shelton has answered your questions regarding actions he personally took and the circumstances under which he took them regarding his awareness of this case.

I am advised that the Child Safety Service first became aware of Mr Griffin's sexual offending through a notification made by Tasmania Police on 2 August 2019 regarding the wellbeing of a young person following Tasmania Police executing a search warrant at the home of Mr Griffin on 31 July 2019. The Child Safety Service progressed an assessment at the same time Tasmania Police were progressing their criminal investigation.

Launceston General Hospital - Child Abuse Claims - Actions of Minister, Mr Jaensch

Dr WOODRUFF to MINISTER for POLICE, FIRE and EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT, Mr SHELTON

[10.27 a.m.]

You became aware of the Griffin matter on 23 August 2019. At that point, child exploitation material had been found at Mr Griffin's home, including what the Coroner described as 'self-generated images'. Mr Griffin had been stood down from employment and his Working with Vulnerable People card had been revoked. On 3 September charges were laid against Mr Griffin. More charges were added a month later. Why through all of this did you not ensure other relevant departments were informed? An ongoing police investigation is no reason for stopping departments from doing due diligence. If another case as serious as this arose, how can you assure Tasmanians you would be more proactive?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I thank the member for her question. On being alerted to this, and in my briefing, I was also made aware that the police had been in contact with the LGH and the department. I have already stated that on the record. As far as any other issues go, I am not going to speculate on matters that will be subject to an investigation through the commission of inquiry. I have already stated that.

Launceston General Hospital - Child Abuse Claims - Actions of Premier

Ms WHITE to PREMIER, Mr GUTWEIN

[10.29 a.m.]

You knew about James Griffin's alleged crimes against children late last year and you knew there had been an horrific failure on your Government's responsibilities to protect children in its care. What specifically did you do with this information once you had it, which was prior to some other key ministers in your Government knowing, even though there are allegations of offences occurring in their departments?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I thank the Leader of the Opposition for her question and for her interest in this. I note that Labor is trying to position themselves on the basis that the commission of inquiry is going to look very closely at how Mr Griffin was able to embed himself in that department over a long period of time - someone who was well known to members of the Labor Party, let us be clear about that.

My understanding is that this first came to light through reporting in *The Examiner*. If memory serves me correct, I do not have the notes here in front of me, there was a report in *The Examiner* around August or September, and one again in October, after Mr Griffin had taken his own life and court proceedings did not continue.

As I made clear last week at Estimates, it was part of a conversation with staff in the former Premier's office, and this matter was raised. When you asked me last week when I was aware of this, I was aware of the fact that a former nurse had taken their own life, there had been a police investigation, and I was aware that a coroner's investigation was under way. That was the extent of it. It was reported in *The Examiner*.

Regarding the questioning about the police investigation, it beggar's belief that on that side of the House you cannot understand that the investigation carried on for a while after Mr Griffin's death because the police would have been looking at every possible lead to see whether there were others. Yet, what you attempt to do in this place is to play politics with a very serious issue.

There is an independent investigation currently under way in relation to Health. There is an independent investigation currently under way in relation to Education. There are matters that are being looked at at Ashley.

I made the decision last week to put in place a commission of inquiry, whose terms of reference are currently being drafted; a commission of inquiry that will be far reaching. We are going to deal with this matter once and we are going to deal with it once and for all.

There is no doubt that it will be a difficult issue to deal with but the inquiry will look at all matters. It will ensure that if there are gaps, if there are matters of process that need to be dealt with, then they will be dealt with. That is its purpose. We need to ensure that we keep children safe.

Ms O'Connor - That is why we have been asking you these questions of this minister.

Mr GUTWEIN - What you are asking him to do, and what you are suggesting he should have done, is blundered into an ongoing police investigation. That police investigation needed to take its course. The other side of the House continues to prosecute these matters. This is not a commission of inquiry in this place; this is not a court of law. There are processes that the Government has put in place to ensure that once and for all the questions are asked, the questions are answered, and we ensure that as we move forward we have a system that is as tight and as safe as it possibly can be for the children in this state.

COVID-19 - Increase in Visitation Numbers to Parks and Reserves

Mr ELLIS to MINISTER for ENVIRONMENT and PARKS, Mr JAENSCH

[10.34 a.m.]

The feedback I am getting is that, since the peak of the pandemic, visitors are returning to our national parks and reserves in droves. Can you provide an update to the House on the visitation to our natural areas?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I thank Mr Ellis for his question and interest in visitors to our national parks and the way they are driving economic recovery in all regions of the state. There is no doubt that 2020 has been a year like no other. It has been a very challenging year for our parks and reserves, with a drop-in visitation which can be directly attributed to the restrictions imposed in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

This is in contrast to previous years where there had been a trend of strong growth in the number of visitors to our parks. More positively, there is evidence that Tasmanians are again exploring our parks and reserves, including those who have not been to a park or a reserve for many years. Since the reopening of Tasmania's parks and reserves in June, Tasmanians have returned to our parks and reserves in substantial numbers, especially on weekends and school holidays. As a result, although not as high as in 2019, visitor numbers to major sites such as Cradle Mountain, Freycinet and Mount Field have been strong.

At Freycinet, Tasmanians have gone a long way to fill the gap left by visitors from interstate and overseas. Visitation at Freycinet for July and August was near or over 90 per cent of the numbers from just 12 months ago. At Highfield House in Stanley, in the beautiful far north-west, visitation for July and August 2020 was the highest on record. There have been very strong bookings on the Overland Track and the Three Capes Track. At the Tamar

Wetlands, Launceston, visitor numbers were up by 7 per cent from the same time last year. Anecdotally, I am advised that accommodation providers near our parks and reserves are also doing well. There have been strong forward bookings from August and beyond, in particular on weekends. This has also occurred in government-owned sites such as the government huts at Mount Field.

Additionally, there is evidence of a significant increase in demand for campsites throughout our parks, with many sites around the state regularly booked out. The Government will continue to implement a roadmap for recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic based on Public Health advice, which includes getting people back into our parks and reserves. This will in turn assist the recovery of the economies of our regional areas. Since 26 October, Tasmania has progressively reopened its borders to all states and territories. Regaining visitation to our national parks in a COVID-19 safe way is a key part of our Government's efforts to get the visitor economy moving again, particularly into regional areas.

The Parks and Wildlife Service developed COVID-safe plans which detail how each visitor centre site and each visitor-facing front office area are to implement physical distancing and hygiene arrangements for staff and visitors prior to the reopening of these places on the 15 June. The Government provided a range of stimulus and relief measures within our parks and reserves to encourage intrastate tourism such as travel vouchers, discounted experience offerings and rental waivers for operators across our parks and reserves and will progressively move back to promoting Tasmania to interstate tourism markets now that the borders are open.

Fees were reduced for the Overland Track between October and December this year. This initiative has already seen a significant increase in bookings to do this iconic walk through this period. Annual and two-year Parks passes, including senior's passes, were extended by three months to recognise the closure of our parks and reserves earlier this year, so nobody missed out. More recently, a discounted offer for the Three Capes Track walk was offered. This resulted in significant demand locally with Tasmanians, which in turn supports tourism operators like Port Arthur and Pennicott Wilderness Journeys. I am very pleased that we are able to provide this opportunity as a means of encouraging more people to undertake our intrastate travel.

As visitors to Tasmania return, I expect parks visitation will steadily return to some normality. I am confident that our parks and reserves will play an important role in the recovery from COVID-19 throughout our visitor economy, particularly our regional areas.

Launceston General Hospital - Child Abuse Claims - Actions of Premier

Ms WHITE to PREMIER, Mr GUTWEIN

[10.39 a.m.]

You have confirmed you found out about James Griffin's crimes last year from former premier, Will Hodgman. You say it was publicly known that James Griffin had died because it was reported in *The Examiner*. Is that how you expect key ministers responsible for children in your Government to find out about alleged paedophiles who may have worked in their department? How can you explain why the minister for Education, the Deputy Premier and the minister responsible for children did not find out about James Griffin's alleged offending until this year when you knew last year?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I thank the Leader of the Opposition for that question. I again make the point that the matter was publicly reported last year. I did not find out from Will Hodgman. I had a conversation with some former members of his staff.

Regarding what I knew, and I will be clear for the record, what I understood was, broadly speaking, what was printed in *The Examiner* and was publicly available and, secondly, that a coronial investigation was under way. That is what I knew.

In terms of your questioning this morning, you have already heard that appropriate departments were notified by Tas Police, as they should have been through the processes of government.

The commission of inquiry will be far-reaching. It will look back at the actions of this Government, my Government, and at the actions of previous governments.

That is the only conclusion I can draw in the way that the Labor Party is attempting to position itself on this, because I think what we will find through that commission of inquiry will be matters of concern. The question has to be asked how a person like this former nurse embedded themselves in departments for such a long period of time. We need to get to the bottom of that. I am certain that the commission of inquiry, as uncomfortable as I expect it will be for some, will get to the bottom of it.

Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse - Reform Efforts

Mr ELLIS to ATTORNEY-GENERAL, Ms ARCHER

[10.42 a.m.]

Can you outline how the Tasmanian Government is continuing our reform efforts in response to the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I thank the member for Braddon, Mr Ellis, for his question and his ongoing interest in this important matter, and indeed all government members' interest in this very important matter.

The Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse handed down its final report on 15 December 2017. Included in it were 409 recommendations to better prevent and respond to institutional child sexual abuse. The final report comprises an executive summary and 17 volumes. It makes 409 recommendations across a wide range of policy areas aimed at improving institutional responses to child sexual abuse.

On 20 June 2018 the Tasmanian Government tabled its response to the royal commission's recommendations. The Tasmanian Government response outlines the Government's support for the overwhelming majority of the royal commission's recommendations as presented in its final report.

On 15 December 2018 the Tasmanian Government released its First-Year Progress Report and Action Plan 2018-19 for implementing the recommendations of the royal commission. On 15 December 2019 the Tasmanian Government released its second Annual Progress Report and Action Plan 2020. The second annual progress report builds on the foundations of the First-Year Progress Report and Action Plan 2018-19.

On 1 July 2019 the Tasmanian Government established within the Department of Justice the specialised Child Abuse Royal Commission Response Unit, or CARCRU, to coordinate the Tasmanian Government's response to and, importantly, the implementation of the recommendations of the royal commission as well as Tasmania's role as a participating institution under the National Redress Scheme for Institutional Child Sexual Abuse.

The Tasmanian Government, through CARCRU, is currently working on the following projects in addition to managing the state's liability under the National Redress Scheme: the three-year pilot intermediary scheme to support Tasmania Police and Tasmanian courts, due to commence in March next year; the development of a child-safe organisations legislative framework for Tasmania incorporating the implementation of child-safe standards and a reportable conduct scheme - that will go out for public consultation soon; and the implementation of legislative reforms arising from the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse final report.

In 2019-20 the Tasmanian Government has undertaken a number of significant law reforms arising from the recommendations of the royal commission, including the passage of the Criminal Code and Related Legislation Amendment (Child Abuse) Act 2018, to implement a number of criminal justice recommendations, including a new crime of failing to report child abuse, the abrogation of the confessional privilege for the purposes of the new crime and mandatory reporting obligations.

The passage of the Justice Legislation Amendment (Organisational Liability for Child Abuse) Act 2019 implements a number of the royal commission's civil litigation recommendations, including the introduction of a statutory duty on organisations engaged in children-related services and reforms to enable the identification of a proper defendant.

The Tasmanian Government also introduced legislative amendments that complement the work of the royal commission by amending the Civil Liability Act 2002 to extend the law of vicarious liability to people who are akin to employees, and the Limitation Act 1974 to enable courts to set aside previous settlements where it is in the interests of justice to do so.

On 6 April 2020 the Tasmanian Government passed the Criminal Code Amendment (Sexual Abuse Terminology) Act 2020 which amended the Criminal Code Act 1924 to remove outdated language used to describe certain sexual offences.

The Tasmanian Government continues to work closely with Australian state and territory governments on areas requiring national consistency and collaboration. The Government annually reports on implementation of all recommendations. A further progress report is scheduled for release on 15 December this year. This is important and necessary work and I am extremely proud of the work the Tasmanian Government is doing in this space and continues to do so.

In closing, the work of the royal commission and the Tasmanian Government's response may be distressing to some people in our community. If at any time anyone feels that they would like to speak with someone, there are services and support groups that can help. Some options for advice include 1800RESPECT, Lifeline on 13 11 14, Sexual Assault Support Services on 1800 697 877, Relationships Australia on 1300 364 277 and the National Redress Scheme information line can be contacted on 1800 146 713.

**Launceston General Hospital - Child Abuse Claims -
Actions of Tasmanian Health Services**

Ms WHITE to MINISTER for HEALTH, Ms COURTNEY

[10.47 a.m.]

You have confirmed inquiries were made into James Griffin's conduct during so-called open disclosure in the year since the initial allegations of child sex abuse were made. You confirmed those investigations focused on three alleged survivors at the Launceston General Hospital rather than broadening to request former patients and their families come forward. Why was the scope of this open disclosure so narrow and why did it not reach out to other families? What is the total number of survivors that have now been identified?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I thank the member for her question on what is an important matter. As I have stated before, the charges laid and the allegations made against the deceased former nurse are abhorrent and this is a very concerning matter. As I have previously outlined to the House, the THS took action the very day the former staff member's Working with Vulnerable People registration was withdrawn. The former staff member was directed not to attend work and access to the hospital and its information system was blocked. There was a Tasmania Police investigation and Mr Griffin was charged by Tasmania Police in September and October 2019. He died by suicide in October 2019 before the charges progressed further.

With regard to both the police investigation and what has now been made public, the coronial investigation, these were made at arm's length from me and I was not aware, nor was the secretary of the department, of the extent of the detail of the police investigation, which is appropriate.

With regard to these matters, as I have outlined before both in this place as well as in Estimates, a process of open disclosure was undertaken. The process of open disclosure was only concluded relatively recently in the context of the events we are talking about. My advice from the department was the processes that we undertook were appropriate, given the nature of the information that was provided to us by police. We have also provided throughout this entire period of time an extensive amount of support to staff, and based on feedback, we have ensured that has been broadened and further support has been provided.

The secretary of the Department of Health has visited the ward and staff on a number of occasions and as we move forward we will continue to ensure we support staff in what is a very difficult situation.

I encourage people to come forward, either to Tasmania Police through our independent investigation and there is a mechanism for people to come forward through the Department of Health where they will be supported and are able to make a disclosure. As the Premier has outlined, I understand he has spoken with the Governor to stand up the Commission of Inquiry.

Ms WHITE - Point of order, Madam Speaker. It does go to standing order 45. The question to the minister was to explain why the scope of the open disclosure investigation was so narrow and how many survivors have now been identified? I ask you to draw her attention to the question.

Madam SPEAKER - It is not a point of order but I do draw the minister's attention.

Ms COURTNEY - The scope of the open disclosure process was formed based on the information provided by police. That open disclosure process has taken its course and we will provide support to those people who come forward. The secretary outlined the people that have come forward last week in Budget Estimates.

Advance Care Directives - Draft Legislation

Ms OGILVIE to ATTORNEY-GENERAL, Ms ARCHER

[10.51 a.m.]

Many years of preparatory work has gone into laying a foundation for advance care directives. A legislative basis is currently missing, and everyone has done their best in the absence of formalised law. We have had an inquiry into palliative care. The Law Reform Institute has reported on it and you have now released a draft bill for advance care directives. Will you table the bill this week so that dying people can have confidence their wishes will be known as they approach the end of life?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I thank the member for her question on this important issue, and in a week that it is an important issue, as members know from previous work done in this area with the voluntary assisted dying bill coming on for debate in this House this week. It does tend to cross into issues like palliative care, advance care directives and other issues. It is precisely why the Government has the position, or the Premier has the position, to obtain some more advice in that regard. I expect that it will cross into areas.

I can advise the member and members of this House, and I have stated in the House and in response to a motion that the independent member made in this House in relation to this matter, that I undertook to further look into this. I issued a media release to the effect that we are drafting a bill.

I will not be tabling it this week. It is important for us to take into consideration some of those matters that may come out of the views of experts in this area, although I expect they will not be concentrating on this area. They will be concentrating on the main issue that they are required to look at. However, there is overlap and overlay that necessarily involves these issues of guardianship, advance care directives and the like.

- While advance care directives are already in operation at common law, the proposed legislation will give greater clarity about their legal status and also provide greater certainty about protections for health practitioners and others responsible for giving effect to them.

- This proposed legislation draws on the 2017 report of the House of Assembly Standing Committee on Community Development inquiry into palliative care and, as I have stated on previous occasions, the Tasmanian Law Reform Institute review of the Guardianship Administration Act 1994 commissioned by our Government. Both these reports provided recommendations regarding the establishment of a legislative basis for advance care directives. That TLRI review was extensive. The legislative work on the advance care directives is being done as a first tranche, because that is the area that needs the most urgent attention at this point in time, as identified by the standing committee and the TLRI.

There is a whole range of work that needs to occur in this space. Rather than develop it as one complex law reform package, I have chosen to do it in tranches, so we can get some of the work under way and introduce legislation as it is developed rather than unnecessarily prolong a massive body of work, as identified by the TLRI.

The Government's response to that inquiry provided in-principle support for the legislative basis for advance care directives, and a commitment to undertake further work to identify an appropriate legislative model for Tasmania. I reaffirmed our Government's support for legislation in my response to the Notice of Motion brought forward for this House by Ms Ogilvie on 27 November 2019.

I confirm public comment was invited on the draft bill until 16 October 2020. I encourage members to take a look at the proposals. I am not professing that it is by any means perfect, and I welcome contributions. We are prepared to look at this very thoroughly. If anybody needs an extension to put something in, I am most likely to agree to that being provided, given the delay which I consider is necessary now, because of the debate that will occur this week. All of these things need to be appropriately considered together so that we do not have inconsistencies or the need to amend legislation that could have waited an extra month or so.

Ms O'Connor - It is pretty clear that you got some forewarning on that one.

Ms Archer - I didn't, actually.

Ms OGILVIE - Point of order, Madam Speaker. That was an untruthful comment, and I request that it be withdrawn.

Madam SPEAKER - Move on, please.

Launceston General Hospital - Child Abuse Claims - Actions of Police Minister

Ms O'CONNOR to PREMIER, Mr GUTWEIN

[10.57 a.m.]

You said in Estimates last week that one of our greatest responsibilities is to learn from the past and commit to not repeating those mistakes. However, in question time this morning,

there is no evidence that we can see that your Police minister is taking this grave responsibility seriously enough.

We now know, for example, it took three months after the initial complaint for James Griffin's Working with Vulnerable People registration to be revoked. On the same day, three months after the first complaint, he was stood down from the Launceston General Hospital. Only a few days later, on 2 August, Tasmania Police made a notification to Child Safety. For three months, Griffin was left in place with responsibility for children.

A commission of inquiry will take at least a year and implementation will take longer. Is your Government seriously suggesting there is no obvious immediate policy and procedural change that can be done now to ensure the safety of children - while the commission of inquiry is getting under way - to address some of the obvious flaws, such as a predator's Working with Vulnerable People registration being in place for three months?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I thank the Leader of the Greens, Ms O'Connor for that question and for her interest in this matter. I can assure you, her concern is shared by all in this Chamber, and you understand that.

Regarding the removal of a Working with Vulnerable Persons card, I am not fully aware of how that process is managed. However, an investigation needs to take place and certain facts would need to be established.

In the same way before someone is charged, a process needs to be undertaken and certain facts established before a charge can be laid. You understand that. In terms of APRHA's processes, which I understand would have been responsible for the removal of the working -

Ms Courtney - The department did it.

Mr GUTWEIN - The department did it. There are processes in place. The Government is considering all those matters as we move forward. The commission of inquiry will bear great inspection of a range of matters. Where there are improvements that can be made, this Government will take action.

Revocation of Working with Vulnerable People Accreditation - Information Sharing across Government Agencies

Ms WHITE to ATTORNEY-GENERAL, Ms ARCHER

[11.01 a.m.]

In the instance where a person has their working with vulnerable people accreditation revoked, what is the process for sharing information across Government? How is information about allegations relating to accreditation being removed relate to other agencies and organisations where that person has been working with children?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I thank the Leader of the Opposition for her question and for allowing me to explain the process of registration and the cancellation of working with vulnerable people and reportable behaviour.

The Registration to Work with Vulnerable People Act 2013 establishes a worker screening and registration process to protect vulnerable Tasmanians. Since 2015 State Service agencies and Tasmania Police have been required to notify the registrar of reportable behaviour. Reportable behaviour is any behaviour that poses a risk to vulnerable persons by reason of neglect, abuse or other conduct.

If the registrar believes on reasonable grounds that there is new or relevant information about a registered person, the registrar is to conduct an additional risk assessment for the registered person. The registrar has grounds for determining to suspend a person's registration if the registrar reasonably believes that the suspension is appropriate. The registrar has grounds for determining to cancel a person's registration if he or she is satisfied that the person poses an unacceptable risk of harm to a vulnerable person.

In performing these functions, the registrar will have regard to a number of factors, including the nature, gravity and seriousness of the matter, the relationship between the offender and the victim and the time since the conduct occurred.

The duty placed on reporting bodies to report information is broad. This can result in a range of information being provided to the registrar. This can include information gathered by hearsay through to convictions established by a court. The nature of the information, including the nature and specificity of any allegation, is also considered by the registrar.

I am advised that in the year to 24 November 2020 the registrar has received 712 notifications of reportable behaviour, commenced 79 additional risk assessments, suspended 12 registrants and cancelled six registrations.

The act contains strong privacy and confidentiality provisions and it is an offence for an officer, including the registrar, to divulge protected information about a person. Protected information is any information about a person that is disclosed to or obtained by an officer because of the performance or exercise of a function or power under this act by the officer or another person.

There are limited exceptions in this protection. On the suspension of a registration, the registrar is to notify the employer of the registrant where that information is known by the registrar. The registrar can, if he or she considers it appropriate to protect vulnerable persons from the risk of harm, disclose the negative risk assessment or suspension or cancellation of registration to Tasmania Police or a State Service agency. Due to these provisions, the registrar does not provide the minister with information regarding individual registrants, including information obtained through reportable behaviour and any action taken to suspend or cancel a registration. As such, I am not able to comment on any action which may have been taken by the registrar with regard to individual cases.

Time expired.

TABLED PAPER

Public Accounts Committee - Special Report - Failure of the Minister to Agree to Publicly Release Documents

Mr O'Byrne presented the following report of the Parliamentary Standing Committee of Public Accounts -

Special Report - Failure of the Minister to Agree to Publicly Release Documents.

Report received.

SITTING TIMES

[11.08 a.m.]

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

That for this day's sitting, Wednesday's sitting and Thursday's sitting, the House shall not stand adjourned at 6 p.m. and instead the House continue to sit past 6 p.m.

We have a resolution of the House to allow for up to two hours discussion in committee on the Appropriation bills responding to the Estimates Committees that occurred last week. Traditionally it has been the case that we do not usually need all 18 hours provided, but we need to ensure the House can, nonetheless, allow for it. We will sit past 6 p.m. each day this week, Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday.

It is the Government's intention that we keep working through today until we conclude debate on five of those nine ministers, to do four tomorrow, Wednesday, allowing us to aim at this stage to get all of them done. That would allow Thursday and potentially Friday to be used for private members bill debate.

I also inform the House that due to Mr Barnett's absence from the House today, the parties have agreed that Mr Barnett's outputs will be examined out of order. That is, they will be done not today but they will be done tomorrow to allow him to listen to the debate and participate in it. That will allow us to bring forward Mr Rockliff to today.

I am in the House's hands but that would be the intention. If we feel that it is getting to a very late hour tonight I am more than comfortable discussing with colleagues across the Chamber whether we might not achieve all five today.

I put that on the record for now and commend the motion.

Mr O'BYRNE (Franklin) - Madam Speaker, we have had discussions with the Leader of Government Business and can confirm the arrangements.

Motion agreed to.

MATTER OF PUBLIC IMPORTANCE

Secrecy

[11.10 a.m.]

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

That the House take note of the following matter: secrecy.

I raise this issue in the House because there has been quite a lot of debate in the public around the lack of transparency from the Gutwein Government. It has transpired in a range of editorials across every state newspaper as well as a lot of talkback radio. This is our community telling us that they expect better of the Government and we have to listen. There have been a number of instances where this Government has demonstrated their continued commitment to be secretive and deceptive. They lack transparency and they need to be called out for it.

The most recent examples have been illustrated through the report from the Ombudsman who explained that Tasmania is the most secretive state in the country. That is not a title the Tasmanian Government should be proud of. It is not a title the Tasmanian community is proud of. They demand better. It is interesting to see the continued criticism this Government is receiving for its lack of transparency.

The Premier has said that he is going to do better but we have heard that before. We heard that after the last election when then-premier, Will Hodgman, informed the community that there would be law reform for donation disclosure in this state and he would get on with it straightaway. Nearly three years later, there has been no progress. There have been very minor changes made but when it comes to the substantial issue of donation disclosure reform so that people know who is donating to political parties, so people know who is actually funding political campaigns, this Government has done nothing. They have sat on a report for nearly a year. Now we will not be seeing that report until next year.

That is a very good example of how secretive this Government is and how they have said something in the past about how they are going to change their ways but they have failed to do it. So, when the Premier gets up and says he is going to change his ways and is committed to more transparent and honest government, it is a hollow promise because we have seen that before.

We saw it with the hardship grants. My colleague has just tabled a report in this place from the Public Accounts Committee saying that the committee is frustrated by the lack of transparency shown by this Government about where \$26 million-worth of taxpayer money has gone. Next week, when the other House is sitting, I believe they will also table a report saying they require the Government to publicly release the information that demonstrates where that \$26 million has gone. This is not government money; this is taxpayer money. The arguments they have made for why it should not be released are not supported with evidence. In fact, sitting in Estimates last week, it was clear there is no clinical advice upon which they have based their decision not to release that information; it is simply a hunch. That is not good enough. It is not a good enough reason to not disclose where \$26 million in taxpayer money has gone.

Saying something over and over again until you believe your own spin does not make it true. That is a character flaw of this Government. They repeat the same tired, misleading statements over and over again, trying to convince people that there is some kind of merit in their argument, but that does not make what they are saying true. They believe their own spin and the Tasmanian community is fed up with it.

There are copious numbers of editorials that have been written which demonstrate that this is not just a matter that is being raised by frustrated opposition parties who continue to come up against brick walls when trying to get answers from government ministers in this place or in Estimates, or try to get information out of departments through RTI process and get stonewalled. It is a wide-held community view that they believe this Government is secretive and that is not something they want for their state.

We have a Premier who pretends to care and has promised to do something, but we have seen that before. One of the key examples I will highlight today is the health inquiry that was launched into the north-west outbreak earlier this year. This matters to many people, particularly to the families of those 13 people who tragically lost their lives, to the thousands of staff who were quarantined for weeks, and the hundreds of people who contracted coronavirus and are, in some cases, still suffering the impacts of that.

This Government commissioned an independent inquiry. That inquiry was due to report at the end of October and was delayed. It was then due to report at the end of November. There was a media release issued yesterday by the Premier, the last day in November, and it reads -

Independent review of the response to the north-west Tasmania COVID-19 outbreak report.

The Tasmanian Government has now received the Independent Review of the Response to the North-West Tasmania COVID-19 outbreak report.

Nothing is more important to the Tasmanian Government than the safety of our community, healthcare staff and patients, and we are determined to ensure that our health system continues to be as prepared as possible.

We are committed to ensuring we learn from any lessons identified in the Report and we will share these across our health system so that we can continue to work to do our best to avoid similar outbreaks in the future.

I would like to thank the working group and the independent reviewer Greg Melick AO SC for their work.

The Government will now consider the findings of the report and will publicly release it next week.

That is the kicker, Madam Deputy Speaker - next week. This is a report that was due to be handed down at the end of October, then at the end of November, and now the Government has received it but is not going to release it until after parliament has risen.

This report no doubt contains some important findings that this Government will need to implement as part of the recommendations of that task force report to make sure that we learn

from those mistakes and that we do not see outbreaks like that occur again in Tasmania, and the horrific consequences that come from those outbreaks. Once again, this Government is sitting on a report they are in receipt of and that the public expect to be able to see, and they are not releasing it until parliament has risen for the year.

That is disgraceful. Parliament should be given an opportunity to scrutinise this report and question the Government about how they are going to implement the recommendations and the findings of this report. It goes again to the lack of transparency of this Government. This is a matter that affects thousands of Tasmanians, it already has, and it affects all of us. Our lives have been impacted by coronavirus every single day and the fact that the Government is sitting on another report is unacceptable.

Time expired.

[11.17 a.m.]

Ms O'CONNOR (Clark - Leader of the Greens) - Madam Deputy Speaker, I note for the *Hansard* record the uncomfortable pause after the Leader of the Opposition sat down when no member of the Government apparently was prepared to leap to their feet to defend the Government's record on transparency. I will say a few things about the Government's record on transparency -

Government members interjecting.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER - Order.

Ms O'CONNOR - The Greens welcome this matter of public importance debate and the opportunity to talk today about the multiple layers of secrecy and opacity which have not only become a hallmark of the Liberal Government but are now integral to its brand. We see it across every agency. We see it in the actions of most ministers. I will say there were some notable exceptions at the Estimates table last week of ministers who were very clear in their communications, but they were the exception rather than the rule.

I take the House back to the very beginning, to 24 November 2014, not that long after the Liberals came to government, when my former colleague and now senator, Nick McKim, put in a right to information request for -

... the locations of all proposed developments, including GPS coordinates if available, from the expressions of interest process for proposed developments in the Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area and other national parks and reserves.

He was refused sometime between December 2014 and February 2015. It was appealed against on 13 February 2015 and only in November 2019 did the Ombudsman come back and release the information - almost five years to the day from the initial submission.

That is standard with right to information under this Government now. You put in a right to information request. There are delays in acknowledging that your request has arrived. There are multiple breaches of the time periods in the act. There are requests for extensions. Then the response invariably is heavily redacted documents - and too frequently, an argument from

the delegated right to information officer that it is not in the public interest to release that information.

That was the argument used with the expressions of interest right to information request that the former member, Mr McKim, lodged in 2014. The department came back and said it was not in the public interest. It was very much in the public interest, as the Ombudsman ultimately found, for people to understand the extent of the expressions of interest process in public protected areas, and where the proposed developments are on public protected lands.

We have the most recent and most damning Ombudsman's Report which states -

Tasmania's public authorities refused access to *any* information in 30 per cent of their 2018-19 RTI decisions. This rate of refusal is nearly twice that of the next highest jurisdiction (Queensland at 16 per cent) and 750 per cent that of Australia's most open jurisdictions (Victoria and the Northern Territory both at 4 per cent). Tasmania's percentage of refusals in full has been increasing each year since 2016-17 when it was 15 per cent.

Correspondingly a higher percentage of RTI requests ... were appealed to, and externally reviewed by my office than any of my counterparts around Australia.

The other key contributors to external reviews are - 'failure by authorities to determine requests within the act's time frames'. There is a figure here that shows Tasmania's public authorities failed in this regard in 27 per cent of their 2018-19 decisions. This has been a deliberate effort on the part of this Government to undermine the intent of the Right to Information Act 2009 - to corrode its spirit. The Government might say all these decisions are made at arm's length. However, we know, for example, a quality control group has been set up at a secretarial level at the Department of Primary Industries, Parks, Water and the Environment, to oversee right to information requests that come in. No, of course, we are told, we don't make any changes. Then why on earth would you set up an entity called 'a quality control group', if it is so independent and at arm's length from political influence or decision making.

Then there was the right to information constant stonewalling over our attempts - and attempts of people who love the wilderness - to obtain information on the lease and licence arrangements through the expressions of interest process. The Government said, 'commercial-in-confidence, we are not releasing that information'. It goes to the Ombudsman who says, 'No, there is no commercial-in-confidence argument here', and I am paraphrasing, 'it is in the public interest to understand what arrangements Government has struck with private developers over public lands'. Finally, we had some information on the leases and licences, five to six years after the expressions of interest process started. That is how we learned the Government had secretly negotiated a lease with a private developer over all of Halls Island, inside the Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area and Walls of Jerusalem National Park. All done in secret, for \$80 per week, and with what the minister for Parks last week at the Estimates table described as 'exclusive possession'.

When we talk about wilderness areas being privatised under the expressions of interest process, it has now been confirmed that privatisation is exactly what is happening. The Government negotiated a lease over a whole island, giving a private developer 'exclusive

possession' over an island in the Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage area that is loved by many bushwalkers and fly fishers.

Then we have the Small Business Hardship Grants, \$26 million of public money, the details of which have been withheld by a secretive Government. We have political donations and the absolute inertia on political donations, the scandalous secrecy over marine farming, the expenditure review committee of Cabinet. We still don't know who they are.

Time expired.

Ms OGILVIE (Clark) - Madam Deputy Speaker, not wanting to repeat what I have already laid down on *Hansard*, I refer anybody who is looking at this debate to look at Wednesday 11 November, a discussion at 3.54 p.m. in which I laid out some thoughts around transparency - particularly with political donations - and referred to the bill that I have already tabled in that regard. A particular concern was around transparency when it comes to electoral campaigning and who is actually making phone calls, for what purposes, and to whom, and what is being said on those phone calls. They should be brought in within the act. It is a factor of time having moved on that they are not already covered.

It also goes to social media use, which I believe we need to address. There was general agreement in this House, when I was speaking last time, that everything we can do to make our political landscape friendlier for those who work and operate in it is a good outcome for democracy, and for the people of Tasmania. I reiterate that.

Having sat through the Estimates process and listened today to the dreadful matters regarding child sex offences, I advise the House that I have written to the Premier. I am supporting the commission of inquiry but I have asked that it be quite extensive and that it perhaps extend further than we had initially anticipated. I consider this is our opportunity to clean up processes and address some gaps. I have asked the Premier to consider that sporting organisations, professional and trade associations, political parties and unions also be invited to participate in the commission of inquiry. I consider that if we can find a person at any one of those layers who is doing the wrong thing, then we are better off having a process in place that adds those additional layers of scrutiny. I hope that that will be taken up.

There is nothing more important than Tasmanian children.

[11.27 a.m.]

Ms ARCHER (Clark - Attorney-General) - Madam Deputy Speaker, while it is fresh in my mind I will respond to Ms Ogilvie's suggestion. The Commission of Inquiry Act falls within my administrative responsibility -

Ms Ogilvie - I am sorry.

Ms ARCHER - No, only from the perspective that I am looking at its powers at the moment.

As the Premier has confirmed, very detailed work needs to occur with respect to the terms of reference, not least of all because we do not want to duplicate the work of the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses of Child Sexual Abuse. There is no point duplicating

that work, but we need to get to the root issue. As the Premier so eloquently said in his Budget Estimates, we need to determine the who, what, when, why and where of these instances.

It is the role of the Executive, through the Governor, to appoint a commission of inquiry, and determine the terms of reference, and the like. As part of this process, we will be looking at the commission of inquiry to ensure the powers are indeed extensive, as with all other states to ensure it is robust. A few tweaks may need to occur; however, I can absolutely say to the House we will ensure it has the extensive powers that a commission of inquiry/royal commission should have.

In that regard, because the powers are so extensive, a commission of inquiry, or royal commission at the national level, can leave no stone unturned. They can follow any thread of inquiry even if it is not in the terms of reference. The terms of reference are essentially the guide, but the powers are so extensive that they can follow all sorts of things. The matters that you raise in relation to looking at certain organisations can occur.

I will also quickly refer to comments from the Leader of the Opposition about the report of the independent review of the response to the north-west Tasmania COVID-19 outbreak. I consider she selectively quoted from the media release issued by the Premier. That media release said the Government will now consider the findings of the report, which I note were only received late yesterday, and publicly release it next week. It is an extensive -

Ms White - That is exactly my point.

Ms ARCHER - I did not interject on your contribution. It is really important to allow the Government to consider that report. It is the normal course of events and we will make that publicly available with a turnaround of a week, so I really do not know what the Opposition is complaining about there.

I am very pleased to report to the House that not only have we been a government that pushes more information out the door by way of routine disclosure than any government before it, but it is important to highlight what we have done in response to the Ombudsman's concerns. Recently the Premier and I met with the Ombudsman, Mr Connock, and that was a good meeting. We were able to flesh out some of the issues the Ombudsman identified and some of the suggestions he has at this point, but more importantly moving forward, some suggestions in relation to how we could improve on our system.

It also confirmed that the Ombudsman also had a view that there are some agencies who are exemplars with their RTI. It is important to note those agencies that are performing well. The Ombudsman also identified that he thinks his own decision should be subject to external judicial review. In that regard, as members know, we now have a Civil and Administrative Tribunal which will come into being early next year. All the legislation is in place to enable that. We are embarking on the process of appointing a president to that tribunal and that is necessary before that tribunal gets up and running. At the moment we have nine tribunals co-located on that site. The reason I mention that is because that body, as in other states, could be the appropriate body that oversees or decides on those matters of a view from the Ombudsman, so that is something we can look at and is a positive thing in that direction.

We also discussed at that meeting the possibility of having one single unit that deals with RTI, gathering information from each agency. Whether that is the best model, we have left it

up to the Ombudsman, who has kindly agreed to look at other jurisdictions as to what jurisdictions work best. In his preliminary view he has mentioned that Queensland is a good system, despite their figures being the next after us, and ensuring that the spirit of the legislation is maintained.

The other issue is ensuring consistency in decision-making across agencies. That may be something as little as - and I say 'as little as' simply because the bigger type of issue would be a broad unit that deals with this - ensuring that there is more adequate training for RTI officers on their interpretation of the act to ensure that it is consistent. The Ombudsman agreed that there were some sections that were perhaps slightly ambiguous and therefore open to interpretation, and when matters are open to interpretation they can be interpreted differently.

It is important that we look at all these issues and amend the act where appropriate on the advice of the Ombudsman and make changes in relation to our systems, our overall model, if that is what he suggests, as well as look at the issue of backlogs, for example.

Time expired.

[11.34 a.m.]

Ms HADDAD (Clark) - Madam Deputy Speaker, to reflect on what has already been said so far in this debate around this Government's record on transparency and being truthful with information, we know that under Peter Gutwein's leadership this state has become the secret state. Tasmania is now the secret state. It is confirmed in multiple reports, most recently in the Ombudsman's annual report, which confirmed for us all that Tasmania has the worst record when it comes to dealing with right to information requests, known as freedom of information requests in other states. Compared to other states we are punching well below the national standards, not just on RTI but on a range of other issues dealing with the systems of government.

In that annual report from the Ombudsman we learnt that Tasmanian public departments and public bodies refuse to release any information in 30 per cent of applications that come before them. That is 750 per cent worse than the most open jurisdictions in Australia. That is a shameful statistic and one we should all be extremely concerned about. What this reflex reaction of Government leads to, or this reflex expectation that ministers have of their department that they will refuse RTI requests as their first response to receiving one, is that the number of review requests going to the Ombudsman's office is higher than any other state. That creates enormous backlog and work in that office in reviewing those requests.

The public service department refuses to release any information, so the member of the public or member of media or member of parliament - whoever it may be who has lodged that request - seeks an external review from the Ombudsman's office. They get more external reviews than anybody else. What we also learnt in that report is that in nearly 100 per cent of those review requests, the Ombudsman overturned the decision of the department - they found in favour of that applicant, the person who was seeking the information in the first place.

The minister and the Premier met with the Ombudsman last week. That is a good start but it is not enough because, in fact, our RTI laws are very good. Yes, there needs to be improvements in processes and administrative things that might need to change in the act, but at their heart they are a good set of laws. The spirit of the act, which the minister spoke about in her contribution, has a good intention, which is that governments should be proactive in

releasing as much information as they possibly can. When they are faced with an RTI request, their response to that request should be to release as much information as they can that is not already on the public record. Ideally it should already be there but when it is not, their response to an RTI request should be to release as much as they can.

That is not what we see from this Government. They have created a culture of secrecy across this Government. That is laid bare in the RTI report as well, where we can see that over their period of government those numbers are getting worse. The numbers of review requests are increasing and the number of instances where no information is released is increasing also. A culture of secrecy is being spread across this Government and filtering into the public sector departments, which is really disturbing and shameful and we should not be proud of that.

When it comes to other areas of transparency, we have spoken about donations law reform a number of times in this House. Labor has a private member's bill on the books that has started debate. We have the worst donations laws in the country. There are no caps on expenditure for lower House campaigns. There are no reporting requirements for candidates for MPs sitting in this place to disclose to the public, their party or to the parliament who they received donations from and for what purpose.

When it came to the Westbury consultation, or lack of consultation I should say, about locating a northern prison in that town, there was woeful community consultation. There was a refusal to release any information about the EOI list of proposed sites. When the social and economic impact statement review was finally released it was almost wholly redacted. It was laughable to even release the document because the page numbers were pretty much the only things that were not redacted.

When it comes to the COVID-19 response, we had a long debate in here about establishing a select committee that would look at the decisions of government, which every other state and territory has done, especially at a time when parliamentary sittings were reduced. The Government refused that.

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- When it comes to the hardships grants that were released to small businesses, there was a refusal to release any information about those grants. There was \$26 million of taxpayer money distributed and no doubt welcomely received by those businesses, but the Government refused to release any information about those hardship grants, even though the applicants of those grants signed documents acknowledging that their businesses might be named as having received those grants. Today we saw the tabling of a report from the Public Accounts Committee where there was a vote that the information should be publicly released.

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- I will finish my contribution by highlighting the important work released yesterday by the Australia Institute. Its report looked at four things that needed to change in Tasmania to improve transparency and improve access to information - right to information laws; donation laws; improving the workings of the Integrity Commission; and truth in political advertising laws. Those are the four areas highlighted in this report. I urge the Government to seriously look at this.

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- However, I disagree with the title of the report. It is called *Good Government in Tasmania*. I argue that they need to amend that and call it 'The Pathway to Good Government', because the information that is contained in this valuable report and research must be taken seriously by the Government.

Time expired.

[11.41 a.m.]

Mr STREET (Franklin) - Madam Deputy Speaker, in the time remaining, I will speak about the hardship grants as a member of the Public Accounts Committee, seeing it has been raised by both Opposition members who spoke.

We understand that grant funds administered by government are drawn from taxpayers' money. We take the management disbursement of public funds very seriously. In ordinary circumstances it is common practice for government to disclose details of grant recipients in acknowledgement of the fact that providing a grant is expenditure of public money for which the government is reasonably accountable.

However, there are some circumstances where limited rather than full disclosure is considered reasonable. In such circumstances, reporting must be maintained at a level that allows for reasonable scrutiny while protecting commercial interests and personal wellbeing.

In relation to the release of individual grant recipient names, we strongly believe that reasonable disclosure can be undertaken through the Department of State Growth reporting on the expenditure of public funds in accordance with the requirements of the Treasurer's instructions under the Financial Management Act, and also scrutiny at the highest level that is being undertaken by both the Public Accounts Committee and Auditor-General of the Small Business Hardship Grants program.

In relation to the recent small business grants, the Department of State Growth has administered the assessment and allocation of these grants at arm's length from Government, with a robust and proper process that openly reports on the expenditure of public funds in accordance with the requirements and the Treasurer's instructions. The department's strong advice is that there is real potential to cause undue harm through publicly identifying individual grant recipients. This is because publicising the names of applicants and recipients could seriously exacerbate the already high levels of personal stress suffered by business owners, and often by their employees and families as well.

Further, disclosure of applicant business names could also provide information to each businesses' competitors regarding its likely financial position. This could expose those businesses to disadvantage.

The public release of the relevant information would also be likely to expose the identified businesses to public debate as to whether specific businesses deserved the outcomes they achieved. Such discussion would be based on limited information and not necessarily conducted in an objective, impartial or empathetic manner. It has the potential to be extremely damaging to business reputations as well as to significantly exacerbate the distress being experienced.

As it has been put on the record, I note the Public Accounts Committee has recommended in its special report dated 20 November, that both Houses of parliament consider the non-disclosure of the grant information. I also point out that both Mr Tucker and I disagreed with that recommendation and have lodged a dissenting report.

Our position has been clearly and publicly stated many times. It has not changed. We do not support publicly identifying individual grant recipients on the basis there is real potential to cause undue harm to Tasmanian small businesses. Furthermore, the PAC recommendation is based on a finding that public disclosure of grant information is routinely a matter of public record, despite the committee being provided with specific evidence to the contrary, including the Bushfire Recovery Grant Program and emergency grants program. Most other states and territories have also not released similar hardship grant data.

I make the point that it is worth remembering that this Government pushes more information out the door by way of routine disclosure than any government before it -

Dr Woodruff - It is because more people have to make requests because you are secret in the first place.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER - Order, Dr Woodruff.

Mr STREET - The following things were not in place under previous governments. Since June 2018 the Government has released more than 60 new routine data sets online as it continues to expand public access to information on the activities of government. We have launched a new government information gateway webpage that is available on DPAC's website to make government information proactively disclosed easier to find. We are continuing to publicly report on gifts, benefits and hospitality received and given by officers across all agencies on at least a quarterly basis. We are implementing the updated ministerial code.

Time expired.

Matter noted.

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

APPROPRIATION BILL (No. 2) 2020 (No. 47)

Reports of Estimates Committees

In Committee

[11.47 a.m.]

Mrs PETRUSMA - Mr Deputy Chair, I have the honour to bring up the reports of Estimates Committee A on the Estimates of the Premier, Treasurer, Minister for the Prevention of Family Violence, Minister for Climate Change and Minister for Tourism; the Minister for State Growth, Minister for Science and Technology, Minister for Infrastructure and Transport and Minister for Finance; the Minister for Housing, Minister for Environment and Parks, Minister for Human Services, Minister for Aboriginal Affairs and Minister for Planning; and the Minister for Primary Industries and Water, Minister for Energy, Minister for Resources and Minister for Veterans Affairs, together with the minutes of proceedings, the transcripts of evidence and additional information presented to the Committee.

Mr STREET - Mr Deputy Chair, I have the honour to bring up the reports of the Estimates Committee B on the Estimates of the Minister for Health; Minister for Small Business, Hospitality and Events, Minister for Women and Minister for Strategic Growth; the

Minister for Education and Training, Minister for Disability Services and Community Development, Minister for Trade, Minister for Advanced Manufacturing and Defence Industries and Minister for Mental Health and Wellbeing; the Attorney-General, Minister for Justice, Minister for Corrections, Minister for Building and Construction, Minister for the Arts and Minister for Heritage; the Minister for Police, Fire and Emergency Management, and Minister for Local Government; and the Minister for Racing and Minister for Sport and Recreation, together with the minutes of proceedings, the transcripts of evidence and additional information presented to the Committee.

DIVISIONS 1, 2, 4, 7, 9, 11 and 13

(Premier, Treasurer, Minister for Prevention of Family Violence, Minister for Climate Change, and Minister for Tourism)

[11.48 a.m.]

Ms WHITE - Mr Deputy Chair, the first thing I would like to comment on is the fact that we still do not have our answers to the questions we put on notice. This has been a long-standing problem of this Government in that they have failed to meet deadlines to provide answers to questions placed on notice. There were quite few placed on notice for this particular Estimates Committee. This year the responses have again not been provided in time for us to scrutinise them through this process. It is another example of the lack of transparency of this Government.

The questions that were placed on notice were seeking information that would have been quite useful for us to examine as part of the report on Estimates to date. Having a look through the records and the reports, I placed a number of questions on notice. Some of them had to do with the unfortunate case of James Griffin and the impact he has had on so many people, dealing with the knowledge the Government had at the time and the processes that were followed at that time.

I remind the House of those questions because I hope the Premier can answer them now. Looking at the transcripts from *Hansard* they were matters that the Premier was going to take advice on and provide a response to the Committee, or through the questions on notice and answers process. Given the delay in time and the fact that we do not have those answers, my expectation is that the Premier will be able to provide those answers for us in this process today.

The first question was regarding the Integrity Commission's Operation Greystone, which reported on page 64 of the Integrity Commission's annual report. This went specifically to the case of James Griffin and whether he was aware of the investigation that was undertaken by the Integrity Commission. Also, on what date was it referred to the secretary for follow up as stated by the annual report of the Integrity Commission? I hope the Premier can provide an update on that now.

We also wanted to understand when the Premier, or the Government, received a copy of the Coroner's report. This goes to a lack of action of this Government to manage something that is very serious. We heard from the Premier in his contribution that the Government was unable to launch an investigation before it announced the commission of inquiry because it was waiting for the Coroner's report to be concluded. The date the Premier gave in the Estimates Committee hearing initially was 23 October, yet it was discovered throughout that process that report was actually dated in May.

The question I have is when did the Government receive the Coroner's report. If it was in May the Government needs to explain why it took until October before an investigation was launched, if that was the true reason they were waiting before taking any further action. That is an important question. That question is still on the notice paper for an answer from the Premier about when they received a copy of the Coroner's report, dated in May, and why it took so long for them to then act to launch an investigation. It could be as given in the evidence by the Premier that it was not until the podcast that the matter became public knowledge more broadly, and pressure was then applied to the Government to do more.

We know that the Health minister was aware of information and did nothing for a year. We know the Premier found out last year. We have learnt now that he learnt that information through the former staff members of former premier, Will Hodgman, which is an interesting way to find out information given that other senior members of Government were not aware until this year.

We need to understand when that Coroner's report was handed to the Government and why the Government needed to wait to receive that report before they could do anything about launching an investigation into the very serious allegations that have been raised about James Griffin. We understand that a police investigation was launched and we understand that while that was taking place the Government was not at liberty to talk about it. We also understand that once he passed away they could have taken further action.

The explanation the Premier gave for not doing so is because they were waiting for the Coroner's report to be finalised. Therefore, it is very important to understand when the Government received that report and what action they then took on behalf of those survivors and their families, those staff members, and former colleagues. They want to understand why the Government took so long to do something.

In fact, it was through evidence in the committee that we found out that on 1 May 2019 allegations were made. On 26 July CIB told the Health department and the Launceston General Hospital about those allegations. On 31 July James Griffin was stood down. We have learnt today that it was not until 2 August that a referral was made from the police to Child Safety Services.

We know then the following year a Coroner's report was handed to Government. We do not know when but we know it was dated in May. We know an independent inquiry was launched by the Health department in October.

A commission of inquiry has now been flagged and the terms of reference are not known. The commissioners are not known. The time frame for that to commence is not known. It is not an excuse to not answer questions now to say we cannot do so because there is a commission of inquiry under way because it does not yet exist.

The Premier in his responses said that -

As a senior member of the Government I was aware that the matter had been handed to the Coroner post Mr Griffin's death. I do not know the date. I was the Treasurer not the Police minister or Premier at the time.

When I asked further questions about when those matters were brought to his attention, what prompted the launch of the investigation, he said -

As a result of public discourse that occurred with the release of that podcast, other matters were brought to our attention and we moved immediately.

The Premier confirmed it was the podcast that had prompted him, along with some other matters which he then would not expand upon. Certainly, the Government formed a view that an investigation was required because of the publicity this unfortunate matter received, the representations made to Government, and the contact that was directly made to the Premier. The question we have is, why did it take so long? Why did it require the media to put pressure on the Government before it acted? They were well aware of this matter last year.

This was the most damning evidence to come from the committee. We expect answers to have been provided to these questions that were placed on notice. Unfortunately, as is typical of this Government and its lack of transparency, they are not forthcoming for us to scrutinise. That is why I am hoping the Government and the Premier can answer these questions today.

We also examined a number of other matters across that portfolio. One of those matters was the Small Business Hardship Grants, and why the Government continues to maintain its secrecy about where \$26 million of taxpayer money has gone. It is not in keeping with other programs. Evidence we heard in other Estimates outputs confirms that no clinical advice was received to support mental health being the primary concern preventing the Government from releasing the information. My colleague, Anita Dow, asked questions about the mental health of those applicants who did not receive funding and what support has been provided to them. Surprisingly, no information was forthcoming.

We talked about other initiatives the Government has offered through the COVID-19. One of those initiatives was the 'Make Yourself at Home' vouchers. Information has been provided today through the media, that as at 30 November about \$5.8 million of the \$12.5 million program has been expended. Our concern throughout this period was that food and hospitality venues would miss out because the Government restricted those vouchers for use only in accommodation and experiences. It also means that the money is not flowing through our economy.

We should know in the next fortnight or so how many of those vouchers will be redeemed in total, but to have only redeemed so few at this point in time is very concerning. This is money that needs to go into the pockets of those businesses to keep workers employed, to support our regions, and to make sure that people can get through this incredibly difficult time. The Labor Party has been very supportive of the voucher program; however, we questioned its design and have asked for it to be expanded to cover food and dining.

I raised questions with the Premier in the Estimates process about what would happen to the unallocated or unredeemed funding. He implied there would not be a third round of vouchers but the money would be allocated in some other way to support the tourism and hospitality sector. It is unclear to us exactly what the Premier has in mind. Perhaps he can elaborate on that today, given we have some additional data and it is the end of the month. We have an idea now about how much might be unspent and what that money could be used for if it is not going to be used for a third round to make sure we do stimulate the hospitality and tourism sector.

As part of our questions on notice we asked for a breakdown of how those vouchers have been redeemed across accommodation and across experience. No information has been forthcoming. Given the update that has been provided to the media, we hoped he could have provided an update to the parliament but it has not happened, has it, Premier?

We asked questions about hotel quarantining. The Premier provided an update on this on Friday in his press conference, but it goes to a serious question about how we are going to staff those quarantine venues. We will be hosting, while they undertake their quarantine, up to 450 overseas travellers returning to Australia. The Premier confirmed in his press conference on Friday that there had been a national partnership agreement struck. The questions that we had at the time were in relation specifically to the staffing arrangements and, in particular, how we can guarantee that security staff who will be required to work at those facilities are supported with the appropriate training and PPE, and that there is a standardised practice that is applied across those hotels. There is one hotel so far that has been identified - there may not be others - but it must have a standard operating practice to make sure that all staff who work in security understand what their requirements and obligations are to keep them safe and to keep the community safe.

We must also make sure that staff, including cleaners and hospitality staff who are working in those venues, are given appropriate hours so they do not have any financial reason to seek other employment, because we have seen the devastating consequences from where that has occurred in other jurisdictions, South Australia being the most recent example, and of course everyone is well aware of the outbreak in Victoria and the impact that had on their community and economy. That stemmed from failing to have appropriate practices in place in hotel quarantine.

A question that is on notice - which still has not been answered but needs to be urgently answered by this Government - is, given these arrivals are due this week, how will those hotels be staffed to make sure that any workers there will be provided with full-time hours so they do not have to work multiple jobs.

The other question I asked in the committee was around training being provided in the native language of the people who are working there. There are many people working in these jobs - cleaning and security in particular - who do not have English as their first language. We need to make sure that we are providing training to them in a way they can easily understand and there can be no confusion. They are the frontline protection between us getting an outbreak or suffering an impact from coronavirus in our community, which is COVID-free. The Premier has confirmed that around 3 per cent of arrivals coming from overseas who will be in quarantine here will have coronavirus. It is critically important that we do everything possible to get this right.

There were other questions asked in relation to coronavirus management as well including home isolation compliance. There are still quite a few people in home isolation and the compliance of that is important to get right. The question was whether the Government is still using volunteers predominantly from Tasmania Fire Service and the State Emergency Service to check on those people to make sure they are doing the right thing - something I hoped could be answered quickly. It's a straightforward question but no information has been provided.

We asked a question which related to the coronavirus pandemic and management and the engagement of consultants under different contracts to perform work, whether that was making sure that communication was clear to the public about what was required of them, as well as any other work that was necessary at that time to keep our community safe. We asked for a breakdown of the contracts because contracts awarded under \$50 000 are not disclosed in any reports, the purpose of each of those contracts, and also the breakdown of the contracts entered into with consultants by the Government's Public Information Unit which deals specifically with the COVID-19 response. That is information that should have been readily at hand for the Government to provide. Unfortunately, it was not provided in time for us to scrutinise as part of the work of this committee and the process we are undertaking right now.

There are other questions on notice from other members and I am sure they too would have liked to have seen responses provided for them to be able to scrutinise those matters before we debate the Estimates report-back. I make the very clear point that this is simply not good enough. There are time frames that the Government needs to meet. There are ministers who have provided answers in time for scrutiny during this process. Unfortunately, the Premier was not able to meet that time frame.

We also spoke about a number of other matters. One I would like to touch on is the replacement of the TT-Line vessels. This is of critical importance to the Tasmanian economy. It is a key driver of the wealth of our community across a number of different industries. The Government initially promised to deliver the first replacement vessel next year. It was then pushed back until 2022. Then the Government stalled the process just days out from signing a contract, we understand, and said they were going to establish a task force headed up by Treasury. The concern we have is that the delay in the replacement of those vessels will see further constraint in capacity across Bass Strait. We understand from TT-Line that they are already operating at 97 per cent capacity when it comes to their freight usage, and that is through COVID-19. We know that six months a year those vessels are chock-a-block full; in fact, they are over capacity, both for tourists and freight.

Drive tourism is going to be critical for the recovery of our economy and our tourism and hospitality sector. It is named in the T21 plan as a key priority for access because we know those are high-value customers who come to our state as tourists. They travel more widely, they go into our regions, they spend more, and they are exactly the kind of customer we need now with airline capacity being constrained because of the devastating impacts of coronavirus. The replacement of those vessels is critical for our recovery from COVID-19, both as a community and the sectors that depend on the vessels to run reliably, safely and on time every day, but also for our economy which has been smashed because of the impacts of COVID-19, particularly the industries of hospitality and tourism. The agriculture sector has also been impacted, especially with our international exports and some of our markets having a few disputes but also air access being significantly constrained.

The replacement of those vessels is critical. We commissioned independent and highly credentialled economist, Saul Eslake, to undertake a report to understand what the economic impact would be every year those vessels were not realised. It is a \$250 million impact to the Tasmanian economy for every year those vessels are delayed. It is significant. We are talking about thousands of people who could be coming here. We are talking about exports of high-value agriculture, time-sensitive freight that has been particularly productive, and also the expansion of the irrigation has meant a lot of people have made investment on island because they expect the capacity across Bass Strait to increase by 40 per cent within the next two years.

If that is not realised, those investments will stall. That investment on island will stall in our agriculture sector. Investment in new products and experiences in the tourism sector will stall. Those decisions are being made right now.

The Government said that the task force would report in January. It cannot come soon enough. We need to make sure that we see that information. The Government needs to explain what they are going to do. They cannot then take a further six to 12 months to decide how to proceed. The industries that depend upon those ferries to operate reliably, safely and consistently day in and day out need to know what this Government's plan is. Instead they have been left high and dry and the delay is costing the economy jobs right now.

Time expired.

Ms O'CONNOR - I rise to provide some observations of Estimates Committee A with the Premier, Treasurer, Minister for Climate Change and Minister for Tourism last Monday. As I was going through the *Hansard* and reflecting on the exchanges across the table, I wondered if the Premier had not had a sip of chamomile tea or something. It was a very different Premier from the one I have encountered at the Estimates table in recent years, a very different Mr Gutwein. I thought you were somewhat less combative and I felt that we -

Mr Gutwein - I am sorry if I disappointed you.

Ms O'CONNOR - No, the Premier did not disappoint me. I expected there to be something a bit Leon Compton-esque about some of the exchanges but that was not to be. Given the gravity of the announcement the Premier made that morning, it was appropriate that there be a measure of calm at the table.

The first thing I want to say on behalf of the Greens, is how pleased we are that a commission of inquiry will be established into how children have been and are treated in Tasmania, particularly those children who are in state settings or whose safety is affected by the processes and policies of the state, at places like the Launceston General Hospital, Ashley Youth Detention Centre and in our public education system.

In 2003, the now Premier crossed the floor to support a commission of inquiry. Those calls for a commission of inquiry first came from my predecessor as the member for Clark and former Greens Leader, Peg Putt. It is a gutsy move to establish a commission of inquiry, particularly for a Government that has a streak of control-freakery about it and always wants to control the message. As the Premier has said, this process of the commission of inquiry is going to be very difficult. It will be particularly difficult for survivors and their families. It is going to be difficult for people who hear the evidence. It is going to be quite hard for some people who have worked or are currently working in government agencies. It will lead to some very emotional scenes. When it comes back to this House, it will be a reckoning.

I encourage the Premier to make sure that the scope of the terms of reference are as broad and inclusive as they can be and that there is full protection provided for witnesses and whistleblowers who come forward. We now know that there has been a cultural and generational culture of secrecy and cover-up about how children and young people are treated in Tasmania. It has to end.

On this rare occasion, I do not agree with the commissioner for children's observations about when we talk about this, and how we talk about it. If we do not talk about the abuse of children, if there is not sunlight cast on this wicked problem, then predators will continue to find their way into paid or volunteer employment positions where they can continue to harm children. We need to have an inclusive terms of reference protection for whistleblowers, a capacity to hear difficult truths, and the greatest measure of transparency that it is possible to have.

The observations that the Greens made this morning about the fact that the commission of inquiry will take at least a year to do its vital work and then there will be implementation measures that will need to be put in place, should not take away from the Government dealing with obvious flaws in the system that have been laid bare by the Griffin matter.

There are things the Government can do right now so that when someone reports either historical or current abuse allegations, for example, the officer who takes that report should be able to go straight to the working with vulnerable people database and determine whether that person, who is the subject of a sexual abuse allegation, is still working with children.

We have painstakingly put together a time line of the past two years as they relate to the Launceston General Hospital and to the Ashley Youth Detention Centre. As we know, Mr Griffin worked at both places. What we can see when we examine that time line rationally is that there were decisions made along the way, following the original complaint, which arguably allowed for a predator to be in a state setting with responsibility for children for longer than they should have been.

There are still many outstanding questions about why it took three months for Griffin's working with vulnerable people registration to be cancelled: why it took two months or more for Tasmania Police to work out that Mr Griffin was employed at the Launceston General Hospital; why there was not a more immediate notification of Northern Tasmanian Netball Association. There are a whole series of questions here but while the commission of inquiry is being established the Government needs to have a look at some of those processes, some of those decision-making points and determine what immediate action can be taken to make sure, to the greatest extent possible, every law, every regulation, every policy, every procedure is about creating the safest place in Australia for children and young people.

We are long way from there right now. I encourage the Premier to have a look at some of those matters that have come up. We are happy to share the time line we made with you. I am sure you have your own.

It raises some serious questions about how we respond to people who come forward alleging abuse. I encourage the Premier, who I know feels very strongly about this, to take a close personal interest in that matter.

We talked at some length about the regrettable brand that the Liberal Government has made for itself going back some six years of being the most secretive Government in my living memory. That unfortunate label has now been attached to Tasmania, particularly as a result of the Ombudsman's report, that we are the secret state. This is the consequence of a series of decisions that have been made going back to 2014. The Premier's former chief of staff, who now works for a lobbying company in Hobart, was probably right in the thick of that decision-

making matrix which decided that it was better to withhold information from the public so that all we have of the Premier is good news.

It is clear from the Greens' point of view that what has happened as a consequence is departmental agencies have worked out what the Government wants. That is being reflected in the right to information responses that we are getting. It has become cultural. That kind of secrecy that has led to that culture, regrettably, comes from arrogance. It comes from a sense of entitlement. At some level it comes from a fear of exposure or loss of power. As I have said many times, good governments have nothing hide. It is not too late to turn this around on this Premier's watch in this term of the parliament. Having a conversation with the Ombudsman was a good start but we need to see tangible and concrete responses. There needs to be a clear directive given to government agencies that they will apply the full letter and spirit of the Right to Information Act. As the Ombudsman's Report makes clear, not only is the act not being followed but the spirit and intent of the act is being undermined.

What a shame that members only have 10 minutes to cover four portfolios.

Time expired.

[12.19 p.m.]

Mrs PETRUSMA - It is a pleasure to rise in regard to the Estimates for the Premier, Treasurer, Minister for the Prevention of Family Violence, Minister for Climate Change and Minister for Tourism.

I thank the committee. This was my first time as chair. Things did get a little robust, mainly because the room was very hot - in fact, last Wednesday it might have been 29 degrees outside, but it got to a little over 40 degrees inside. The committee was willing to put up with me and my foibles in my first time as Chair of Committee A. I thank them for their willingness to work with me in ensuring that the debate was respectful, even though a bit robust. All members had the opportunity to express their matters of concern.

I pay tribute to the Premier. This was my first opportunity to watch the Premier in action. Even though I have done 11 Estimates, in the first four I was a shadow minister, so I had my own portfolios to examine. For the next six Estimates I was a minister. This was my first time watching the Premier in action, and it was over 11 and a half hours that day. It was a long day but I had to say I felt very proud and honoured to not only be his parliamentary secretary but I pay tribute and commend and thank the Premier for his time and his responses. I believe that throughout the day he showed great care, compassion and consideration to the people of Tasmania and his respective portfolio responsibilities.

I was especially heartened, as I know that other members of the committee were, by the Premier's significant announcement that the Government would establish a commission of inquiry into the responses of Tasmanian government agencies in relation to the management of historical allegations of sexual abuse. As the Premier noted, the vast majority of people who work or have worked in our government agencies in positions of great trust do the right thing and place children's safety as their highest responsibility. Unfortunately, there have sadly and tragically been occasions when that trust may have been breached.

All Tasmanians have a great responsibility for the safety and wellbeing of our children. One of our greatest responsibilities is to learn from the past and to take any actions necessary

to keep our community safe. As the Premier stated, while we cannot change the past, this Government is very much committed to making a difference for the future. We owe that to the victims and survivors of abuse.

I welcome the Premier's statement that we want our state to be the best place it can be for our children, both for their wellbeing today and for their future. We want our children to be able to stay in our state, to live, work and raise their own children safely. In this regard I look forward to the launch of the consultation process for the Child and Youth Wellbeing Strategy and welcome the allocation of \$100 000 for the Commissioner for Children and Young People, the Youth Network of Tasmania and the Mental Health Council of Tasmania to have face-to-face conversations with children and young people right across our state. The Child and Youth Wellbeing Strategy will be about what we need to do as a government and as a community to provide the best support and protection to children, young people and their families to help them to live their best lives.

In regard to unemployment, I note that the Premier said that since May this year about two-thirds of the people who lost their job at the height of the pandemic have now returned to work. Importantly, this Budget provides for 4000 new apprentices, trainees and youth employees with \$22 million in payroll tax rebates in small business grants for all industries. The Government is already offering schools-based traineeships and pathways to employment for young people with the Tasmanian State Service, including in regional areas. The students under these programs are able to gain a nationally recognised qualification in the State Service while staying at home to complete their TCE in years 11 and 12. These are really welcome initiatives and I commend the Premier and the Government agencies involved in their implementation.

The Premier also continues to maintain his significant responsibilities as Treasurer, and at a challenging time like none we have experienced in generations, I passionately believe that the state could not be in better or safer hands than the Premier and his Cabinet, especially as the Premier as Treasurer has delivered a budget that will increase confidence, grow our economy, attract investment, support jobs and rebuild a stronger Tasmania.

With the Government's rollout of a landmark \$5 billion infrastructure program over four years, this will support around 25 000 jobs, build the intergenerational infrastructure our state needs to thrive and also provide the economic stimulus to return our budget to surplus in two years. The Budget also provides across forward Estimates \$9.8 billion for hospitals and health services to build a better health system for all Tasmanians; \$7.5 billion for education, schools and TasTAFE to give Tasmanians even greater opportunities to participate in and benefit from a strong economy; \$2.4 billion for better and safer roads; and more than \$300 million into social and affordable housing projects so that we can support more Tasmanians right across Tasmania.

These significant funds will help to rebuild a stronger Tasmania through building intergenerational infrastructure for our communities, backing Tasmanian businesses, supporting their recovery and growth and making it easy for them to employ. It also is about investing even more into education and skills to ensure more Tasmanians have the ability to grasp the opportunities and lead more fulfilling lives.

It is also about investing more into housing, health and essential services around our state as well as investments into programs and resources to keep our communities safe. It is about

futureproofing our industries and investing to protect the Tasmanian way of life while continuing to back businesses to recover and make it easier for them to hire apprentices and trainees while at the same time supporting our critical industries to grow and capitalise on our competitive advantages including renewable energy, tourism and agriculture.

We are also supporting our businesses through the Government's Buy Local program which is certainly benefitting local businesses. At the first quarter of the 2020-21 financial year, 93 per cent of contracts valued at \$50 000 or more awarded by Tasmanian government agencies following an open procurement process were awarded to Tasmanian businesses. This is an outstanding outcome for Tasmanian businesses and reflects the Government's commitment to local businesses and local employment whilst also ensuring value for money for Tasmania's taxpayers.

The Budget also provides for those who require a helping hand. As a government we have put in place unprecedented levels of support for Tasmanians and our businesses to cushion the blow from the COVID-19 pandemic and we have provided over \$1 billion in support for the Tasmanian community through these difficult times. This is the largest level of support as a share of the economy that has been provided anywhere in Australia. In the 2020-21 Budget the Government is also providing a wide range of concessions, as they do every year, but this year it continues with discounts on the cost of government services to assist eligible Tasmanians who are experiencing social disadvantage.

In 2020-21 the Government will provide concessions of almost \$70 million through Finance-General. This will include electricity concessions, council rates remissions and water and sewerage concessions to name a few. These concessions are real and practical examples of how this Budget, through this Premier and his Cabinet, are helping Tasmanians who need support.

With regard to climate change, as the Premier advised, Tasmania is already a leader in climate action and it was pleasing to hear that Tasmania has achieved our commitment to net zero emissions by 2050 for the fourth year in a row. I was also pleased that the Premier announced in the Budget that the Government has set the ambitious target to transition our Tasmanian government fleet to 100 per cent electric vehicles by 2030. As we know, Tasmania is ideally suited to benefit from the growing electric vehicle market and when powered by locally produced renewable energy, this has the potential to improve the efficiency of the state vehicle fleet through reduced transport emissions, fuel and maintenance costs. Based on fit-for-purpose vehicle models currently available, our transition is expected to reduce emissions by approximately 13 000 metric tonnes. As well, incorporating electric vehicles into the Tasmanian government fleet will stimulate demand for technology, raise community awareness and contribute to the second-hand market in the state.

To assist, the Government is also delivering a statewide electric vehicle charge network for 14 fast chargers and 23 workplace and destination chargers. This investment will provide a convenient charging network for locals and tourists and will stimulate a total spend of over \$2.5 million in installing electric charging infrastructure right across Tasmania. These are all very welcome initiatives in the Climate Change portfolio and a real credit to the Premier and the work done by the Tasmanian Climate Change Office.

The Premier is also Minister for the Prevention of Family Violence, a cause very close to my heart.

Time expired.

[12.28 p.m.]

Mr O'BYRNE - Before my response to the Estimates, I echo the sentiments of the member for Clark, Ms O'Connor, on her positive reflection on the member for Franklin who has just resumed her seat and the manner in which she chaired. It was at times quite a stifling room with regard to the heat, not only produced by those within it but some of those old rooms had the sun beating in and coming through those windows. It was quite a dark room but when you saw it on the telecast it was quite a bright room, so the old-fashioned contrast was turned up. I am not sure whether that was for our benefit or for others, but it was an unusual room. Not reflecting on the person who is currently in the Chair, but he drew the long straw in terms of the room that you had downstairs. In that context, there were some good, strong exchanges.

I reflect the opinion of a lot of people in saying our current system of Estimates is probably not working for the best for Tasmania, in the way they are structured and managed - in the time allocated to deal with such lofty matters as well as the environment within which the information is shared and the amount of work the departments have to go to and the topics that are covered.

The report brought forward from Committee A shows many topics were covered. You could argue that, on the whole, they were not covered in a manner which added to the public debate in terms of people's understanding of expenditure and Government decisions. I know other jurisdictions have different forms of Estimates hearings. I believe we should look at other models, including the federal Standing Committee of Estimates processes and their committees, and how public servants and other departments are brought forward to debate these matters.

Regarding the questions asked of the Treasurer, we believe that the Budget is a missed opportunity to create jobs and to rise to the challenge that confronts our economy. Some of the economic reports from various commentators are bouncing around; however, it is a fact that we have 8.2 per cent unemployment and the Budget forecasts an increase in that unemployment rate. To all Tasmanians, the highest unemployment rate in the country is the key indicator of the success of our response. All indications are that it is not going to improve in the short term, and that means too many Tasmanians are on the unemployment scrap heap. The current figure is that there are 27 jobseekers for every one position advertised in Tasmania. That is not a circumstance anyone should accept.

In the committee, we discussed the issue of projections and forecasts in the Budget. We highlighted that Tasmania is the only jurisdiction that has failed to provide that forecasting, which is regularly provided in the Budget papers for the full out-years of the forward four years. Extraordinarily, this Government has chosen not to do that. We all understand the times we are in, and most Tasmanians would be able to look at those forecasts in the context of those circumstances. Many economists and various people involved in public life have seen that decision, and it has reflected poorly on the Government that they are not able to provide that level of information to inform the forward Estimates.

The excuse that was given that, 'it's just trend and they bounce around and we are not really bound by them', goes not only against convention but also against accepted practice in every other jurisdiction. In an answer on the calculations on payroll tax, the reasons why they did not give the forward Estimates were exactly the opposite to the reasons why they did give

the assessment on what payroll tax revenue could be predicted. The Budget predicts a surplus in the out-years, third and fourth years. It is remarkably convenient that those years were not provided with the projections and forecasts of the economy.

Under questioning and further investigation, it was very clear that those surpluses were built on cuts or a lack of funding for a whole range of projects. Not only in the hearing that we dealt with the Treasurer, but across all of the portfolio areas, ministers said time and time again, yes, the funding does finish in 2021-22 but it is our view that it is a good program and we will continue the funding'. The \$18 million wafer surplus in the fourth year is a mirage. If it is realised, it is code for massive cuts after the next election if Tasmania is unlucky enough to have the Liberal Party re-elected.

A number of programs that are important to the Tasmanian community, including Out of Home Care; Family and Sexual Violence Plan; Workforce Development - which will be crucial in assisting Tasmania recover from the economic impact of COVID-19; Events and Hospitality; Dark Mofo; AFL football games; and events in Tasmania; that funding is significantly diminished over the out-years. It is clear that is the time there will be a real ask of Government and, by virtue of their answers, a commitment of the Government to respond to those needs.

Basic programs, like bushfire fuel reduction on private land; Tas Alert - which is an important app and digital technology asset for the community to understand when there are emergencies across Tasmania and informing people about how best to respond and what they need to know; the Glenorchy Jobs Hub and the Sorell Jobs Hub - are not supported over the forward Estimates. These are practical initiatives that Government has supported, but miraculously they disappear from the Budget in the out-years. That makes the surplus in the third and fourth years not plausible in the argument that the Government has placed through the Budget Papers.

The Premier and Treasurer said we needed to use our balance sheet to respond to the needs of our community, yet there is a whole range of programs that are not funded in the out-years. There is an acceptance within the Budget Papers that there is going to be high unemployment, but that is the job done. We do not accept that. We think the Government needs to do more. It says it has the best books in the country. We don't necessarily agree. However, let us say it is the accepted principle from the Government; but every other state is going into significant net debt and deficit over the forward Estimates because they are responding to the challenge.

We argue that there is a whole lot of spin and disingenuous information put forward about the Budget and how it is responding. The Budget states the Government's response to COVID-19 is infrastructure build. This is building and construction, but time and again, this Government fails in its delivery of infrastructure projects. Of the 80-odd projects that have been listed in agencies for infrastructure projects, over half of them are delayed - and the combined delay is 67 years. Of the 24 road projects, 14 are delayed - to a tune of 23 years. The infrastructure delays are a combined period of time of 90 years. You cannot say it is an infrastructure-led recovery when you cannot get stuff out the door, when you cannot build, and you do not build for the community.

Labor in its last six years spent more on infrastructure than in the last six years of this Government. This is not a record spend, per se. This is a mirage that the Government is trying

to impose on the Tasmanian people. This is not a program that is going to work. We were disappointed in a whole range of answers from the Treasurer, in his openness to our forecasting and projections, and the impact of the infrastructure underspend and what it means for unemployment in Tasmania. It was a missed opportunity for the Treasurer to explain his plan.

Time expired.

[12.39 p.m.]

Ms STANDEN - I rise to contribute on the process of Estimates for what is my third occasion since coming to this place. My particular role was examining the area of climate change which is under the Premier's responsibility now as he is the first Minister for Climate Change the Liberal Government has had.

I have sat across the table from two ministers in this time. I started with some comments about the Premier's ambitions. I guess that was coming from the reflection that I recalled that the Premier had been a minister for environment in the past. I was not exactly sure what the time frame was for that but I have since looked that up and it was from the middle of last year through to January when the Premier was announced as the Minister for Climate Change. Prior to that I believe Ms Archer had responsibility for the portfolio.

The Liberal Government has consistently maintained that Climate Change is an important part of the Government business, be it as an independent portfolio or prior to that. I am not sure there is proof yet of that being the case, given that the Premier had that responsibility for about six or eight months before becoming Minister for Climate Change. The state is operating under the Climate Change (State Action) Act 2008 and he announced in the context of the Budget that there would be a review of that act. I believe it was widely anticipated that that review was going to come to fruition in his time as minister.

An independent review under the act is undertaken every four years. In 2016 the Government commissioned an organisation to undertake the latest review. Public consultation was undertaken on proposed amendments to the act and that closed two years ago in November 2018. I know from talking with representatives of Climate Tasmania and others with an interest in climate change and action across the state that that has been widely anticipated for some time now. I doubt the Premier could say anything different other than his latest initiative to provide funding of \$300 000 to progress the 2020 independent review of the Climate Change (State Action) Act is anything but an independent review of an independent review.

Nonetheless, if it brings about climate action I am sure we can all be pleased about that, but it does seem to me that the Premier is coming to this portfolio after a period of inaction including under his watch for at least six months or so before he has taken on the mantle. The fact that there is anticipated a gap between the existing Climate Change Action Plan 2017 to 2021, which ends in just one year, and the Climate Change Action Plan 2026, I am not sure whether that means it will be an action plan for 2021 to 2026 or from 2026. I really hope that this does not signal five more years of inaction.

The DPAC annual report is of concern because it flags precisely no performance measures in the area of climate change and that has been the case since 2017-18. If this Premier is serious about tackling this portfolio he needs to sharpen his pencil and not just provide funding for independent reviews for which there is no independent reviewer announced or

terms of reference or anything of the like. There needs to be proper performance measures and plans in place.

He consistently argues that Tasmania is a leader in the area of climate change and I accept that part of that story is true because we have hit our target net zero emissions by 2050 for the fourth year in a row, but as John Hunter, a semi-retired climate scientist and oceanographer, said in his opinion piece recently in the *Mercury*, it is a bit much to claim to be a true world leader in climate action given that emissions since 1990 have substantially reduced in the area of land use change and forestry, there has been a significant reduction in emissions in the period 1990 to 2018 and that has been the sole reason of setting in fact an increase in emissions in the areas of waste, industrial processes and product use, agriculture and energy.

It would be good to see action across those sectors, which is why I asked a question of the Premier whether he intends to identify sector-specific emissions targets within his upcoming action plan for 2026. I was surprised and disappointed to hear that that is not the case, despite the fact that in the other place he cited the benefits in some places, including Costa Rica apparently - I will have to look into that, Premier - where they boast negative net emissions and that is used as a marketing tool for visitation and so forth and he could see the benefit of this within Tasmania. I urge the Premier to look carefully at that and identify the opportunity for us to work hard on those other sectors around industrial processes, agriculture and waste where we could go harder, faster, stronger.

I asked some questions about the electric vehicle target for the Tasmanian Government in relation to the fleet and bus trials. Premier, congratulations on finally adopting Labor's policy to transition the Tasmanian government fleet to electric vehicles which we identified five years or so ago, but why is this goal set for 2030 when by his own admission he knows that price parity and technological advances mean that within five years it is likely that those vehicles will be comparable to combustion engines?

I congratulate the Government on the charging station rollout. That has gone reasonably well from what I can see. There might be one or two gaps in areas where the Electric Vehicle Association and tourism bodies would like to see some additional charging stations but by and large that progress has gone quite well. There is a real opportunity to capitalise on that and identify not just fleet vehicles to seed the second-hand market, as the Premier says, but also to work with hire car companies and taxi companies and so on. Rather than just two Metro bus trials, having identified the capability of transitioning our Metro buses to low-emissions vehicles, why could we not be more aggressive and act more quickly in this regard? It seems to be an opportunity going begging.

I want to flag the opportunity to work more closely with youth. I have had the opportunity to work with Toby Thorpe, the Tasmanian Young Australian of the Year, and others who have been outspoken in relation to climate strikes and so on. I note that the Premier has seen fit to provide just \$50 000 to support the Greening Australia youth climate leaders program within this Budget. I thought that was about half but in fact it is only about 25 per cent of what the youth climate leaders program was seeking. This is a truly unique opportunity to work across regional schools and reach deep into the pockets of Tasmania to harness that energy of young people.

They are deeply concerned about the climate's future. Mission Australia's youth survey report 2020 revealed the most important issue identified by young people in Tasmania was the

environment at 44 per cent, closely followed by mental health. Those two issues are linked and there is an opportunity to work with that sector to do much more.

Time expired.

[12.49 p.m.]

Ms BUTLER - I rise to discuss the Premier's contribution to the Estimates committee. It was quite interesting that the main focus around the Budget was infrastructure and building our way to recovery, when we know that half the infrastructure projects in this state are already delayed and there is a combined 90 years backlog in infrastructure projects in Tasmania at the moment. The Bridgewater bridge is a fantastic example of delayed infrastructure. Delayed again and again. I recently did some door knocking -

Mr Gutwein - You had the money 20 years ago.

Ms BUTLER - I am glad you are listening. What the community stated when I have been door knocking in Bridgewater is that they have a strong connection to their bridge. It is named after their suburb. A lot of people have family members who were the original crew on the bridge who used to run it. They know that bridge well. They like their bridge and they want a new bridge built to replace it. They want it done properly.

Some of the main feedback is that people want it to be built for the future. They do not want it to be built for now. It is like when they started building the Sydney Harbour Bridge in 1923. A lot of people complained at the time that it was too big, far too wide, that it was a waste of money and that they would never have that kind of vehicle transportation and population to require such a wide, huge bridge. The bridge is now perfect for what was forecast for the future of Sydney. It is perfect for the population and fits it perfectly.

If you ever build any of these proposed Bridgewater bridge plans - I have seen so many over the last 12 years that I find it hard to take them seriously anymore - you do not have any space for a rail corridor. Every person I spoke to said, 'if they are going to build it, build it properly'. It is not about building it for now, it is about building it for the future. If you are not going to put a rail corridor in there, at least leave the space to put a rail corridor in there. I am dubious about whether that bridge will be built, or even the first sod turned, within this term of Government. I ask you to reconsider leaving space on that bridge for a rail corridor. It is important infrastructure and we do not want in 50 years' time, or in 100 years' time, to have the same situation we have now with the Tasman Bridge, which is that it is not wide enough. It was not built for the future. This needs to be built for the future.

Talking about infrastructure gone wrong and the inability to roll out a project, I cannot go past the dreadful handling of the Westbury prison. The first site was earmarked without any community consultation. For this new site there was not any effective community consultation. Hundreds and thousands of dollars have been wasted without a feasibility study. There has not been any proper due diligence. You have a project sitting out in the never-never. No one knows what is going on. A heap of uncertainty for that community continues. The minister is incapable of rolling out infrastructure projects.

Labor has always supported a northern prison. We support a major project in the north and we know that is what the building and construction sector wants. We also want to make sure that if you are going to build it, that Tasmanian builders and Tasmanian construction firms

are considered and that it is built in a place that would be appropriate and suitable for a correctional facility which holds vulnerable people.

At the moment, you are looking at placing a prison in the middle of a bushfire zone in a nature reserve, which is on Crown land. It is not appropriate. You know it is not appropriate. It was a nice place to park it. The road that leads to it is not that flash. It is only three kilometres from the original site and there is no infrastructure. It has no gas, no power, nothing. It is built on five stages of very hard rock.

It was going to cost you \$270 million at the original site. This will cost you a lot more than that. Other people wrote to the Government and said that private land was available. One of those people stood up at a public meeting in Westbury and was told in front of about 200 people; that the Government did not look at the application; it was not considered because it was not in the expression of interest. That was said in front of 200 people by a minister in your Government. This site was never put in the expressions of interest either. It was never part of that process.

This Government has also never been forthcoming about where those original expressions of interests were. How many of them were in Bass? How many of them were in your electorate, Premier? There are a lot of questions that need to be answered here. I hope the Government can start running some of these projects and infrastructure projects properly and to date because, if you are building us out of recovery, you have not got a very good start. Being 90 years behind already is not right.

I want to touch on COVID-19. I have had many people say what a good job you did in leading the state in isolation. People trusted your advice, followed your advice and you were part of that. That needs to be stated on the record.

The one problem I had with it was the use of a special exemption workers and allowing special exemption workers into Tasmania during COVID-19, at a time when we had the north-west outbreak, which we still have not got the report from. It might be good if we could hurry that up because people deserve to know the answers, or at least understand what happened.

You allowed a roofer to come from Victoria to fix a leak in a roof at the Royal Hobart Hospital, our main health asset. That was ridiculous. It was not at arm's length from the State Controller and it was not fair to put that amount of pressure onto the State Controller saying they were making the decisions. There is a level of responsibility a government has to have around testing of people who came into the state and allowing those people straight onto workplaces to take Tasmanian jobs.

We have a lot of people in the building and construction sector who lost their jobs. We had a lot of people who were working side by side with those people who were flying in from interstate. They were not tested: that was only brought in after we jumped up and down, and that was with a lot of help from the CEPU and the CFMEU. They did an amazing job in raising that issue. I was more than happy to work with them because I thought it was important to protect Tasmanian jobs but also to protect the community's health.

When it came to the special exemption worker, they were applying to be seen as specialists for doing things like Hungry Jack's fit outs or petrol station fit outs, and fixing holes

in roofs. We should have that capacity here in Tasmania. It was not up to the State Controller to have to undertake workplace capacity testing but we should know where the gaps are. We should know that going into the future. We should know that we do not have enough roofers, builders and painters if we are to undertake the task to build this recovery, Premier. I do not feel like we are doing that at the moment.

Another deficiency is with the HomeBuilder Grant. Yes, you may have extended it but when we came into the debate on that HomeBuilder Grant, Labor pointed out the deficiencies with the problem -

Mrs PETRUSMA - Point of order, Mr Deputy Chairman. I am trying to work out to which dot points in the Premier's portfolio, Ms Butler, is actually referring. She has mentioned a few here. I actually cannot see them listed as matters of concern at the committee.

A member - You don't think COVID-19 is -

Mrs PETRUSMA - You are taking a very long bow as to what could be done under it. I raise that point of relevance.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIR - Thank you, Ms Petrusma. You do have to be relevant to the dot points in the report, Ms Butler.

Ms BUTLER - Thank you. Obviously, I was hitting some buttons that the Government did not wish me to keep talking about.

Time expired.

[12.59 p.m.]

Ms DOW - I rise today to provide my contribution and follow up to Estimate hearings which were held last week and what an enlightening week it was for us in Opposition. We had the ability to ask a lot of questions: some things that we had been seeking answers on for a significant period of time. It was pleasing to have some answers from the Government on some things.

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

APPROPRIATION BILL (No. 1) 2020 (No. 46) APPROPRIATION BILL (No. 2) 2020 (No. 47)

Reports of Estimates Committees

In Committee

Resumed from above.

Ms DOW - Mr Deputy Chair, I was making reference to the COVID-19 outbreak in the north-west, which was a very difficult time for our community on the north-west coast.

A lot of discussion took place during Estimates about our preparedness for the outbreak. It was a very difficult time for our community. I place on record my thanks to all of the staff involved at each of our hospitals across the north-west coast, and their families, who found themselves quarantined. There were almost 5000 individuals and their families, and also small businesses who endured a lot during that time.

The secrecy of this government, and their ability to sit on reports, was discussed during Estimates. Over the course of the week, we saw a number of reports dropped, and there was not the ability for adequate scrutiny on each of those important documents during that time.

One of the reports that I am particularly interested in is the independent inquiry on the north-west. I am concerned about the delay to that inquiry and those findings being made public. It is disappointing they were not made public for scrutiny during this week of parliamentary sittings, to better understand the recommendations, the implications and what preventive strategies need to be put in place in the event there were future outbreaks on the north-west coast. It would also help to understand and learn from actions of the past about how we can do things better in the future.

That is important as our state begins to open up again, with people coming to our state over Christmas. There will be many families coming together again - which is very positive - but it increases the risk of another transmission within our community, or the incidence of an outbreak as we have seen around the country, most notably in South Australia recently.

It is important that information is made publicly available, and it is disappointing that the findings of the review have been delayed. The original time frame was October; that has been drawn out to the end of November. We now have an additional week to wait to better understand what took place and what we need to do better in the future.

I thank those who provided submissions to that process. I also thank those undertaking the independent inquiry for their work on this significant matter for the north-west coast.

We were significantly impacted, and it was a terrible time in that we lost loved and respected members of our community. I also place on the record my deepest sympathy to the families and friends of those people, and the wider community.

That brings me to the subject of the Small Business Hardship Grants, which was discussed at great length throughout Estimates. One of the interesting things we learned through Estimates was the provision of mental health support to those people who were unsuccessful in their grant application in that initial stage or those who received the lesser amount of \$4000 when they originally applied for the \$15 000. I have heard firsthand from those who applied for the grants program that the correspondence provided to them was sometimes inconsistent across different applicants, but it also did not include a direct reference to mental health support.

It has been an incredibly difficult time for small business owners and operators right around the state. Consideration should have been given for their ongoing mental health and wellbeing, and support should have been put in place. It would have been an important time for those people to be directed to the appropriate mental health support when they were learning about the success or otherwise of their applications.

It is pleasing to note that there will be further discussion in this place following the deliberations of the Public Accounts Committee that will further debate the transparency of that grant program and understanding exactly who was successful as part of that program.

It highlights the importance of ongoing support to small business across the state as well, and I know there has been lots of discussion about that during the response to the Budget but also during Estimates.

That brings me to tourism and the investment in the *Spirit of Tasmania* ships, which we know has been significantly delayed under this Government. This is significant inter-generational infrastructure for our community and they are critical to increasing the capacity and growth of our local industries on the north-west coast. Tourism is one of those but also agriculture as we look to increasing fresh freight exports from our state, and particularly from the north-west coast.

There had been discussion in Estimates about the delay of this project and the impact it will have on the tourism industry and regional tourism. There will be a reliance on driving tourism in and around the state, and we would like to see that grow. We know that regional Tasmania will benefit from that. Certainty about the delivery time frame for the new *Spirit of Tasmania* vessels is needed. There is an ongoing need to work with the tourism industry, particularly in the rural and regional areas of the north-west coast.

That brings me to the discussion of ongoing funding for the Abt Railway, another piece of critical infrastructure for the north-west and west coast, and also a pivotal part of our local tourism economy. I know there were some questions asked about the operational funding in the Budget and some capital funding was included in previous budgets to do some ongoing maintenance and upgrades. My understanding is they have had a pretty tough year and it would be important for there to be increased support for the Abt Railway in the outer years of the Budget, not just this financial year.

The other project I will touch on is the Cradle Mountain redevelopment, an iconic project not only for the north-west coast but for the entire state. This is another project that has endured some delay, particularly around the expression of interest process for the Gateway Precinct, the private investment component of the project. We learned during Estimates there should be an announcement about that next year. I ask the Government to uphold that commitment. It is a critical project for the north-west, not only for the economic activity the construction jobs it will create in the short term, but in the long term it is an investment in a world-class tourism experience that will draw people to Tasmania for many years to come. There has been a lot of work done across the regions about putting this proposal together, and a lot of federal and state money committed. It is important that it is delivered in a timely manner and the full economic benefits and long term inter-generational benefits of this project are experienced.

At the time of the north-west outbreak, we called for a dedicated package of investment for the north-west region in response to the extended period of lockdown for our local economy and all the other issues that were experienced during that time. I note the Cradle Mountain redevelopment project was one project, as was the iconic walk.

Time expired.

[2.40 p.m.]

Mr GUTWEIN - Mr Deputy Chair, I have a board meeting I have to attend at 3 p.m. so if the House can indulge me. Before I start welcome Maggie, Dippy and Penny. Penny is Jane Howlett's daughter. Very nice to have the year 6 students from The Friends' School getting an understanding of democracy in action. Welcome to the parliament.

I thank all members for their contribution to the Budget debate. I note that the shadow Treasurer bemoans how Estimates works and that it does not operate as functionally as it could. I spent 11.5 hours - I had a lunch break - at Estimates on Monday and we did not get to one output group in the Budget. I had the pleasure of spending nearly 10 hours in the upper House Estimates the following day. After a very short overview we went straight to output groups and covered an enormous amount of territory. The Budget was fully explored. Before the shadow Treasurer bemoans the Estimates processes, he should have a good look at how members approach Estimates. Any information about the Budget is available if members are prepared to work through the Budget in the manner in which Estimates was first established to allow them to do so.

Having come to this place nearly 20 years ago and spending, at times, a relatively short period in overview; at other times, depending on the minister, we would range far and wide. Through this, the upper House has consistently demonstrated a full exploration of the Budget and its outputs is available to members, if they do not attempt to play politics for, as it turned out the other day, about 11 hours.

Regarding the matters recently raised on the independent inquiry into the north-west coast, I received a copy yesterday and the independent report will be released in full next week. Mr Melick has made himself available to provide his thoughts and insights on the release of that document. The Government will now consider its recommendations and provide a response next week. The report will be released in full. Members will have the opportunity to understand the input that was received and the views of the independent reviewer, Mr Melick, and what actions he believes should be taken.

This was an opportunity to make certain that if processes needed to be altered or changed then this was a learning experience. I thank all the people who made submissions and contributed to the report. I thank the people of the north-west coast for being so disciplined through a period of great challenge. I recall the remarks of the then Chief Medical Officer, Brendan Murphy, when he said the north-west was an exemplar of how to deal with an outbreak. It was the first outbreak of any scale that needed to be dealt with in the state. It is with great thanks and all credit to the people of the north-west coast for the way they approached the difficult directions they had to manage. I thank them very much for that.

I also thank the departments of Premier and Cabinet, Treasury and Finance, Communities Tasmania, State Growth and Tourism Tasmania for the support they provided to me and my office during the Budget and Budget Estimates process. I especially acknowledge the leadership provided by Jenny Gale, Tony Ferrall, Mandy Clarke in Communities in the Children, Youth and Family division, Kim Evans from State Growth, and the CEO of Tourism Tasmania, John Fitzgerald.

They all lead agencies and play roles in agencies that we can be proud of, serving Tasmanians during what has been a difficult time. I thank the nearly 32 000 people who are

employed within the public sector for their efforts over the year. They were engaged in outstanding work and made sacrifices to ensure our community could be safe.

Likewise, I am very proud of the 2020-21 Budget that my Government has delivered. It is a very important Budget: the most important Budget I have delivered as Treasurer and one of the most important ever delivered in the state. It is, as I have said before, a Budget for our times. It is a Budget that responded to the challenges, disruptions and uncertainty created by the pandemic. It was a Budget that was built around jobs and confidence and the community, and designed to rebuild a stronger Tasmania. The Opposition is broadly happy with the Budget, as in their little red book of debt, 99.7 per cent of it they agreed with.

The Greens did not agree with that much of it, but as I have said many times in this place, you need to have the courage of your convictions and you need to explain to Tasmanians what you stand for and, importantly, how you would pay for it. Once again the Greens brought down an alternative budget which had a few things in it that were kooky that I certainly would not support but you could understand what they stand for and, importantly, how they would pay for it. They had the courage of their convictions to demonstrate those things that they would defund.

Ms O'Connor - There are a couple of our policies in your Budget this year too, so that is a good thing.

Mr GUTWEIN - Not many, but those that are in it are important. I was very pleased with the transition of our vehicle fleet to 100 per cent EV and zero emissions.

Ms Standen - Albeit rather slowly.

Mr GUTWEIN - When you bring out an alternative budget and what a five-year transition would cost then you will have a policy. At the moment you just have a wish. That is something that you can put into a policy document when you do get around to doing one.

In the discussion during the Estimates hearing for DPAC, and it was touched on by Ms O'Connor, we spent time talking about the commission of inquiry. It will be very important. As I said this morning, we want to do this once, we want to do it well and we want to make certain that out of the commission of inquiry comes all the information we need to ensure we can have a very safe system in the state for children and that we can be confident of it.

The Attorney-General is now working assiduously with the Solicitor-General and others to ensure that we have a robust set of terms of reference. As I indicated last week, my expectation was that within two to four weeks we would have the terms of reference, with the commission of inquiry to begin early in the new year.

The other point I make about the DPAC Estimates is to note that DPAC played an integral role in the Government's response to the COVID-19 pandemic. The department is the responsible agency for emergency recovery under the Emergency Management Act and is also responsible for public information, communication, policy advice, interoperability arrangements, critical technology infrastructure and call centre requirements.

The 2020-21 Budget offered a range of measures to support the breadth of work undertaken by DPAC. In particular, this year's Budget had a focus on building resilience in the

wake of COVID-19 and also ensuring we have a contemporary public service that strives for client-centric service delivery. Funding of \$2.2 million over two years has been allocated to the department for a centre for review and evaluation which will initially support the delivery of the Tasmanian State Service review. We have also allocated \$500 000 to reshaping key government services provided to the Tasmanian community using best practice and a customer-centric approach.

We have allocated \$2.9 million over four years to intergovernmental partnerships with the Australian and other governments to continue to mitigate risks and pursue priorities to the Tasmanian community as we work through the new collaborative and responsive national cabinet model. Further, we have allocated \$474 000 per annum for four years for policy coordination planning response support and recovery in relation to natural disasters and security threats, and we continue to roll out the 2019-20 allocation of four years' additional operational funding of nearly \$1 million to deliver a robust TasAlert service and emergency management communication system across government.

The Budget also sees an allocation of \$570 000 over three years to support the outcomes of the Aboriginal Employment Strategy and school-based traineeship program and for delivering important Aboriginal cultural respect training for Senior Executive Service management employees. At the hearing, Mr Ellis asked some questions in regard to the establishment of four Aboriginal employee working groups to progress the strategies and actions relating to Aboriginal cultural respect training building networks developing a whole-of-government toolkit to support Aboriginal employment and delivering a whole-of-government mentoring program. We have set an employment of 3.5 per cent to increase the workforce participation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in the State Service.

These are all important initiatives which will be driven by DPAC. I would again like to thank the hardworking people in the Department of Premier and Cabinet for their efforts not only in their support to our COVID-19 response and recovery but in their ongoing support of me as Premier with my Cabinet and the work that they do every day.

As I have said before, in responding to both the health crisis and economic crisis, Treasury has played a key role in responding to the pandemic. Treasury has been there providing advice on what has been an unprecedented and uncertain time, and like all other jurisdictions around Australia, we took the decision to defer the delivery of the 2020-21 Budget. Notwithstanding the deferral of the budget until November, we prepared two economic and fiscal updates, the first in May and the second in August. The Treasury staff vacated their offices at the time that we had the first shutdown and then worked in the main remotely from that period on for a number of months before returning in the June/July period.

It would be arguable that their output actually increased during that time in terms of the support they provided to government and the reports they provided, but importantly they also maintained the ongoing process of developing this Budget we have recently brought down. With that comes a range of key personnel management tasks in respect of the budget branch, and I will mention David Bailey, who did a fantastic job. He knows this place well having been a long-time adviser, I think, for Michael Aird. He runs the budget branch like clockwork and I could not heap more praise on him than I am about to do because he was sensational. He was brilliant through that period.

It is a very difficult task to pull a budget together under those circumstances, at the same time managing all of the challenges of COVID-19. It was an outstanding effort and the leader I believe Labor fully understands and knows that. I noted that they chose to ignore the fact that for a small state we had provided forecasts now for two years in this Budget, which was an additional year to what we would do in a normal budget year. If you consider South Australia's budget, they provided one year of forecasts and three years of projections. I would much rather have our Budget with a forecast for this year and also a forecast for the coming year. I believe Labor understood the reasons for that. I know Mr Ferrall explained ad nauseam to them but they will choose to ignore the very sensible advice he provided of Treasury's view that providing a forecast this year and next year was of more value than providing a forecast this year followed by three years of long-term projections based on long-term averages when the world has changed considerably.

A range of different questions came up. I note that Ms Ogilvie acknowledged the uncertainty of our environment and a number of her questions discussed the potential timing of the vaccine and its impact on the budget Estimates over the coming year. The other matters that were raised included a very clear message from the Labor Party that in terms of debt we should be borrowing more. That is a very Labor position to have -

Ms O'Connor - Hang on, you're standing there in a glass house with this Budget. It is the time for it and it's fair.

Mr GUTWEIN - and we have borrowed and taken full use of the low interest rates. It is a statement of fact that both of you would like us to borrow more. Your alternative budget indicates that very clearly and -

Ms O'Connor - I don't think it's something you're strong on in this Budget, that's all.

Mr GUTWEIN - I am just making a point that we put the Budget up and it was unusual that we would be called upon to borrow more. I believe that with a \$5 billion infrastructure program across the forward Estimates and record spending into health, education, and housing, this Budget is a good budget for the times.

[3.00 p.m.]

Dr WOODRUFF - It is disappointing that the Premier is leaving. I make no negative comment about that, other than he might miss a few kind comments from me. Since he has to do other things, he will have to refer to *Hansard*.

This was a very important Budget for the Premier, who is also the Treasurer and the Minister for Climate Change. Few would argue the importance of both those portfolios. Climate Change and Treasury are both weighty portfolios to manage for the future of Tasmanians.

One thing that we are very disappointed about with the Liberal Budget is the failure to take the opportunity that should have been provided through the response to COVID-19 to really set Tasmania on a new course by looking at our future through a climate lens. We had that opportunity and this Budget has missed it. There is no doubt Tasmania is blessed by renewable energy. There is no doubt, as well, that there is so much more that Tasmania urgently must do to rectify the emissions that we produce across the state, across all the sectors -

transport, waste, manufacturing and agriculture. Many of these emissions are rising, as shown by the latest greenhouse gas accounting records.

It is also obvious to anybody who reads the science and who reads and listens to what scientists are telling us, that we have to do everything we can to keep our carbon stores intact and to expand them.

What this Government does not do, and the Minister for Climate Change has not accepted, is that we must put an end to native forest logging in Tasmania. Until then, we can never say we are doing everything we can to take strong action on climate heating, bring down emissions and safeguard the future of our children against the changing climate, which is going to be the major issue in their lifetime.

The Premier is an intelligent man, and it quite clear from the conversations we had in Estimates climate change discussions, that he understands a lot about the importance of reducing our state's emissions to bring down climate heating. However, he is also blinded by a number of inconvenient truths, one of which is his inability to come up to speed and recognise the changing science about the carbon accounting for native forest logging, as well as the urgency to stop native forest logging to protect the biodiversity and the beauty of what is remaining in our native forests in Tasmania.

Although the Premier made some clear statements about the fact that it is very important for Tasmania to reduce our emissions, he fell short of praising the Tasmanian Forestry Agreement for being the key reason that we have our current emissions profile. There is no doubt that the Tasmanian Forestry Agreement led to a reduction in logging. The carbon stored as a result of that is the reason for Tasmania's current emission profile.

That is the reason that Tasmania's emissions profile is what it is at the moment. That is even more reason we should be doing everything we can to end native forest logging, to keep what remains of our forests intact and to do everything we can to grow the stores out of there.

In our alternative budget, the Greens established a safe climate commission. We spent \$10 million doing that, and we focused on the things the Government has failed to prioritise in the Budget. We focused on planning for water security. We focused on funding the greening of our cities and towns for health and safety, and also for the enjoyment of people living there but, fundamentally, to be able to deal with the heat waves of the future. We focused much more money on community emergency hubs to respond to increasing climate change disasters, and supporting SES and TFS volunteers who are on the hard end of bulldozers and chainsaws and being asked to respond to disasters at any time of the day or night.

It is clear that the Premier urgently needs to prioritise a meeting with the Doctors for the Environment. They wrote an open letter to him about a month or so ago and I am not sure whether he has ever responded. I have not heard that he has, certainly not publicly. The core of that group originated in the north-west of Tasmania. They were people who were working day and night to protect Tasmanians and patients at the North West Regional Hospital. They are doctors. They are people who sit in surgeries every day, and talk to patients about their concerns and their fears. They are the people - the hundreds of them - who wrote to the Premier calling on him to end native forest logging to protect our health: for the health of people through the reduction in bushfire risks, through the reduction in the pollution related impacts of forestry burn offs, most of all for the importance of maintaining those carbon stores and

growing the carbon stores to better buffer us and the planet from the escalating heating which we are facing.

The Premier needs to respond to those doctors. He needs to accept that there are experts in the medical community he should listen to as much as there are expert scientists in every other community. He has shown he is capable of doing that through COVID-19 and now in a time of emergency, this is what he needs to be doing as a priority this year.

I will set the record straight for the Premier. He said Treasury was going to have a review of emissions profiles to provide advice on the impact on a range of industry sectors under a transition to a new target before 2050. The Premier has to look at the impact of native forest logging on those emissions, and he has to look at the impact of ending native forest logging and the benefit it would have to our emissions profile. He has to look sooner rather than later. I have a sector by sector reporting target, because it is clear that although overall our emissions are net zero in Tasmania, we have a 10 per cent increase in emissions between 2016-17 in the agriculture sector and 5 per cent in waste, and a number of other sectors as well. All sectors should be encouraged and incentivised to bring down emissions.

I want to mention our Halls Island. The Premier, despite having the knowledge from his time as Parks minister, was incapable of answering Ms O'Connor's question about public access to Halls Island and whether it would still be available. It is clear from Mr Jaensch's response in another Estimates Committee that Halls Island will have 'exclusive access' to the developer, Mr Hackett, and that there will in fact be no public access unless there has been agreement by that person. That is a shame and we will continue to fight it.

Time expired.

[3.10 p.m.]

Ms O'BYRNE - Thank you for the opportunity to make comment on the Estimates for the Premier and Treasurer. I want to make my contribution predominantly around the area of family violence which was examined during this portfolio. I am pleased the Attorney-General is here because there are a couple of crossovers that were identified within that portfolio that the Premier has undertaken to take some further advice on. I am not sure whether they fit with the Attorney-General or the Police minister but it was to do with some of the challenges women face when they are reporting family violence incidences.

One of the challenges is that if you are trying to obtain an order, or get an order changed or upgraded, you have to have \$47.75. That might not sound very much to everyone in this House but \$47.75 is a lot of money to some people. I dealt with a constituent recently for whom that meant she couldn't make the changes to her Family Violence Order that keep her safe. Her existing Family Violence Order prevents her ex-partner from entering her house but not standing on her front lawn and screaming at her, not following her around and not doing all of those sorts of things.

The Premier undertook to investigate that and see whether there may be some capacity for that to be resolved. It might be that in cases of family violence perhaps we waive those fees; I think that would be an appropriate response. If we are asking women to make the very brave step of obtaining family violence orders we should not be putting in barriers to make it difficult for them to do that.

The other incident I raised with the Premier that he also said he would look at was that the same constituent was then told when she did get her \$47.75 to make her application that she would have to serve that order herself against someone who has been known to be violent towards her. As we have understood it since then, if the violence order is taken to court by the police and an order given at that stage they will be responsible for serving that order. If you have done it yourself to increase the safety around you and your children, then you have to find someone to do it for you or do it yourself. I do not think any of us here would think that is necessarily a safe move for anyone to make in that circumstance. I appreciate that the Premier took on board a further investigation into that matter. I look forward to him coming back with something positive given his positive commentary at that point.

We also identified issues around the emergency accommodation, Rapid Rehousing. They were sort of brushed off as if there wasn't really a challenge for people, but I know from talking to the sector that they often have phone calls and referrals that they cannot house, so there are many people who cannot find somewhere safe. The waiting list for Rapid Rehousing is quite extreme. Once again, if they are leaving violent situations, often with their children, having asked them to do that then it is our responsibility to make sure they are safe. The most dangerous time for someone fleeing a family violence situation is the point of leaving. If we cannot wrap around those services that is extremely concerning.

There has also been a tendency by the Government to talk about the fact that they have not had an expected increase in family violence reporting. We have not had an increase in the ones that reach the threshold for police reporting that would form part of that data set, but we are seeing increases in violence and women seeking help. Most disturbingly, we are seeing an increase in people's tolerance for how much they will accept. When you talk with service providers they say that the tipping point for women now to seek assistance is much higher than it was before and that, in a way, the impact of COVID-19 has been that they accept a greater level of violence before they seek help. The alternate side of that is that the perpetrators are able to exert a greater amount of control before somebody can seek help. So, whilst we may not be seeing a significant increase in the data set that the Premier refers to, we are seeing an increase in cases. We are seeing an increase in the complexity; therefore, we are seeing an increase in the demand on services to be able to deal with those.

Each of the services responding to family violence have recorded significant increases against last year and nationally and internationally we are seeing that the response to the increase in family violence through COVID-19 and coercive control is extremely high.

The Government's Budget allows short-term assistance to those service providers; however, that does not come with an ongoing understanding of the cost and increase in that abuse. The increase that the Government gave, whilst welcome, is nowhere near enough to meet the ongoing demand. Most services reported that it allowed them to catch up with where they were to deal with some of their waiting lists but each one of those services has extensive waiting lists now. There is, in some cases, 45 days before a referral can be dealt with appropriately, so we are seeing an increase in demand and an increase in complexity and yet within the Budget, we are not seeing a long-term commitment to an increase in funding.

That disturbs me because the funding we are getting now is clearly not meeting the need. That need is not going to go away because one of the outcomes of more complex family violence circumstances is more complex solutions and ongoing need for support. I was quite concerned about that.

What also concerned me greatly was the fact that there were unexpended funds in family violence prevention. I cannot understand that and, to be fair, the Premier was not able to explain that either. We are looking forward to the answer on why there would be unexpended funds in the area of family violence prevention when we know the demand is higher and the need is not being met. We have seen it in a number of portfolios where we do not expend the money, it gets rolled over the next year and then counted as some kind of bonus or initiative, when really we have not met the need or expended the funding in the period up until that point.

It is an opportunity for this Premier, having taken on the Prevention of Family Violence portfolio, to make some decisions and some funding commitment that go not just to saying, 'Here is this brand new thing that we did', but particularly to resourcing the needs. This current chronic underfunding already exists within this portfolio area. We know women are not getting support when they leave. We know women cannot find housing. We know women do not remain safe. Whilst there has been, thankfully this year, fewer deaths of women from family violence, I think only yesterday three women died across Australia due to family violence. It is not going away. It is not something we can be complacent about. When we tell women that we will be there when they leave, it is about time we were there when they leave so that we are getting them somewhere safe to live and immediate access to the counselling and support they need, and we are ensuring we are not putting weighty barriers between them and their ability to get some level of resolution.

Time expired.

Estimates of the Premier, Treasurer, Minister for Prevention of Family Violence, Minister for Climate Change, and Minister for Tourism agreed to.

DIVISIONS 4, 9, 11 AND 13

(Minister for State Growth, Minister for Science and Technology, Minister for Infrastructure and Transport, and Minister for Finance)

[3.19 p.m.]

Dr BROAD - I rise to discuss Estimates from last week with particular reference to Infrastructure, being my shadow portfolio. Throughout the entire Estimates process we saw a government that has brought down a budget but it is not fixing problems. We saw that in health, housing and also in infrastructure.

We also saw that once again this Government is renowned for its cover-ups and its secrecy. In the Infrastructure portfolio we are increasingly seeing this appetite to simply kick the can down the road at every opportunity. The Government does that by using consultants, committees and indeed a task force. One of their most ironic strategies is to develop an action plan which is, typically, a lack of action plan to delay making a decision.

We saw also that with Right to Information requests and the Government's capacity to sit on reports. We saw a number of reports being dropped immediately after, sometimes during, the Estimates discussion. We definitely saw that with the independent report into the north-west outbreak, which was only dropped yesterday.

That does not give us the opportunity to discuss and question the Government on these reports. The other tactic is to dump all the reports for things like GBEs on the one day, to snow everybody under and make it hard to scrutinise.

In the Infrastructure portfolio I spent a fair bit of time on what is one of the most important infrastructure projects in the state, the replacement of the *Spirit of Tasmania* vessels. The Government was in denial about the impact of that decision. We have a report from the independent economist Saul Eslake showing that every year of delay would cost the state's economy \$350 million a year in the tourism sector alone.

That is not taking into account the longer-term impact on industries in the agricultural sector, aquaculture and the sea fisheries that are reliant on the just-in-time, last on-first off service that the TT-Line provides. That means 6000 jobs that would not be created. The extra tourists coming into the state would create 6000 jobs. For every year that the Government delays replacing the new *Spirits* that is the impact on the Tasmanian economy.

I also pointed out that former premier, Will Hodgman, former ministers, Jeremy Rockliff and Rene Hidding, and the current minister, Michael Ferguson, have been promising to maximise Tasmanian jobs all along. If you go back into Estimates and GBE Estimates of the past you will see questioning by the Labor Party of the Liberal Party and the chair of TT-Line, Michael Grainger, about what you are doing to maximise Tasmanian jobs. This was dealt with in some depth and we did not hear anything in the Estimates that contradicted that.

We are keen for Tasmanian jobs to be maximised. That is exactly what we are keen for and that has been promised all along. We did not hear what these extra jobs are going to be: extra jobs on top of the fit-out that was promised in 2017. The Government again kicks the can down the road. The Government seems to have this idea that when you announce a project then the project is completed. A project announced is not a project delivered. We have seen it time and time again. We have seen the underground bus mall, the fifth lane on the Southern Outlet, the Bridgewater bridge, the Tamar bridge and so many more. Delayed projects are not a stimulus. The Government cannot even fix a roundabout, yet there is \$1 billion in infrastructure funding on the books for this financial year.

During questioning we could not get any information about how much money in total had been spent on infrastructure in this financial year. However, we did learn from a question that was put on notice that, as of 18 November, State Growth has spent \$68 million. The total budget for this year for State Growth is \$483 million, meaning the Government has \$415 million to spend in the seven months remaining in this financial year.

There is definitely a construction season, but this shows that in the first five months of the year State Growth has spent \$68 million and still has \$415 million to go. They have a lot of work to do to get the money out the door by the end of the year.

State Growth is struggling for capacity. Due to cuts over time, State Growth does not have the people to facilitate the tendering and the contracting to be able to get \$1 billion-worth of spend out the door. The Government says it is going to happen. I have significant doubts. I did not hear anything in Budget Estimates that would make me think otherwise.

I will go back to the TT-Line. Mr Ferguson loves using language to good effect, even when that language is completely misleading. After some of my first questions about TT-Line

in Estimates, Mr Ferguson had the hide to say that the Government is accelerating the replacement of the *Spirits of Tasmania*. I cannot for the life of me understand how putting the brakes on something for six months is an acceleration. That is a braking, stopping; that is delaying. That is not an acceleration.

He also told the committee about his disappointment with the FSG contract falling over. In *Hansard* it is a bit weirdly worded, but 'nor with the progress we reached with TT-Line and Rauma Marine Constructions (RMC)'. He then talked about how they were responding to something nobody predicted, the global pandemic. Under questioning, I asked that the TT-Line spent millions of dollars in search of a best option to replace the current *Spirit of Tasmania* vessels and sought years of expert advice. They put together a business case and a strategy. Mr Ferguson is not seeking, from his evidence, to do another business case. I can only assume that the same business case for the replacement of the *Spirits* is still in place.

On 27 February the minister signed a memorandum of understanding with the boat builder, RMC. Less than five months later RMC was dumped. When I asked about TT-Line spending millions in search of the best options to replace the current *Spirits* and years of expert advice, Mr Ferguson said, 'At that point, there was not the national capacity'. There was not the national capacity when the minister signed a memorandum of understanding. Suddenly, less than five months later, there is a national capability. There either is a national capability or there is not. Five months during COVID-19 is not suddenly going to make capacity appear out of nowhere.

He says, 'when people are out of work and looking for job opportunities for the sake of a six-month exercise'. He talks about a project that is accelerating with a six-month pause but he fails to mention that this would cost \$350 million for every year of delay and the creation of 6000 jobs. Those are the jobs that we are worried about. He also claimed that TT-Line stated publicly that it was very prudent for the Government to look through its options with the task force. I am not sure where that comment has been made in the public. It seems rather bizarre.

I will go to the dot points with this minister. The Government won for delaying projects, there is absolutely no doubt. The minister confirmed that, 'we are determined to replace the *Spirits* before the optimal replacement date of 2028, not after'. If 2028 is the deadline, that is still seven years delay from what they have already promised. Also, there was rubbishing of independent economist, Saul Eslake's work. The idea that his report to us was based on rumour and innuendo and outdated data is one that I strongly reject. Is the minister expecting there to be a tourism snap-back, or is he not? Is he expecting there to be a lack of tourists coming into the state? I will defer to Mr Eslake before I defer to this minister.

The Government is reviewing the freight and passenger projections expected in the medium- and long-term. That was evidence from the secretary, Kim Evans. We have a job to look at what the medium- and long-term projections look like; to look at the capacity and capability in the Tasmanian ship building industry to contribute to the replacement of the TT-Line. I emphasise the word, 'contribute'; that was the wording used by the secretary. They are not saying Tasmania will do it all. They are talking about Tasmanians contributing - just as they were promising in 2017 that Tasmanian companies would get a look in. Now, all of a sudden, they are presenting this in the media as though the entire ship will be built in Tasmania. That is definitely not the case.

I go back to the commentary the minister is using about Saul Eslake's report. He was using almost exactly the same wording used by the CEO of Austal when he was on the radio,

in the south and the north of the state. The minister admits he met with Font PR. I wonder if Font PR handed over talking points on how to rubbish Saul Eslake's report because the words coming out of his mouth were virtually identical to those used by Austal's CEO. There might be something in that because the minister probably couldn't come up with that idea by himself and so he is parroting Font PR's lines.

I will speak about the Leith Overpass, another project which has been delayed. This is a project we would certainly like to see completed. It is a dangerous intersection, and it has raised the ire for residents at Leith. Former Central Coast Councillor, John Deacon, said the Government should get on with it. It is disappointing it is taking so long. I asked the former minister, Jeremy Rockliff, about the Leith Overpass two years in a row. One year it was not in the Budget, and then the minister pointed out that funding was allocated in a line item but was not specifically for the Leith Overpass. I heard the same last year but building was about to start in this building season, the 2020-21 season, but it has not started and once again it is delayed. Now we hear it will be started in the next construction season. It is another project delayed. Every year we have seen a massive underspend in infrastructure from this Government. Adding up their typical underspends, they have underspent their infrastructure budget on average by about a quarter since they were elected in 2014.

Last year they promised roughly \$700 million in infrastructure but spent a little over \$500 million - and the \$500 million only really occurred because the Perth bypass finished early. If the Perth bypass had not finished early, that underspend would have been even bigger. This Government has no ability to get infrastructure projects out the door. They delay and delay. Once again, we have heard about the Bridgewater bridge. The minister says that people will be driving over the bridge in 2024, yet the funding goes into the following financial year and the Budget documents say it will not be completed until 2025. All we have seen so far is some holes drilled. I am not sure if this project has officially been ticked off by the federal government. Has it been ticked off by Infrastructure Australia? They basically canned the whole project only a few months ago. We have some long awaited geo-technical reports but we do not have a finalised design. Is their design going to be 80 kilometres per hour as the maximum speed? It seems like that is going to be the case to reduce costs.

One of my colleagues mentioned there is no capacity for rail on that bridge. We know this bridge is going to be delayed because they delay everything. It is well and truly pushed off beyond the next election, like everything else.

My colleague, Ms Dow, asked about the light rail that was promised to be starting any day now. Mr Hidding was discussing time lines for it to be built within about five years and now we are talking 10 years.

Again, I highlight this idea of reports being tabled. It is really disappointing that the minister tabled the report into the northern suburbs light rail after we had finished Estimates. I consider that to be an absolute disgrace. It treats parliament with disrespect by not giving us the chance to scrutinise what was in the report. What was in it? Not a lot. We have another consultant's report and we are no further along. No decision has been made; merely some simple statements about options. What are the recommendations? What is coming out of it? Once again, we have a report being done after Estimates have finished, and we are no further progressed.

On another issue, I asked about a shipping container that is lodged in the Forth River. It rammed up against the bridge during the floods of the Forth River in about 2016. It was going to take the bridge out so they got an excavator, leant over the bridge and punctured it, and the container sank. It is good that the minister is in here to hear about this one. The question I put on notice was, who is responsible for the removal or otherwise of that container? The information I received in response is that MAST is not responsible. They are responsible for issuing a navigation warning. That was already spoken of in the Estimates Committee, but I am none the wiser about who is responsible. Minister, who is responsible for the removal of that container? It is a question my constituents want answered. Who can I direct them to, minister, so that container can be removed? There has been some buck passing between the different government departments as to who is responsible for it. Please, can I have an answer?

We also discussed the Bruny Island ferries and the investment going on there. My colleague, David O'Byrne, raised the matter. One thing was that these sort of upgrades to the Bruny Island ferry were not in the tender. In fact, they were excluded from the tender to get a new service across to Bruny Island. Why was that the case? There may have been some other tenderers who would have put in a very decent bid if they knew that landside infrastructure was part of the deal - but it was excluded. Now, we have a situation where the Bruny Island ferries are struggling to meet the capacity at times and landside infrastructure is now on the table - \$7.5 million of it. It is good but maybe that should have been part of the original tender instead of excluding it from the original tender.

We have this minister who is responsible for the delivery \$1 billion of infrastructure in this calendar year, responsible for \$5 billion-worth of infrastructure spend over the following four years and this is supposed to be the stimulus for our economy. This is what the Government is relying on to bring Tasmania back to where we were before the pandemic. It is all on this minister's shoulders. What we have is a minister who is constantly delaying projects, reannouncing them, and pretending that reannouncement is delivery.

Time expired.

[3.39 p.m.]

Ms O'CONNOR - In response to minister Ferguson's Estimates of Finance, State Growth, Science and Technology, and Infrastructure and Transport, I have a few things to say.

The day started out with a conversation from the Greens' point of view about when the legislation to embed poker machines in pubs and clubs until the year 2043 will arrive in the parliament. Our understanding pre-COVID-19 was that it would be being debated at around this time in the parliamentary cycle. Now we understand from the Premier's answer on the Monday, we will see amendments to the Gaming Control Act in the first part of next year. There was some talk of consultation from both the Premier and the Minister for Finance. However, it was not clear to me that that consultation would involve the community sector organisations and social welfare advocates who recognise that this policy to individually license pubs and clubs until the year 2043 will cause homelessness, poverty, child abuse, neglect, mental illness, addiction and family violence. That will be the consequence of the changes to the Gaming Control Act once they pass through the Tasmanian parliament. And because of Labor's perfidy and backflipping on a principled position that they took to the 2018 state election, it is almost certain that that extraordinarily socially damaging legislation will pass the Tasmanian parliament.

What we understand from our conversation at the Estimates table with both the Premier and the minister is that there are currently negotiations taking place between Mr Gutwein, Mr Ferguson and representatives for the Farrell family as they discuss what tax rate will be applied to casinos and keno, as I understand it, once the monopoly deal is effectively broken up but arguably a much more harmful policy is put into place.

It was déjà vu all over again with the Farrell family calling the shots. The Greens certainly hope that this is not the case, but we never did get an explanation out of either minister as to why the Liberals changed their original policy for a market-based mechanism and went to an individual licensing model against the advice of the Gaming Commissioner and indeed, as I understand it, against the advice of Treasury and Finance. There is also the fact that they have decided this will be a 20-year agreement when the advice from the Gaming Commissioner and the Department of Treasury and Finance is that perhaps the agreement should extend for the life of the machines, which would be between five and seven years but the profits of the gambling industry took primacy over good advice and the social and economic wellbeing of the Tasmanian people.

We were very disappointed to see a major report on options for activating the northern suburbs rail corridor dumped on the Estimates table late in the day. When you had a look through the report it became pretty clear why it was dumped in Estimates. It makes a reasonably strong case for light rail over more regular bus services or trackless trams as a catalytic infrastructure project that would transform the City of Hobart. It is clear that that would come at a higher cost than the other two alternatives, but if we are serious about state-building as opposed to nation-building then we need to get on with Hobart light rail because, as the report makes clear, that would activate urban and business growth along the transit corridor.

The fact that we were reassured by the minister that sometime within the next 10 years there may be some activation of the rail corridor was not particularly reassuring because the City Deal was signed some two years ago, from memory. If it is to be activated within a 10-year time frame, we are assuming that means sometime within the next eight years. For the people of Hobart who endure daily congestion and rising transport costs, light rail cannot come soon enough. It is well past time that we had a government that was serious about it and in the context of COVID-19 recovery this is a strong investment that would transform our beautiful city. It would connect in some way or another with the Tasman Bridge.

The minister and I had an interesting conversation about the design elements for the Tasman Bridge upgrade, which is an excellent infrastructure allocation and a very important part of extending the life of the bridge, making it safer on multiple levels, and making sure that the bridge is fit for purpose for pedestrian and cycling activities so that we can start activating clean transport options for people travelling from the eastern shore into the city. We had some very thoughtful correspondence from a member of the public about the need to make sure there is wind tunnel testing on the bridge so that, whatever construction ends up on the wings of the bridge in order to support cycling and pedestrian infrastructure, it is the best and the safest it can be, underpinned by the strongest possible engineering knowledge and advice. We are very supportive of the Tasman Bridge upgrades.

I also spoke to the minister about a very significant Aboriginal cultural heritage site at the site of roadworks at Eaglehawk Neck around the road that goes to the Blowhole. Our understanding is that that is a site of very great significance to Tasmanian Aboriginal people.

They have called for those roadworks not to proceed on the basis of the deep cultural heritage on that site. We strongly encourage the minister to reconsider those roadworks.

As I said at the time, I am a regular resident of the Tasman Peninsula and you do not get traffic jams on the Neck; you do not have traffic problems. It seems like it is a make-work scheme as part of scattering road funding around the state. Perhaps this is one make-work scheme for roads that could be abandoned. We do not want another kotalina here. At some point the Tasmanian Government is going to have to demonstrate to the palawa/pakana people that they take their heritage seriously enough not only to protect it but every now and again to adjust their plans in order to prioritise the protection of Aboriginal cultural heritage. We will be watching that very closely because the days where governments could just get away with smashing and trashing Aboriginal heritage have to end.

I also want to spend a bit of time talking about the State Growth portfolio that covers the expressions of interest process for development inside public protected areas. We have had the minister and a number of Government members misrepresent the Auditor-General's report into the expressions of interest process and cherry-pick some words from it when the actual report is much more damning of the EOI process. We now know that there have been 64 developments put forward through the EOI process, that stage 2 of the process is entirely secret, and that there is a gag clause on developers who put up projects to rent-seek in public protected lands. The Auditor-General's report notes the absence of environmental conservation experts and members of the Tasmanian Aboriginal community contributing to issues with projects receiving a social licence. The report also notes the decision not to replace the independent member of the assessment panel after their resignation and that it was explained.

A further note by the Auditor-General in their report is that the EOI process was meant to have a communications and engagement group to work with stakeholders. That group was never convened. The report notes that the EOI process probity advisers should not have had any other involvement in the process, yet most of the external review reports commissioned in relation to proposals went to the same organisation that provided a probity officer. No safeguards were put in place to prevent a conflict of interest.

The Auditor-General quite rightly pointed out that Tasmania is the only state that allows for proposals that are inconsistent with management plans. The Auditor-General asked the question about why the independent member of the assessment panel was not reappointed and again what we were given from the minister and the Coordinator-General was obfuscation and more opacity. The Auditor-General found that the scoring process for projects was problematic, with scores often being allocated before vital information was received, potentially prejudicing final scoring because of an averaging of assessment criteria scores, and projects that failed one or more criteria could still be recommended for approval. Shameful. Shame on that EOI process. It is another mark of the secrecy of the Gutwein Government.

Time expired.

[3.49 p.m.]

Mr ELLIS - I rise to speak on Estimates Committee A which examined the Estimates of my colleague the Minister for State Growth, the Minister for Science and Technology, the Minister for Infrastructure and Transport, and the Minister for Finance, Mr Michael Ferguson, on Tuesday 24 November 2020.

A range of matters were raised. The first one I want to touch on is the HomeBuilder scheme, which was extended today. This is wonderful news for a lot of families in my area in the north-west, the west coast and King Island. It is across Tasmania and across the country. There has been \$20 million budgeted in 2020-21. That means that families of all kinds, of all aspirations, will be able to get into their first home, or put on the extension that they have always been looking for, either for a growing family or to meet their current needs, which may have changed since they first bought it.

It is a brilliant example of a partnership between the federal and state governments that is made possible when you are willing to work together and willing to do the hard work to support our community to get through one of the worst health and economic challenges that this country and this state has faced in generations.

Essentially, it is about the aspirations of young families who want to get set up, to build their first home, to have room to grow, get out of the flat and get onto a little bit of land, have some kids and really take a shot at life, and to settle down. I know people across the north-west coast, in a similar age bracket to me, who are taking advantage of that. We can see it in the building and construction industry across the north-west coast. It is flat-out, whether you are a plumber, a sparkie, or a builder. The problem now is that there is not enough land, and not enough tradies. Those are all great problems to have because it means that people are working. You are always better to be too busy than not busy enough. I hear the whingers on the other side, but when you have worked in the construction industry I can tell you that you would much rather have a pipeline of work ahead of you than blank days where you have nothing to do but pick your nose.

The scheme was extended today after the Estimates. That is wonderful. Some of the feedback I got in my area was that people wanted more of the HomeBuilder, wanted more opportunities to take part in that. Certainly, a lot of the tradies wanted to see that benefit come to our economy on the north-west coast and around Tasmania.

I will move on to pokies. We know of the patronising betrayal by the Labor Party in 2018 of some of the people who voted for them all their lives. Labor said they do not have the right to spend the money they earn in the way that they want to. I was knocking on doors and people were telling me they were flabbergasted that people who they once trusted, who their parents trusted, would say to them that people in Sandy Bay, public servants who go to the casino, can have a flutter on the pokies, but if you are a log truck driver in Smithton, you have to go to Launceston. People were staggered with the arrogance, with the temerity that the Labor Party would say to them, that even though they worked flat-out all day, or they had paid taxes all their lives, they could not be trusted to spend their own money in the way they wanted to. It was fine to go down to the track, to the doggies and to the horses, bet your house on your mobile phone, but the main problem was that families might want to go for a flutter after work on a Friday at their local pub. We are going to end the monopoly and respect people's personal choice -

Ms O'Connor - You should do some more research on those machines. It is the way they are designed. You do not understand addiction, Mr Ellis.

Mr ELLIS - We are going to work on the solution with Gaming in making it fair and reasonable, and making it so that pubs and clubs in regional communities are able to stay open and be supported. The choices that people are going to make with their own money -

Ms O'Connor - Where does that money go? The money goes to Sydney.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIR - Order.

Mr ELLIS - are going to be respected rather than the patronising stitch-up that Labor and the Greens managed last election. From the sound of things, they are going to do it again.

I will move onto the TT-Line vessel replacement. This was probably the most staggering clanger that I saw in my time in Estimates this week; this bizarre and rolling mistake that Labor seems to have committed to and does not seem to be able to pull out of. I heard my colleague, Ms Dow, seeming to back away, change the tone, trying to change what the shadow minister had been saying for the last weeks and months, that he was going to sell out Australian and Tasmanian jobs and ship them to Finland. She was going softly, softly, not wanting to commit too much.

We have seen similar things from the Leader, from Ms O'Byrne and from Mr O'Byrne. They do not really want to back him. They are happy for him to stand up here and make a fool of himself and go back to Braddon and tell people that we should not buy Tasmanian, we should not buy Australian. We should not even look into it. We should not even pause for six months because we really need to make sure that the Finland economy is supported as best we can. It is bizarre.

The poor bloke gets up here and mumbles through what he is trying to say and tries to tell people who want to work hard, who want to build things, who want to make ships in Australia, that we export all around the world and want the opportunity to build iconic vessels like the *Spirit of Tasmania*. Dr Broad wants to make sure we do not have a chance, not even look at it. We want to support local jobs; we want to buy Australian, buy Tasmanian wherever we can. It is about sovereign capability.

I was staggered to hear Dr Broad ask, 'What's changed in 2020?' Everyone has had a fantastic year this year. I cannot imagine how you would have no spare capacity in 2019 and then 2020 comes around, there is a global recession, there is a global downturn, the ship-building industry is on its knees around the world but what has changed?

It is truly staggering. We have seen during COVID-19 how important sovereign capability is. If you cannot make masks, if you cannot make ventilators, then you cannot survive a health crisis in the way that you want to. If you live on an island, if you live on a series of islands, surrounded by islands, surrounded by a further chain of islands, then you need to be able to build ships, and you need to be able to support the industry that builds those ships. Incat and Austel send ships all around the world but we cannot even pause for six months to take a look and see how they can be part of the build and how tradies, manufacturers, our foresters, people across the economy and the supply chain can be involved in these processes.

Mr Dwyer asked if there was any other way, especially in the environment we are now in, to get more Tasmanian and Australian content. It was borne out of those conversations that the Government quite prudently said, 'Let's just pause and really make sure'. The Government wants to understand if there is any more ability for Tasmanian and Australian content. If the Labor Party does not know how the world got into this global downturn then they will not know how to manage the response.

I turn to Infrastructure. This is one of the most important parts of the Budget. As we know, it is the most significant infrastructure budget in Tasmania's history. There is \$5 billion, including a landmark \$2.4 billion for roads and bridges. For tradies across the north-west, for truckies in your beautiful seat of Lyons, Mr Deputy Chair, it is about making sure that they can get to work in a timely manner and safely get back to their families. We want to look after them.

More than that, this massive capital infrastructure investment is about investing in 25 000 jobs. We know that Labor supports 99.7 per cent of the Budget. We are still not sure how much the Greens support other than chooks and dogs, but we know that Labor mostly supports everything that is in there. Imitation is the sincerest form of flattery.

In 2020-21 there are \$485 million worth of projects. We committed to matching funding for projects being delivered in partnership with the federal government. We are talking about \$130 million to upgrade the Tasman Bridge to make it safer for pedestrians. The Greens in a rare note of positivity supported that. There is \$46 million in coronavirus stimulus projects, \$187 million for the duplication of the Midway Point and Sorell causeways. Sorell is a wonderful place to live. It is a beautiful place to raise a family, to enjoy the Tasmanian way of life. If you can commute to and from Hobart, send the kids in to school if that is what you want to do, then that makes life a lot easier. You know you are going to get to work in a timely manner and you know that you are going to come home to the ones who you love.

Time expired.

[3.59 p.m.]

Ms DOW - I rise to speak on Estimates Committee A with regard the Minister for Infrastructure and Transport and I will refer to Estimates for State Growth as well in my contribution.

I want to touch on the Leith Overpass and I am surprised that Mr Ellis did not acknowledge this in his previous contribution. A lot of young families live around Leith and they are very concerned about safe access in that area because there have been a number of serious accidents over the years. There has been a commitment made by the Government to upgrade this area but it keeps getting delayed. Another project I asked about during Estimates was the Round Hill upgrade which was also committed to by the state Government by the then Infrastructure minister, Mr Rockliff. The minister committed to get me some more information on it and I have not received it yet. I would appreciate an update on where those improvements are at.

Over the course of the day we discussed infrastructure. We talked a lot about the delays in the Government's infrastructure program and there are varying examples of this. Many of my colleagues have referred to those, including Dr Broad earlier this afternoon. I want to touch on the Derwent River ferries. There are significant issues in and across the Greater Hobart area. Much of what the City Deal is based on is investment in infrastructure aimed at congestion busting; I think that is the term the Government uses. To date all we have seen is tow trucks deployed in and around the city. There has not been that delivery of infrastructure that has been promised through the City Deal and one example of that is the Derwent River ferries. I will be pleased when we see the trial of this service. I believe people will welcome the opportunity to participate in that trial and I urge the Government to get on with.

The other aspect of transport I want to talk about is the integrated ticketing system which has been committed to now for many years. I understand an expressions of interest process is being undertaken at present and we were provided with a minimal update about that during Estimates. It is a great opportunity for local IT companies to be involved in the tendering and expressions of interest process for this project, and a great way to demonstrate their expertise and capacity. The Government should, as we clearly outlined in our budget reply, be looking to have local content in all of its major projects and thinking strategically about how it can partner with and utilise the talent and capacity of local businesses across Tasmania. This is one great example of where there could be an opportunity for a local Tasmanian IT company.

The other transport-related issue I want to raise is around taxi subsidies for those members of our community who live with a disability. The minister committed to provide me with some further information on that and I look forward to receiving that.

The other major infrastructure projects I want to make reference to include the Wynyard rail line. When it comes to intergenerational infrastructure projects across my region on the north-west coast, the coastal pathway is a wonderful example of a project that can bring great economic benefit and better opportunities for transport and connections between coastal communities. There is also the economic uplift which will occur during the construction phase but also the other economic activity it will generate through the establishment of small businesses along the rail corridor and the extension of the pathway along the coast and also the tourism opportunities.

We look to the TT-Line's replacement of the vessels and the great potential for cycling tourism as well that could come from this project. The coastal pathway is one example of a significant infrastructure project which is intergenerational and a transformational project for the Tasmanian community, particularly the people of the north-west. It has been significantly delayed and I do not want to see any more delays on it. I want to see it get up and running.

Ms O'Connor and Dr Broad referred to the light rail project and the active transit corridor for the northern suburbs in Hobart. This is another example of the transformational intergenerational infrastructure project. It has the ability to change the landscape of the northern suburbs with opportunities for different accommodation offerings for members of the community and for greater development and growth of the northern suburbs. It is a project that will bring great economic stimulus within its construction period, and it will also offer another mode of transport for people living in the northern suburbs. It will assist with congestion reduction and is a fantastic project for southern Tasmania.

As others have said, we saw the report dropped. I think it was meant to be dropped in the State Growth Estimates but instead was dropped during Transport and Infrastructure. As others have said, it outlines the significant advantages of this project. We want to see the Government make a decision on it, work with local government and those partners in the City Deal and make a decision on it, and make this very important transformational project happen.

That brings me to State Growth. I want to touch first on the role of the Coordinator-General. It was interesting to note this year that there was less detail provided in the annual plan for the Department of State Growth and during Estimates around the activities of the Coordinator-General. Considering there is a significant amount of money allocated to this department within the state Budget, there could have been more information provided about

exactly what this money will be used for, particularly because it was a recommendation that came from PESRAC around greater investment in projects that will ensure state growth. It was really limited on detail and I hope in the coming months the Government provides more information about what this money that is included in the Budget is intended to do.

The other aspect of the Coordinator-General's role is red tape reduction. During Estimates we wanted to understand more fully the role of the Red Tape Reduction Coordinator, his position description and salary. The Government was not forthcoming with that. It is important when you have these positions in place that are tasked with undertaking a specific action and have targets set around those roles that there is transparency about what that position description entails but also how much money is being allocated by government for that role.

Obviously, we get the reports each year which are largely a tick-and-flick exercise with cutting and pasting, and there were only a few items that are still yet to be met by the Government. I have talked before in this place, and I said it in Estimates, around the importance of there being transparency around the regulatory reform project. A number of pieces of legislation that have been brought through the House this year have been aimed at red tape reduction. In some instances, there has been better consultation on this legislation than at other times, particularly with the local government sector which will ultimately be responsible for implementing many of these changes.

I understand that the regulatory report came about from a report originally by the Property Council of Tasmania. There seems to be some reluctance by the Government to publicly release this report and to publicly release the submissions that underpin and inform the recommendations that have come to this place about red tape reduction. I do not understand why, so I would like the minister to provide the reasoning for why not. In fact, I call on him today to release that report. I am not sure what it is that you are trying to hide, minister. It is a constant pattern of behaviour of sitting on reports and being secretive about the contents of reports. When you are asking us to make decisions about legislative change it is very important that we understand the reasoning for that change.

Time expired.

[4.09 p.m.]

Mr O'BYRNE - I rise to speak in response to the Committee A Estimates hearing with the minister for Finance, Infrastructure, Science and Technology. I make the point that we welcome the opportunities but it is important we acknowledge the work of the public servants who spend a lot of time putting together the folders, the briefings and advice for ministers. It was restricted access for them this time around, and we know they put in a lot of work. We have to find a better way for Estimates, to get public scrutiny into the length and breadth of the government; not only government expenditure, but also government decisions.

I was in a number of sections of hearings, the first being the Minister for Finance, and we raised concerns. It has now been nearly three years since the last state election, an election that was hotly contested, as all elections are, but particularly this one on the issue of gaming. The Government had a policy they took to that election. They won, and we are very keen - as is the community - to see what form of legislation will be put in place and what the gaming regime will look like for the future in Tasmania.

On questioning, the minister used COVID-19 as a justification. There is no doubt that COVID-19 has had an impact over the last six months. However, we are nearly three years

into this term and the community is none the wiser about gaming regulation into the future. That is disrespectful to the people of Tasmania, it is disrespectful to the community who have clear views on this matter, and also to the industry which the Government purports to represent.

It is not good for industry certainty, and it is not good for community certainty. A lack of ability to deliver on that legislation reflects very poorly, not only on this minister but on the Government. It demonstrates that instead of the Liberal Party holding firm views, they will put politics and opportunity above the best interests not only of workers in that industry or the industry itself, but also community wishes about gaming. We will make it clear that we have not made a decision until we have seen the legislation they are forming to give effect to this bill. Three years in and we have not seen the legislation. It is completely unacceptable.

This minister has failed on a whole range of indicators. The member for Braddon, Shane Broad, the shadow minister for infrastructure, has illustrated the lack of delivery on infrastructure projects across the state, and the manifest failure to build. The last six years of this Government and their expenditure on infrastructure is still less than the last six years of Labor government. They fail to be able to deliver on infrastructure.

As the member for Braddon noted, if the Perth bypass - the Taj Mahal of bypasses in Tasmania - was not brought forward and delivered, their numbers would be even worse. We are still waiting. We have sent the search party out to have a look at the underground bus mall. It was announced with great fanfare at the last election. Another broken election promise. We have been searching for it and have the mineral resources team out there digging around Tasmania to see if they can find the underground bus mall.

We have been looking for the fifth lane on the Southern Outlet. No luck there either. We are still looking for these famed projects. The second bridge or the third bridge over the Tamar: there is still no sign of that but we know they will re-announce it as they did when minister Ferguson announced the commencement of work around the roundabout at the Mowbray Interconnector; the new upgrade. There was not one bit of machinery to be seen, not one worker to be seen, but there he was in his hard-hat and high-vis, doing the job for the media, but no tangible effort at that time.

We know the minister has misled the House. Unfortunately, he has left the House, but I am sure he will read this. We believe there is no doubt that the Minister for Infrastructure, Michael Ferguson, has misled the House in relation to the Hobart Airport roundabout. This is a very important upgrade and Labor has supported it up hill and down dale. We have supported the upgrade to that intersection, because we know that traffic snarls are there. There has been a gaggle of Liberal politicians every six months or so, re-announcing it since late 2014, 2015. It is clear by their public advertising that when landowners were in the final stages of negotiating an outcome with the Government, the minister reached in and pulled out those good faith negotiations. He then causes more delays and more legal impediments to the commencement and completion of that work. We know the minister has misled the House because, on 25 August, we asked him why the Government had chosen to join the appeal with RMPAT. He said, and I quote -

The developer, for their own reasons - as is their right - has chosen to take Hazell Bros as the applicant for the development application to planning appeal. I repeat that is their right.

and this is the killer here -

The Government will respect that process between the parties which now needs to run its course without interference.

That is giving the House the indication that the Government has nothing to do with it. Well, the Government sought to join weeks before that answer was provided by the minister for Infrastructure. It took us another couple of questions in question time, it took a Public Accounts Committee, and it took us towards the very end of discussion in the Estimates Committee last week, for him to finally admit he knew. He used his weasel words in answers to questions and said, 'I only found out this morning that we had been approved': weasel words, to try to avoid taking responsibility for misleading the House. The very next day when we asked the question he tried to cover it with weasel words around saying 'I only found out today', or, 'This morning I was advised that the court had agreed', or that, 'RMPAT had agreed to allow us to join'.

Then in the Public Accounts Committee - if you follow *Hansard* and the debate - he tried to avoid the question, he tried to run interference. His departmental officials eventually made the admission, after an extensive amount of questioning and arguing across the table, that they had been consulting with the minister's office previously. In the Public Accounts Committee and in other utterances publicly, he said no, DSG has joined. He was trying to give people the impression that the Crown had not joined. Well, the DSG is the Crown. This is a major project, a major investment in infrastructure, dealing with a whole range of issues of traffic congestion in that south-east corner. There is no way that the minister would not be aware he had approved and acknowledged the department - the Crown - seeking to interfere, seeking to be represented and playing not a passive role, but an active role in those court proceedings.

The minister has clearly misled the public, and he has clearly misled the House. This minister has form on this. It is not so much what he says, it is his omissions. It is not so much what he says, it is how he constructs the argument. Getting up in question time and saying that it needs to happen. Referring to Hazells and the developers, he said, 'the parties need to run that course without interference'.

When he knew - and if he did not, I am not sure which is worse, misleading or incompetence. It is a combination of both. He knew the Government had intervened in the RMPAT proceedings, and was actively working against the interests of those developers in a very complex legal battle: a battle over what I consider are legitimate claims to try to find access to a major road upgrade to enable them to build jobs, to enable them to build and get full value of the development in that area.

He has misled parliament. He has misled the community in terms of the Government's role. It has taken a number of hearings - a Public Accounts Committee and the Estimates - to call him out. It is a disgrace, and he needs to tell the Tasmanian people why he chose to mislead as his first instinct.

Time expired.

[4.20 p.m.]

Ms BUTLER - I rise to speak on Estimates Committee A of the Minister for Finance and I would like to delve into the HomeBuilder Grant scheme. I heard all the lines from

Mr Ellis, which we have heard again and again. It is wonderful propaganda but it is not real, it is not true.

Building approvals data out today shows a 3.4 per cent decline in October compared to the previous month. This was the second biggest fall outside Victoria and well below the national average of positive 3.8 per cent. Our approvals are up around 1 per cent compared to October last year, but this is in the context of a national increase of 14 per cent. For Tasmania, in October the value of non-residential approvals fell 60 per cent compared to September. The October numbers were the lowest level recorded in over two years and 11 per cent lower than October last year. Tasmania is missing out on the building boom. That is the truth. You can have all the mantra and propaganda about how we are going to build our way out of recovery but we are already missing out on the building boom and these figures are a bad sign for your so-called construction blitz because you do not have the mechanisms in place to get it right.

The Government is not touching the sides of this problem at all. During the finance security committee it became very evident that minister Ferguson and the Premier do not communicate, or if they do certainly not on a professional level. In fact, when my colleague, the shadow treasurer, David O'Byrne, asked the Premier about what I am calling the 'ban the battlers HomeBuilder grant scheme' and whether he would consider reviewing some of those eligibility criteria independent of what the Commonwealth is doing with their grant, the Premier answered yes on both. That contravened minister Ferguson who would not steer away from the political line he has been running in relation to this HomeBuilder Grant scheme. When asked whether there could be a change to the definition of 'commencement' the minister was adamant that Tasmania could not construct a scheme that suits local conditions and local circumstances beyond the federal legislation.

We have been banging on about this since this bill came into the House. For months and months we have been lobbying you, we have been representing industry groups, we have been representing the community. You have been adamant that you were not going to make any changes. Then when you made some changes because of public pushing by the extension of the grant, you made out as if you are amazing saviours when you could have done this months ago. If you were really serious about this building boom you would have started it months ago, taken some advice and stopped being so arrogant.

The minister, Mr Ferguson, stated in the committee that there is no unilateral power to deviate from the terms of the national partnership agreement with respect to commencement. We know that is rubbish. At least the Premier picked up on it. If the Premier and Mr Ferguson had any form of professional communication between them they would know that the definition of 'commencement' was changed in nearly every jurisdiction to meet the needs of their local markets. That is fact.

Each state watched us put through our bill. We debated all the points. You voted it down because you knew better. Other jurisdictions adopted the bill but actually picked up on where the problems were and changed the definitions to suit their state. That is something Mr Ferguson was not capable of doing and would not listen to the advice. That advice was not just from us. That advice was from industry and the best people in the business. All other states took on that advice except for us because Mr Ferguson knew better. We have advised and lobbied on behalf of industry on this issue.

We know that the definition of 'commencement' is contentious. We argued in the House after consultation with the HIA around the definition of 'commencement', that it should be

changed from 'foundations laid' to 'cutting in'. The minister knows this because I have said it many times. Yes, you have extended the grant scheme but changing the definition of 'commencement' provides flexibility for people who would like access to the program, or for people who have been successful in meeting those commencement dates. Arrogantly, you knew better. If you were serious about this building boom maybe you would have changed that definition of 'commencement'.

Under the bill the grant money can only be provided if commencement of building is under way. There are aspects of this that may inhibit and restrict the intent of the bill and may not propagate the crucial pipeline of work required to keep the wheels turning for the building construction industry and the Tasmanian economy as a whole. That was said months ago. The bill requires flexibility and sensibility. We had concerns that the brief commencement criteria could disadvantage eligible HomeBuilder Grant applicants. Three or four months later you realised that that was a problem. You had already disadvantaged people by three to four months, but you knew better. You did not know better. The Government was aware of the concerns. Industry leaders from all sides implored you to reconsider this aspect to the bill. You did not. You chose to ignore the advice of experts and leaders in the field. That is what has happened. The definition of 'commencement' is an issue.

The intent of that bill was to safeguard 20 000 jobs in the building and construction sector and the 6000 businesses that make up part of that building and construction sector and spin off work from that, so it was important to get this right. You have only now decided to extend it but you still have not changed the definition of 'commencement'. Until a few days ago you did not even realise that there was a problem with people being able to build under this grant if they qualified after 4 June. When we brought that up in Estimates you said you had not been notified about this problem at all. That was because we found out they spoke to the Minister for Building and Construction and the Treasurer. That is another indication that there is not very good communication between you and the Premier and it is holding Tasmania back.

I do not know if you guys need to do some mediation, maybe a professional sit-down, and talk about the leadership challenge. Whatever the problem is it is affecting the Tasmanian economy. You need to sort it out because it is not good enough. We need a lot better from you, especially in the positions you are in.

I was amazed that you were not aware of the status quo of that HomeBuilder Grant scheme and the fact that you were not even considering the option of trying to make it more flexible to suit our local market economy. Other states have decided to do that. I can read out to you what the definition of 'commencement' means in other states. In the ACT it means substantial earthworks, excavations, demolition and physical building works. They were quite flexible and decided to make it work for them because they really wanted building to commence and boost their economy. They have much better building figures than us. I do not know, minister; you join the dots.

In New South Wales, the definition of 'commencement' means new builds, excavations and site preparation works. In the Northern Territory it means excavations and site preparation work. In Queensland it means excavations and site preparation work. In South Australia it means excavations and site preparation work for approved building works. In Victoria it means excavations and site preparation work and, in Western Australia, it means significant earthworks, excavations, demolition and physical building work.

In Tasmania 'commencement' means -

- (a) the date of completion of the laying of the foundations for the building; or
- (b) if no foundations are to be laid, a date determined by the Commissioner in respect of the building;

That is by far the slowest definition of 'commencement' but that is okay, minister, because you knew better, even though I think your Premier probably knew a bit more about this than you did. Maybe you could communicate.

Only 21 grants out of nearly 800 applications have been paid out. That is because you refuse to make the First Home Builder Grant structure the same as the First Home Owner Grant. Our battlers in Tasmania cannot access that grant because it is not viewed as a deposit, so unless you already have the money saved you cannot access it. If you were really serious about this building boom and bolstering the market - and you also have no idea about the skills that are required because that is another deficiency in government - you would change the structure of that so it could be viewed as a deposit, like the First Home Owners.

Time expired.

[4.30 p.m.]

Ms O'BYRNE - I appreciate the opportunity to speak. I will take that piece of advice that you often run out of time before commencing the work of all the public officials that worked so hard on preparation for Estimates. It must have been so utterly disappointing for them because I have seen the work public officials do in preparation for Estimates. I have a reasonably good idea what kind of information is in those folders. When you have a government whose main intent is to not give information then all those hours and hours of detailed work by public servants goes to waste. They have come to Estimates with the understanding that Estimates was designed so that when a minister is questioned, information can be given. That is clearly not how this Government treats Estimates.

It can get you into trouble. The best political advice I ever received was to always tell the truth. It is the easiest thing to remember. If the main purpose of going into Estimates is to obfuscate, to be misleading and not give the truth, then your stories get mixed up. We saw that between this minister's evidence and the evidence of the Premier and Treasurer. There were things they were both asked about, yet their answers were different. That does not happen if you are telling the truth. That happens if you do not have your story straight about how you are going to cover up something that you do not want to share with the community. That is what we got.

Do not for a moment think that this minister walked into the Estimates Committee with a belief that he should share information. When I asked the very simple question, how much does the Red Tape Reduction Commissioner earn, I was told arrogantly, condescendingly, and quite rudely, that I was not entitled to that information. Whether he thinks I am personally entitled to it is one thing, but the Tasmanian taxpayer is entitled to know how much we spend on things. The minister pointed to a member of the Greens' staff in the back of the room and said, 'For instance, I wouldn't tell you what that person earns'.

Ms O'Connor - She is underpaid, I will tell you that. The most talented and low paid senior adviser in the world.

Ms O'BYRNE - My point, Ms O'Connor, is that every year the Premier legitimately tables the salaries of the type of person Mr Ferguson was talking about. He tables the salaries of staffers in political offices every year, but when it came to the Red Tape Reduction Commissioner we are not entitled to know. Do you think I was not entitled to know or do you think that the minister was worried that we would discover how much we had paid for the eight projects that the Red Tape Commissioner had done over the last 12 month's report? It turns out he is paid on the general service band 9, which I think starts at \$150 000 and goes up from there. So we probably got each of the eight for about \$20 000. You can make your own judgments as to whether that is money well spent.

The reason the minister did not want to tell me is because they knew that I was referencing an article in the *Mercury* which said that when it had showed surprise at the fact that there were only eight projects done, the report from the previous year that it was compared against mysteriously disappeared from the site. The minister said he knew nothing about that. The Coordinator-General said he knew nothing about that. In all fairness it is back on there. I am clearly not entitled to know because the minister did not want to be embarrassed about that. There is a lot to be embarrassed about in this minister's portfolio. I wish I had more than 10 minutes.

The non-replacement of the TT-Line vessel process has been a debacle by this Government. The Hobart Airport roundabout has gone swimmingly, hasn't it? The Bruny Island ferries continue to be a problem. The delays in infrastructure. This Government spends more time on its media releases than it does on making sure the projects get rolled out the door. It is all about spin and very little about shovels. The underground bus mall has been mentioned before. The invisible underground bus mall; the mythical underground bus mall. The underground bus mall everyone knew was never going to happen. This Government talked it up and now has to admit it is not going to happen.

Then there are the Derwent River ferries that Metro would not touch with a barge pole because they were so poorly done. The *John Duigan* is going really well. Where is the support for light rail? No support whatsoever.

Members interjecting.

Ms O'BYRNE - I will get louder because the members are being very rude over there.

DEPUTY CHAIR - Order.

Ms O'BYRNE - Integrated ticketing will lead into my next contribution on science and technology. The fact that you know a project is coming and you do not take the time to work with local industry about how they might prepare themselves to be either a whole or part of a tender process is really distressing. That list goes on.

Before I go on to science and technology, there is Macquarie Point. You do not expect us to believe that no one has any idea about what that last part of the project might cost; that no one has any idea about what kind of damage is under there, that no one has ever done any kind of environmental assessment on that? You cannot possibly expect us to believe that.

Moving into the Science and Technology portfolio. I will start off with the issues around Buy Local, which is something that industry has been very concerned about. The industry has said that the challenge from its point of view is that you can have a 25 per cent threshold for local impact, but in regard to the services that members deliver, if you go out to tender for something like Justice Connect, which is a huge tender for \$25 million, for a single provider, the local industry struggles to deliver that.

You can talk about buying local but if you do not structure your contracts and your investments in a way that allows local industry to participate, then you are joking or being flippant about local content. We talked about it in the Estimates process with the TechnologyOne project. The Government lauded this \$100 million finance investment and a whole-of-government strategy, except it turns out it is not. It is not a significant new investment and a whole-of-government strategy. Every agency, independently apparently, decided to apply for an exemption so that they did not have to go to tender. Every single agency is negotiating directly with the company that has the contract. Every single agency will have its own implementation team and its own licensing fees. This is an absolute joke. The minister said they had had a look around and thought local industry was not capable of doing it, but thought it was wonderful that they are hungry. How condescending. The reality is that when TechnologyOne got the contract they had Tasmanians involved. That was a long time ago. The Government chose not to structure a contract in a way that local businesses could participate. It was an active decision by this Government.

The Government will talk about its digital strategy. It is an unfunded digital strategy, a digital strategy with no time lines. It is not possible to hold this Government to account against that because they do not fund it and they do not have a program for when it is going to be done.

One of the best ways to never be judged for your investment in IT is to say it is impossible to assess how much is spent in IT, that nobody is able to do it and that everybody does it differently. The reality is that other governments have dashboards that show exactly how much they are spending in IT investment across the government. You may want to have different measurable aspects, but you can identify those different measurable aspects and still compare yourself against it.

You would not want to set a target that you might be measured against because in every part of your portfolio where there has been a target, or a time line for when a project might be delivered, a commitment to an industry about buy local, a commitment to investment in a certain area, you do not need it. So why would you suddenly embrace the kinds of targets that the industry says are crucial and that actually matter?

The initial work by our industry shows around 1.5 per cent of ICT as a proportion of the Tasmanian Budget. New South Wales has a significantly larger portion, at least around 4 per cent to 4.3 per cent. Of the spend in IT, what is the spend in cyber security? You cannot measure a portion of something if you do not spend it anywhere else and you do not measure it anywhere else. To be fair, the industry was pleased. For the first time it got some money in cyber security - \$4.9 million over four years and the possibility of \$200 000 this year. They are pleased because you do not do anything else. They are pleased that in the absence of any other investment, finally there was something. Nobody who is serious about cybersecurity thinks, and even the minister cannot stand up and say that he thinks, you can spend that kind of money and deliver the outcomes that the Auditor-General has made clear in report after

report needs to be spent on our security. This minister has failed in his portfolio and continues to do so.

Time expired.

[4.40 p.m.]

Ms HOUSTON - I rise to speak to Estimates Committee A of the Minister for Infrastructure and Transport and would like to start briefly with the TT-Line vessels that will not be delivered on time. Every year of delaying the replacement of the TT-Line vessels costs us \$350 million. That is in the tourism sector alone. That does not take into account the cost of the loss of growth in freight capacity. Surely this is going to result in less jobs growth.

If we did not have the capacity before to build ships here, how do we have it now? It is a specialist area. Projects are being delayed. Announcements and plans do not create jobs; only actually building things will do that. This does not give us confidence that \$1 billion in projects will get off the ground in the coming years.

Back to the *Spirits* for a moment, it does not seem like any of those vying for a so-called Australian build, which will largely be done in the Philippines, actually have the capacity to build roll-on roll-off ferries. They do not have any actual experience with these ferries. This is a specialist build and when it goes wrong the consequences are dire. You only have to look at what has happened internationally where those ships have failed.

The Bruny Island ferries are not sufficient to meet demand. The vessel intended to serve Flinders Island, the *John Duigan*, is not fit for purpose and has spent far too much time in dry dock for a vessel apparently built in 2018. It is far better to get it right the first time and ensure reliable service and a safe vessel for years to come.

I will move to roads and particularly the widening of the road at Eaglehawk Neck. There is a protest today at the side of the roadworks at Eaglehawk Neck related to the significance of the site. It is acknowledged by Government as an Aboriginal Heritage site but the roadwork was planned anyway. At the very least it is a site of a mass grave of palawa/pakana people dating back to around the 1820s. This is unusual, given that the burial practices of the day saw people buried or cremated individually. That is a pretty clear indication that this not a standard burial site but most likely the site of a massacre, and there could be up to 80 bodies there.

This is a particularly timely issue given that the national agreement on Closing the Gap places an emphasis on respecting Aboriginal culture and governments adapting to the way they work with Aboriginal communities. This would be a good place to start. This is one project that needs to prioritise Aboriginal cultural heritage. There must be alternatives that leave the site undisturbed. What is perhaps the worst thing about this situation is that it has set different aspects of the Aboriginal community against each other again. There are plenty of other projects that could be rolled out. This one does not seem to be an essential one. It is widening the road there -

Ms O'Connor - It is a make-work scheme.

Ms HOUSTON - Yes, and there is plenty of other work that could be done elsewhere.

Ms O'Connor - That's right.

DEPUTY CHAIR - Order.

Ms HOUSTON - There is a whole list of projects that have never been off the ground.

Even one of the most respected historians on Aboriginal history says the burial site under investigation near road-widening works could be the location of the largest indigenous massacre in Tasmania and that the significant massacre site could hold the remains of as many as 80 Aboriginal warriors. A Heritage investigation is under way on the site just off the Arthur Highway in south-east Tasmania amid revelations that it could be one of the most significant sites. This is particularly relevant given that the document that I was referring to, Closing the Gap, was signed by all premiers, including our Premier, in July 2020, before this project would have got under way.

There is further evidence to support that this is a massacre site because we know that Aboriginal people were not impacted by disease until the late 1820s and even the historical writer, Plomley, indicated that the site related to an event that could have happened in the early 1820s, meaning it is most likely a massacre site. Either way, this is the final resting place of a number of Tasmanian Aboriginal people. It is not our practice to unnecessarily disturb the resting place of the dead by running roads over the top of them.

Ms O'Connor - Hear, hear.

[4.46 p.m.]

Mr FERGUSON - I acknowledge the contributions that have been made. Some of them have been very positive and affirming of what the Government is doing in my portfolio areas.

I say that with the exception of Ms O'Connor, members outside the Government were pretty hopeless at the Estimates committees. They were ill prepared, poorly functioning, not able to manage their time, and asked questions in a way that demonstrated a lack of understanding -

Ms Butler - That's not the feedback we got.

Mr FERGUSON - It is not the feedback that you got from each other, I am sure that is true.

Ms Butler - No, from outside experts who thought your performances were terrible.

Mr FERGUSON - Lots of mutual reassurance happening. I have been here listening very quietly in the main to the contributions that have been made and it would be the case that the member who now interjects, whenever she gets to her feet in this place, it is always with a great deal of caution that we take on board anything that is offered. It is in fact the very exercise of the allegations that she makes about people who claim to know everything about a subject.

The Estimates process demonstrates that the Government has a genuine plan for jobs in Tasmania. It is a real plan, not a photo album or a colourful brochure, that has been drawn forward that tries to pretend to be an alternative budget, that people in the community would understand and expect, but a document which I have just been told contains 21 photos of the Opposition Leader, but in terms of substance accepts 99.7 per cent of the Government's plan.

We know what a real alternative budget is. A real alternative budget is a rewrite of the budget saying what your priorities are that are different, how much they will cost, the impact on the bottom line of the budget, arising also from demonstrating where your savings would be made and putting into print what you believe is a different vision. We do not have that from the Labor Party and that is the only explanation I can offer the Committee of the House today as to why they were so poorly prepared.

I have been listening to Mr O'Byrne - no plan. Ms O'Byrne - only rude insults. Ms Butler - an unstructured set of claims that seem to miss the point entirely about the success of our construction program and the very strong partnership we have enjoyed with industry and working together with the federal government to deliver some incredible outcomes.

I want to take on board what Ms Houston has shared, particularly around the Eaglehawk Neck project. We definitely will not be rushing that job; it is an important project. I have seen some vision and images of the site and it does not enjoy the width that we would ordinarily want for a road carrying that traffic. There are access intersections and junction treatments for nearby facilities. We are treating this particularly sensitively, Ms Houston and Ms O'Connor, and there will be no rush.

I heard a lot of insults too about our infrastructure program and there was a little game that the Labor Party was playing with each other about naming the project that is delayed. They have failed to make a case. There have been some project delays with a very small number of projects, but they dismissively brought forward one of the biggest projects that the state has funded on the Midland Highway, which was nearly one year early. It was brought into the debate, but 'you have to exclude that when you are talking about the infrastructure program'. It has been a tremendous success. I will not even trouble the time of the House. It is beneath contempt, because a range of things have been said about individual projects that are wrong, but they are not true. Members are either ignorant or bringing information into the debate which is not accurate.

I am pleased to listen to the contributions that have been made and I am thrilled with the 99.7 per cent score that has been provided to this Budget by the official Opposition. I say the official Opposition, because at Estimates the unofficial Opposition was the party of two who frankly carried themselves more professionally than the official Opposition. I do not mean to provide faint praise either, it is just a fact.

It is clear that the Labor Party has forgotten how bad a government they were. I am pleased to update the committee on the Government's landmark infrastructure program; it is almost \$5 billion, it is phenomenal and nearly half of that is for the roads and bridge program that we have well under way. The industry is saying this is what we need and we are loving the work that the Government has done. In fact, a massive capital program is underpinning tens of thousands of jobs as we build our way out of the pandemic. It is providing jobs right across the sectors.

Over the Budget and forward Estimates we are investing around \$176 million in the Greater Hobart Traffic solution which includes the design, again the often belied design and planning of the fifth lane on the Southern Outlet, on time, according to the City Deal. The Kingborough park and ride facilities; the Derwent River ferry service trial -which was not an election commitment. It was a statement and a commitment made in the state of the state address by the Premier and it is being delivered as we go to market right now.

It is interesting when people get caught out and then they try to cover the fact that they have brought misinformation into the debate. We are delivering assets that were promised by the previous government, but they failed to deliver. We will be delivering the new Bridgewater bridge that the failed former government could not do; \$553 million of the total project budget scheduled to be delivered in the Budget and forward Estimates. That is phenomenal progress. We are now in the market for our early contractor involvement and that was updated to the committee; and yet I hear the official shadow spokesperson whingeing about the fact there is funding set aside for the future budget 2024-25 financial year to deliver the project, and that comes as some shocking surprise.

It is the same as last year's budget. The profile is the same because we expect cars to be driving in calendar year 2024, which is in financial year 2024-25. Why is it that we have to explain these things to a deaf Opposition, that cannot stand the positive progress? It is odd.

We are also delivering for the north-west of the state. We will be rolling out massive packages of works. That includes the Leith Overpass which is now fully funded by this Government. It is the subject of some land acquisitions with the new route which is being secured, which is far superior. It seems that the lazy Labor Party want to talk down good progress for a project which they falsely claim is overdue. I also heard an interesting and an unhelpful claim about the coastal pathway being delayed by the Government. It is not our project. It is a council project that the Government is supporting financially. We have rescued it with \$12 million of extra funding. I hear this being said by the official Opposition. What it shows me is that you can come out with bingo insults, you have a little machine back in your office that you crank up and spit out another insult, but you are not delivering anything for the community that you represent.

Ms Dow, I agree with you that it is an excellent project. It is an excellent council project that the Government is supporting financially, and if you have concerns, if you believe it is being delayed in some way, I invite you to speak with your former council about it. The arrogance, the hubris, the insults, the rudeness and the personal things that are said, I have to say, reflect very squarely on the White Opposition.

I also note that we have significant progress on the Tasman Bridge. I have to say this has been a real labour of - I will not say a labour of love but it has been a labour of the heart in many respects. Again, I heard unhelpful comments being made. This is a project that should bring this House together. If people had the self-awareness to understand what is at stake instead of playing their stupid, puerile politics, this is a project like none other that should bring this House together.

It has been given in briefings. I have written to members. I have raised it sensitively in the debate. We secured \$130 million for a life-saving project. It is not just about the life of the bridge; it is to strengthen it, to take it 2070. It is about people, and it is a project that should bring this House together. On behalf of people who do not have a voice, I am disappointed that when we make major progress on something like this, as significant as this - even at the Estimates Committee I was challenged about the way in which we convinced the federal government to pay half of that project. I just walk away, shaking my head at the puerile, vacant Opposition that we have here in Tasmania, that would do that and undermine the greatest shot of confidence in an important project that people have been pleading for and yet they would

undermine it. Deputy Chair, do you get a sense of my passion on this? I hope so because I walked away shaking my head.

The Gutwein Liberal Government, the Morrison federal team - we have a fantastic outcome. It has exceeded all expectations. At one stage we wondered if we would need to close off those maintenance corridors entirely because we had to focus on safety. At a later time, we thought we might only get funding for one side of the bridge to have three-and-a-half metre safe pathways and we thought that would be a pretty good outcome. We have the best outcome, and such is the shallow depth of the Labor Opposition that we see that being undermined. It is a project that will take time -

Ms Butler - I don't think it was undermined.

Mr FERGUSON - I am not hearing any more from you, Ms Butler. You have undermined your own argument.

Ms Butler - It wasn't undermined. You are just creating a little drama around yourself with that.

Mr FERGUSON - I am sorry, no, you are just irrelevant. You are actually irrelevant and no one takes any notice of it. It is unhelpful.

Ms Butler - Excuse me, did you just say that? That is awful.

DEPUTY CHAIR - Order, Ms Butler.

Mr FERGUSON - This project will take some time to deliver and there is much work to do. I ask members to support State Growth as we work through the engineering and the design principles that Ms O'Connor raised with me. This will be a great outcome for our state and there should not be the mockery or the undermining. There should only be support for something that was not even expected by members opposite before the Budget was brought down.

Mr Deputy Chair, given the brevity of time that we have to talk about those set of outputs, I want to say how committed we are in State Growth to the Safer Driver Reward scheme. It started today and is widely supported, including by the Road Safety Advisory Council, the RACT and other eminent people in the space. We continue to see crashes that bring a lot of distress to me and many families around our state. Every year, far too many are dying on our roads. However, with better education, better mentoring and supervision and also better infrastructure; and we have to focus on attitudes and behaviours because ultimately it is the decisions being made behind the wheel.

I talked about the Office of the Coordinator-General and the extensive investment attraction that has occurred. I would like to correct Ms O'Byrne. Again, she really was twisting what was said. I made it clear that when asked about the salary of a particular public servant, I threw to the secretary of the department to answer because I did not know if I had the right to give that information. In fact, I said as much. Then we hear this twisting and misrepresenting about entitlement. However, we know that the person who occupies that role, Mr Clues, is doing a phenomenal job for Tasmanians, particularly in the building and construction sectors and also wears a second hat as our Small Business Advocate taking triaging complaints directly

from the coalface, feeding them into government and joining up solutions that help sustain business and support jobs.

We have also talked about the City Deal in Launceston and Hobart and the phenomenal outcomes that are being achieved there, again within a schedule. It is not all about the first year. It is about achieving in the implementation plans a pipeline of program of works that can be relied upon in years to come. We have discussed the business support and business growth loans, the progress that has been reached at Macquarie Point and in terms of my Science and Technology portfolios I have canvassed those extensively in the earlier debate.

This is an opportunity to thank our public servants in my departments who have been hardworking through this pandemic. The Budget delivers on many of the important outcomes that we have been working on and are committed to delivering. They need to be accorded respect but we need to see more of a sense of focusing on the needs of our state and less twisting of the facts, less of the dishonesty and less of the personality stuff, because it does not help anybody. A greater effort from the Labor Party next year might bring forward an alternative budget, the different vision they claim to represent, if they are to be taken seriously as anything like an alternative government's shoelace.

Estimates of the Minister for State Growth, Minister for Science and Technology, Minister for Infrastructure and Transport, and Minister for Finance agreed to.

DIVISIONS 2, 6 and 10

(Minister for Housing, Minister for Environment and Parks, Minister for Human Services, Minister for Aboriginal Affairs and Minister for Planning)

[5.02 p.m.]

Ms STANDEN - Twenty minutes is not long enough to adequately recap on the range of portfolios examined under Mr Jaensch's stewardship. I will particularly focus on the portfolios reflecting my shadow portfolios of Housing, Environment and Parks, but also Human Services in which I took lead responsibility on behalf of the shadow who is in the other place.

I will begin with Human Services because that is where we began four hours of a very intense morning, with only an hour and a half for examining the critical area of Human Services. After a lengthy introduction and four Dorothy Dixers I have to say we were probably down to less than an hour of critical examination, focusing in particular on the Child Safety Service and Ashley Youth Detention Centre, and it was not long enough.

We began with examination of the recent allegations of abuse that impacted across agencies including the Ashley Youth Detention Centre in order to establish a time line, and got to the point that a notification had been made through the Child Safety Service through Tasmania Police on 2 August. Yet, incredibly, this Minister for Human Services had not become aware of a possible link to Ashley Youth Detention Centre where the alleged perpetrator had worked in the past. It was only as a result of media inquiries in September 2020: over a year had transpired since the notification had first been made through Tasmania Police and we were painfully trying to extract information from the minister as to the time line impacting his portfolio.

As a former public servant, it was disgusting to immediately realise that the left hand is not speaking to the right hand. How can it be in this day and age, particularly in a portfolio area as sensitive as the Ashley Youth Detention Centre and Human Services, supporting the most troubled, traumatised and vulnerable young people in this state, that potentially those children could have been exposed to further atrocities in that time through whatever cause?

The minister took some time to talk about the Government's response to Professor Maria Harries' Redesign of Child Protection Services report, the Strong Families, Safe Kids redesign project initiated in 2016. Although this is not my portfolio, Chair, I cannot help but reflect on the culture of abuse at Ashley and the culture of cover-up within this Government that seems to be a long-running sore. Despite an apparent acceptance of all recommendations of that 2016 report, how could we be at Estimates this year examining exactly those issues?

I asked the minister how many children had been strip-searched in the past year at Ashley Youth Detention Centre and even I was not prepared for the answer of 223. I was reassured that none had involved staff that were under investigation or had been recently stood down. I am not sure how many young people are currently at Ashley but I am led to believe around 15 or so detainees are there at any one time at the most, so on average they are being strip-searched 15 times per person per annum, and in asking the minister how many had involved those staff, he was unable to immediately answer that.

He was also unable to answer the question as to why those young people had not been interviewed in the context of the recent allegations and investigations, despite monthly visits from the Commissioner for Children and Young People and Child Advocate. It beggars belief that he would stand by and allow a situation where there were potential allegations that had not been explored and not at least reassure those young people themselves who must be exposed to some of the media reporting around these serious allegations.

The so-called commitment to a therapeutic youth justice system I believe has a long way to go. There were no answers to the question of how many children are held in isolation. There were reassurances that that is not a course of punishment but this was a valid question and there were no answers forthcoming.

I asked how many staff had been stood down and over what period they had worked and in answer to a question on notice I finally ascertained that those three staff working at Ashley Youth Detention Centre had commenced as early as the mid-1990s, so we are talking about a time frame of some 25 years. There was no answer as to how far back the current investigation will explore so there is a serious lack of knowledge and understanding around the scope of the investigation and what the terms of reference will be, let alone what issues will be explored.

Under the Housing portfolio I explored questions of youth homelessness. Housing includes homelessness and this was a matter of significant crossover between the Human Services and Housing portfolios. I was gobsmacked that I had to ask three times how many young people exit the Ashley Youth Detention Centre potentially into homelessness. This Minister for Human Services had no idea. He could not answer the question. He answered eventually how many children were on care and protection orders but he could not commit to ceasing the practice of exiting children over the weekend. There was a question on notice around how many young people under 18 were sent to Ashley Youth Detention Centre on remand and that number was 12. That is an unacceptable gap in service and support to these vulnerable young children. The assumption is that those children would be somehow

connected to services, yet there is significant risk that they would leave the care of the state, of this minister, without a roof over their heads. It is completely unacceptable.

In Housing we started with the examination of the Commonwealth-State Housing debt waiver. In the June 2020 quarterly housing report, the minister reported that five houses had been completed. In the latest housing report, September 2020, three had been completed as a result of the debt waiver. This is despite a promise from the minister at the time. I am quoting from an 8 September 2019 article in the *Mercury* -

The agreement could see about 80 houses built each year for people on the social housing waiting list, which currently sits at 3400. We aim to get that waiting list down. That is our dashboard.

More than 12 months later the social housing wait list is still at 3400. It beggars belief that within the Estimates Committee process we found that not five, not three, but zero houses had been built by this Government because the three that were claimed to have been delivered were in fact purchased by the Government.

The housing register, at 3400 or thereabouts, is up 50 per cent since taking office. I cannot believe that that money, \$15 million per annum, has not been banked directly into housing supply. There are no excuses for prioritising other aspects when there are so many people who are homeless and seeking housing through the housing register.

In relation to housing stock, the minister claims that he has delivered 823 new homes of 2400 over the course of the Affordable Housing Strategy and its two action plans from the period 2015 to 2023. We are about two-thirds of the way through those action plans and he has delivered just one-third against that target of 2400.

I was keen to get to the bottom of the pool of social housing available to house those who are falling out of the unaffordable private rental market, unable to get into home ownership and reliant on the social housing system. The minister admitted under questioning that in September 2019 the total housing stock was 12 504. Since there was a claim of building 370 over the past year, that 40 had been sold, and that 10 or so had been demolished, how many would you expect today? Five more than there were 12 months ago, 12 509 homes, despite the hype about the millions of dollars being spent, despite the promises under the Affordable Housing Strategy and the debt waiver that was supposed to deliver 80 new homes every year.

Despite rigorous investigation and questioning in the Estimates process in the House of Assembly and upstairs, those figures do not add up. Today there is an 11 400 shortfall of social and affordable homes across the state and 8000 households living in rental stress. If you use a 2.3 multiplier for the number of people in those households we are talking about well over 20 000 Tasmanians living in rental stress. There are 3400 housing register applicants waiting on average 65 weeks. I have spoken with people who have been waiting well over two years.

This past weekend I spoke with a woman who has been waiting in deplorable circumstances. Her hot water system has broken; she has no running hot water. I investigated her flooring which had rotted through because of the damage to that hot water system. Her stove does not work, there are problems with the bathroom seals, and so on. She cannot get into her shower over the bath. If she was to try it would be a serious risk regarding falls, but

she has no hot water system: unbelievable squalor and this woman has been waiting to be housed for two years.

She fronted up to Housing Connect, seeking the help that this minister says is available to her. I can only assume that they must relegate her down the list because she has a roof over her head. We must ask ourselves, what sort of house, what sort of roof over people's head, how are these people living and how can we expect them to engage in society and live a happy and healthy life under those conditions?

Disability access: there was a question on notice in relation to 20 per cent of new social housing homes being accessible for people living with disability. The answer, unbelievably, is that -

It is unknown and it has not been identified, Ms Standen, as requested during the Committee hearing.

Here is the document, minister, Agency Implementation of the Disability Framework for Action 2017. It is on the Communities Tasmania website, on the DPAC website and it clearly says on page 11, under Department of Justice -

Require 100 per cent of social housing new builds in Tasmania to include accessibility in their design, with 20 per cent of those homes being built to the platinum universal standard.

With around one in four or one in three Tasmanians on that social housing waiting list saying that they are living with a disability, will you now investigate this source and explain what progress has been made against that target?

Mr Jaensch - That is not the question that you asked in Estimates, or that you put on the record. You should not misrepresent it because you did not ask.

Ms STANDEN - I will write to you, if necessary, if you want to play those silly games. I can quote from *Hansard*. Do not dig this hole deeper than you already have. You are looking ridiculous and you know it.

The maintenance liability in this state in the last 12 months has not shifted from the \$60 million that it was this time last year. I welcome the investment of \$15 million to accelerate maintenance and replacement of appliances but it would be good to add Labor's promise of an additional \$17.5 million. This promise is only limited to Director of Housing owned and managed stock and will not extend to the community housing sector. This minister knows that some of the oldest and most dilapidated housing that was transferred out to the community housing sector under Better Housing Futures badly needs accelerated maintenance and replacement of appliances. He was unable to answer the questions as to how Windsor Court and Oakleigh Court have been prioritised for maintenance and refurbishment, unable to say whether that was a result of political lobbying, or how on earth these projects are prioritised.

In relation to private rental, there is a lot of work to be done to ensure that people can access affordable rental properties in this state. Today's rental affordability index once again shows that Hobart is one of the most unaffordable capital cities in this country. There was no plan for impending evictions.

I know of a woman who was to be evicted on 6 December. Since then the protections for private rental have been extended to the end of January, but too late for her. She had to make plans. She had no place to go. She was offered no property from the social housing register. She could not find an affordable private rental and her only option, was for her family to arrange for her to move interstate to be housed with her mother. What a terrible situation. What have we come to, when people in this state need to move interstate in order to have a roof over their heads?

I asked questions about homelessness and in particular about brokerage accommodation - how many of those people had formerly been homeless; what were the average nights that they had stayed; and what outcomes had been achieved through those people accessing brokerage accommodation? No answers.

Yet there are states like South Australia that have an aggressive, proactive, strategic approach to addressing homelessness throughout the pandemic, by setting a target to house those people who had been on the streets. I asked about fast-track rezoning in the Huntingfield Estate, and again this minister failed to commit to a percentage of social housing and a percentage of affordable housing. He grouped those together as at least 15 per cent - a woefully low figure for state-owned property that's ripe for development and the biggest opportunity available to him in memory.

In the Environment and Parks portfolios, I asked questions about the move north of 100 staff. Thank you, minister, for providing some answers to questions on notice in relation to those. There was a significant number of business cases that had been knocked back and a number that had been supported to ensure that that policy is followed through. I was shocked and dismayed that the secretary was exempt from that policy as a result of being in the Senior Executive Service. I can only think with concern about Aboriginal staff, in particular, who may not be exempt and the disconnection from family and from community that would occur as a result.

I asked questions about insecurity of work and in the other place, Deputy Chair, I was disgusted to hear a response that this work insecurity somehow was something staff enjoyed.

There were many more questions than answers and not enough time to go through that today.

Time expired.

[5.22 p.m.]

Ms O'CONNOR - Before I talk about the substantive issues that came out of Mr Jaensch's Estimates, I remind Ms Standen that the reason we only had one-and-a-half hours for Human Services was a choice that her party made, to take time away from Human Services. Just so the record is accurate, Deputy Chair.

A significant part of the Estimates with Mr Jaensch this year dealt with that terrible, unsafe place that is Ashley Youth Detention Centre. While the minister told the Estimates Committee that Ashley is a safe environment, we do not believe him. The evidence does not point to that. We have spoken to staff who disagree with the minister. It is one thing to focus

on historical allegations and historical events. It is not all historical. Something is rotten at Ashley now, today, here. That is a fact.

I went back through the *Hansard* transcript last night to prepare for today and I could see no recognition on the minister's part that this is not all historical. Until he accepts the reality that there are significant, unresolved problems at Ashley that impact on the outcomes for those children and young people, he is not going to be able to administer this portfolio effectively. The evidence is clear.

In fact, the evidence is in the Ombudsman's report of an event at Ashley Youth Detention Centre in December 2019. The report talks about a January 2018 incident, a complaint from a young person about the use of force against them during an incident at Ashley in November 2017. Communities Tasmania instigated a review of the use of force against the young person, and several other use of force incidents that happened around the same time. It made a large number of recommendations. One was that an assessment be made to determine if action needed to be taken against the staff involved in the use of force against the complainant.

One would expect that some sort of action should be taken when there is evidence that staff have used force - that is a euphemism for being violent - towards a young detainee at Ashley. The Ombudsman says in the subsequent assessment that the department decided not to take any formal action against staff due to 'gaps in training and procedures'. We looked at the department's assessment of whether it should take formal action against the staff involved in the use of force incident. The allegation is - and here is the kicker from the Ombudsman -

Although we did not make any findings about the use of force it did not seem reasonable despite any gaps in procedures or training to throw a 12-year-old from a bench and pull the complainant by their handcuffed arms while they were lying on their stomach after being restrained.

After the use of force incident the young person was left handcuffed in their room for two hours without constant supervision.

This is not stuff the Greens have made up - and we were accused of that a lot last week.

This is in the Ombudsman's report, where he says the assessment did not obtain all the facts. The department's assessment of this incident was basic and the decision to take no action against staff was based on little or no evidence. The department did not get some facts or did not mention them in the assessment such as -

- details of the harm the complainant suffered including photos taken by correctional primary health services of bruises and physiotherapy appointments relating to shoulder pain;
- the complainant's version of events;

Whatever happened to the rights of the child?

- evidence of the training provided to youth workers or outline which specific procedures were not clear; and

- the experience of the youth workers and how long they had been working at AYDC, which combined was in excess of two decades.

Not having these facts meant that the assessment had not been adequate and as the Ombudsman notes -

I understand ... there have since been three AYDC staff suspended as a result of use of force incidents.

It is not true to say that Ashley is a safe environment for young people. It is delusional to think all of this happened in ancient history. There is a reason three staff have been suspended and there is a question mark hanging over a number of others. Yet, when I put testimony to the minister, from people we have spoken to who work or have worked at Ashley Youth Detention Centre about a culture there - the minister rejected that. The minister put it back on the Greens and said if you have any evidence, present it.

The minister has the Department of Communities Tasmania at his disposal. These issues were raised in a parliamentary forum. They are now on the table. It has been brought to his attention, and we are not going to ring up the referral line. We are parliamentarians. That is where we will bring this up. I wonder about the quality of the information that is being fed up to the minister. There are vast contradictions between what we heard at Estimates and what we are hearing from people with experience of Ashley.

Ashley needs to be closed. It is the most damning indictment on this Government that they know that place is such a harsh environment for young people and they do so little to give them an opportunity for a good life. It is a damning indictment on the Government that they have put \$7 million in this year's budget to fix up Ashley. It cannot be fixed. That \$7 million presumably is for infrastructure. Where is the money going into extra clinicians, therapists and mentors? It was a political decision to keep Ashley Youth Detention Centre open, and that \$7 million should be withheld until the Commission of Inquiry has done its work, because presented with the evidence of the failed Ashley model, surely that commission of inquiry will recognise that Ashley needs to close. It is failing those children.

We heard that there were 223 strip-searches in the past year. We would like to know how many of those young people who underwent strip-searches had modesty gowns on, which was a recommendation of the commissioner for children. First of all, we should not be strip-searching children. Second, a recommendation was made to provide some dignity to those children who were being strip-searched with the use of modesty gowns. We understand there has been a problem procuring those modesty gowns and a big question mark hangs over whether that recommendation of the commissioner for children is being implemented.

We heard some very tricky language around the question of isolation of young people. What is happening is that children are being put into their rooms for extended periods; it is just not being called isolation. We know from a number of sources that after that incident on the roof at Ashley Youth Detention Centre in December last year a number of the young people involved were isolated in their room for an extended period. That is isolation.

We want to see that commission of inquiry undertake its work and the infrastructure money for Ashley, which is about politics, be held off until that is done. We would also like some real clarity about why young people who are brought in by Tasmania Police are not provided with a lawyer before they are sent to Ashley on remand. That question was not

answered. We contend that that is in contravention of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. It is also a denial of access to justice for the children and young people who come before the Magistrates Court on matters that Tasmania Police have brought them in for. We will not let Ashley go.

Time expired.

[5.32 p.m.]

Mrs PETRUSMA - It is my pleasure to rise in regard to the Estimates of the Minister for Housing, Minister for Environment and Parks, Minister for Human Services, Minister for Aboriginal Affairs and Minister for Planning, the Honourable Roger Jaensch MP.

As I thanked the committee members in my last Estimates reply this time I would like to take the opportunity to thank our wonderful parliamentary staff who supported Committee A Estimates this year including our committee secretaries, Laura Ross and Scott Hennessy, Margot Scales, who did a brilliant job with Hansard, as well as the attendants and cleaning staff who kept us all COVID-safe.

I also commend, thank and pay tribute to Mr Jaensch for his strong passion and commitment to his portfolios. On what turned out to be a very hot day both outside and in the Long Room, his responses to the questions consistently demonstrated his great love, concern, care, compassion and consideration for the people of Tasmania and his respective portfolios. The fact is that Mr Jaensch's portfolios touch the lives of every Tasmanian in many different ways, with just the Housing and Human Services portfolio alone looking after hundreds of thousands of vulnerable Tasmanians in need every year.

Every day in these portfolios, despite what we have heard, there are thousands of good news stories happening that sadly do not make the news because people do not seem to want to hear about the good news stories that are happening in these portfolios. There are stories such as a child's life changed through having a stable placement in a loving home, a family that had survived horrific family violence being housed in a brand-new home, a woman getting the assistance she needs at the most vulnerable point in her life as a victim or survivor of family violence, or families receiving assistance through our wonderful Neighbourhood Houses throughout the state.

These are a few examples of the myriad stories that Mr Jaensch or others could outline. I know they are the stories that each and every day fuel Mr Jaensch's desire and commitment to get up and get out and do what he can do best in his portfolios. I know he is 100 per cent committed to making Tasmania a better place in which to live, no matter your circumstances or social economic status, by doing all that he can in his power in his portfolios to do this. I commend Mr Jaensch and thank him for his commitment. I thank his staff and his department's dedication and hard work in all of his portfolios.

In regard to Housing, despite what the Opposition is saying today, I commend the minister for his announcements in Estimates, especially where he was able to share that, in addition to Magnolia House being awarded a grant under the Commonwealth Government's Safe Places grants, there are now two other programs in which the state Government has also partnered to see delivered. One of these recipients I am delighted to see is Jireh House in my electorate of Franklin, which has received more than \$800 000 from the state and federal

governments to expand the services they offer through the purchase of a three-bedroom home, as well as the construction of another three-bedroom home.

Another recipient is the Salvation Army, which will receive more than \$2.5 million in state and federal funding to deliver an additional six one- and two-bedroom units for women and children escaping family violence. This project will also be delivered in the south of the state. All up, a total of \$4 million has now been committed by the federal government under the Safe Places program to go along with the \$5.3 million that is being provided by the Tasmanian Government.

I was also delighted to hear Mr Jaensch share that the changes to the eligibility requirements for HomeShare announced earlier this year have seen a mini boom in HomeShare, with the total number of applicants during the first four months of this financial year being 78. That is more than the total number normally expected for a whole full year. It is great that people are taking the opportunity to take up HomeShare because about 13 per cent of the applicants earned over what were the previous income limits, meaning that they are now eligible to apply because of the changes Mr Jaensch and this Government made back in June.

There is no doubt there will soon be even more home owners in this state because of the work of Mr Jaensch and it is great that home owners are able to secure further support under the Government's HomeBuilder Grants which have also been very successful.

It was also great to hear that Mr Jaensch and his team have been working on a new agreement with the Migrant Resource Centre, a fantastic organisation that each and every day does tremendous work delivering support for new arrivals to Tasmania from overseas. One of the programs they have been funded to run by the Commonwealth is the Humanitarian Support Program. I note that earlier this year the MRC came to the Government with a proposal to improve their capacity and service delivery model. I was delighted to hear that the Government will now be supporting this proposal through providing a grant of \$1 million and a loan of a further \$840 000 to support the MRC to purchase the Elwick Cabins and Caravan Park site in Goodwood.

Through MRC being able to own this site they will now be able to run a more efficient and financially sustainable support model while also increasing their capacity to house and support humanitarian migrants. This also means that the previous 20 houses they had in the past which were quite widely dispersed and did not facilitate a good model for MRC will now come back into the pool of social housing and will be able to be used by other households on the Housing Register. This is a win-win all around and is only possible due to the hard work of Mr Jaensch and this Government getting the Housing debt waiver from the Commonwealth Government.

In the Human Services portfolio it was great to hear the minister outline all the efforts that are happening in progressing our Strong Families, Safe Kids child safety reform. This redesign involves and includes a significant investment in additional staffing resources to help restructure the Child Safety Service into a more contemporary service. This includes 49 new positions including clinical practice educators, child safety liaison officers, support workers, unit coordinators, core coordinators and safety and wellbeing officers.

I note there has now been an evaluation undertaken by the University of Tasmania which is a positive evaluation and has provided a number of recommendations to continue the

redesign of Tasmania's child safety system and that Communities Tasmania is now developing a Strong Families, Safe Kids next steps action plan that will incorporate the recommendations from the evaluation and complement the delivery of the Child and Youth Wellbeing Strategy that I also outlined this morning in the Premier's Estimates.

In regard to Aboriginal Affairs, I appreciated hearing the update to the committee on Tasmania's progress on the Closing the Gap national agreement. This Government's 2020-21 Budget includes funding of \$1.2 million across the forward Estimates as part of our commitment to the Closing the Gap Refresh initiative. This is our contribution to a national funding pool that will be reinvested in Tasmania to build the capacity of our Aboriginal community organisations so that they can deliver services that result in better life outcomes for Tasmanian Aboriginal people.

It was also great to hear that the Government will now be working with Aboriginal organisations across Tasmania, government agencies and service providers on an implementation plan to set and meet Tasmania's targets as part of this national commitment, starting with a series of themed Closing the Gap round tables that will be held around the state in the coming weeks. All Tasmanian Aboriginal communities, organisations, representatives of the Australian, Tasmanian and local government and non-government organisations with service delivery to Aboriginal children and families have been invited to register their interest to attend the round tables.

Tasmanian Government departments have prepared a statistical analysis of how Tasmania measures against the targets in the national agreement and current government service delivery in order to guide the round table discussions.

With regard to the Environment and Parks portfolio, as Mr Jaensch outlined, this Government has a clear plan for progressing some of the pressing waste management issues for Tasmania.

Ms O'Connor - Yes, to privatise whole islands in the World Heritage area - exclusive possession.

Mrs PETRUSMA - And unlike Ms O'Connor, I was delighted to hear about the significant investment this Government is making in the waste management resource recovery and recycling sector in Tasmania as we build towards a circular economy for Tasmania.

Ms O'Connor - I am delighted about that too. It's the privatisation of the World Heritage area that gets up my nose.

Mrs PETRUSMA - Ms O'Connor is making a lot of noise because she does not want to hear the good news. It goes back to my point at the start of this. It is a good news story. Well done, Mr Jaensch. Thank you for all the hard work that you are doing.

Mr Jaensch - Thank you, very much.

Mrs PETRUSMA - I was particularly pleased to hear about the National Partnership Agreement on Recycling Infrastructure, including the fact that this Government provides \$5.5 million in grants over the next four years, which will be matched dollar for dollar by the Australian Government through its \$190 million Recycling Modernisation Fund. This funding will also leverage additional matching investment from the waste, resource recovery and

recycling industry. The funding provided through the national partnership agreement is expected to result in more than \$16 million being injected into the resource recovery industry in Tasmania.

The Recycling Modernisation Fund comes in response to the Council of Australian Governments agreeing to phase out the export of unprocessed waste, glass, plastic, paper and cardboard. Congratulations to Mr Jaensch. I applaud him for all his efforts in his portfolio.

Mr Jaensch - Thank you, very much.

Time expired.

[5.42 p.m.]

Ms WHITE - Mr Deputy Chair, I rise to make a contribution on this Estimates output for Mr Jaensch. At the outset I say what a disappointing Estimates process it was. The lack of regard this minister has for young people was evident, particularly when we were discussing matters in relation to Ashley Youth Detention Centre. Specific questions were asked about how many young people exited into homelessness and the minister could not answer. Yet we know right now there are 12 young people there. We know that in a course of a year there are very few young people who are incarcerated there. It is our expectation that you know exactly where those young people go when they exit Ashley. Your expectation is that it is up to them.

Some of these young people are not 18. These young people would need to provide a forwarding address. In some instances, these young people are exiting into homelessness and volatile situations and finding themselves returned to Ashley. It is very concerning to me and to the Labor Party that the minister seemed not know how many young people exited into homelessness once they had been in the Ashley Youth Detention Centre, but he also seemed to think it was not his responsibility to know because it was up to them to find their own way once that incarceration then ended. This is exactly what is wrong with this Government: they think it is somebody else's responsibility when it is this Government's responsibility.

The shadow minister for human services, Alison Standen, made a number of arguments and expressed her frustration at the lack of answers she was provided throughout this Estimates hearing with the minister, particularly when it came to the plight of people who are facing homelessness or who are in precarious housing situations, who are desperately in need of safe, secure accommodation.

I was very disappointed to learn that not only was the maintenance liability still stubbornly high but the fact is the Government has not built the houses it promised. The net change in housing stock is just five properties over the course of 12 months. That is not good enough. The historic housing debt that the Tasmanian Government had to the Commonwealth, which was waived because of the advocacy of Senator Jacqui Lambie, was supposed to result in 80 houses being built every year. We discovered through the course of Estimates that there were zero houses built by this Government over the last 12 months yet there are nearly 3500 Tasmanian households currently waiting on the public housing register for safe and secure housing.

This situation could not be more urgent and yet the Government crows about the fact that they have secured the debt waiver. They did not: it was Senator Jacqui Lambie. Then they

promised to build 80 houses a year but did not build a single one. That is incompetence of the highest kind. The worst thing about it is that Tasmania's most vulnerable are suffering.

We also spoke about the now-announced commission of inquiry and what Mr Jaensch, the minister responsible for vulnerable children in the state, knew and when he knew about James Griffin's offending and when his department was made aware of that offending, given the connection with Ashley Youth Detention Centre. We learnt today in question time that a referral was only made to Child Safety Services about James Griffin on 2 August.

A police investigation began in May; the Department of Health was told in July; yet the Department of Communities, responsible for children, was not told until August. There is a clear failure of process here that is alarming. It cannot be dealt with by saying the commission of inquiry will resolve these matters. That is too far away. We have a situation right now where a royal commission has found there are likely to be 2000 Tasmanians come forward seeking redress. We have had about 200 Tasmanians already come forward and achieve compensation for the horrific crimes that were committed against them.

If we are to see another 1800 people come forward, and it is likely that some of those will come forward soon, the processes of this Government dealing with those allegations needs to be improved. The referrals that are made to authorities and the sharing of information across departments to prioritise the welfare of children has to be improved.

It is unconscionable for this minister to not be made aware of these allegations until this year when the Premier, who was then the Treasurer, knew about its last year. The Government has not been able to explain how the Treasurer could have heard from a former staff member of the former premier Will Hogman and did not share that information, or how the Police minister could have found out about this over a year ago and did not share this with the minister responsible for children.

There are clear process failures that need to be fixed. A royal commission or a commission of inquiry is welcomed by the Labor Party but there are steps this Government needs to take now to make sure that children are safe, and when serious allegations are made they are swiftly acted upon and information is shared appropriately across departments to enable that to occur.

I want to talk more about housing stress in Tasmania. I was alarmed to see today, shared by the Tenants' Union, a commentary on people who are looking for housing right now. They have shared on Twitter - and if you are not aware, minister, I encourage you to take a look - the number of people in Tasmania using Gumtree to find secure accommodation to put a roof over their head. It is probably the same thousands of people who are waiting on public housing waiting lists and have been languishing there for many months, in some cases years.

One was for an old man. He advertises as a very small cute dog with a not-so-cute old man looking for a home in the hope that will attract attention. He is so desperate he is looking for something that must be wind-tight and watertight, or able to be made that way, and have basic features such as electricity in some form, a toilet and a shower, but again this is negotiable. This man is so desperate he says that he is willing to live in a cave. He just needs some shelter. This is very sad.

The listings on Gumtree that were shared by the Tenants' Union - I encourage you to have a look, minister - include one from a woman who lives at St Helens, who says -

Urgently seeking a home to rent. I have a two-year old son and another baby due in March. We are needing a home to rent urgently. Please message with anything you know of or have available.

These are Tasmanians right now who are desperately in need of a home. Another person posted -

Desperately wanting a three-bedroom house for myself and three children. We have been homeless for nearly two years due to a toxic relationship. We've been sleeping on my mother's lounge room floor. I am extremely desperate to find a house.

These people are sharing their personal stories on Gumtree because they are so desperate for housing. This is a government that only increased the housing stock by five properties last financial year. That was the net increase of public housing stock. This is a government that failed to build a single house with the debt waiver relief money, the \$15 million that has been provided to this government because of that waiver.

There are people like the ones I have shared stories of who are so desperate they are willing to live in properties that do not have electricity or proper working toilets or showers. They are desperate to put a roof over their head or the heads of their children or their yet to be born children - pregnant mothers looking for somewhere safe to live.

We can do better and I thought the responses from the minister in some cases were callous and heartless. This is not the kind of Tasmania we should have for these people or for our future. I urge the Premier to step up here. This minister has responsibility for some of the most important portfolios dealing with some of the most vulnerable Tasmanians. I found his performance at Estimates to be lacking the compassion, the urgency and the empathy necessary to make sure we have a decent minister doing the best job possible on behalf of these Tasmanians.

[5.52 p.m.]

Ms DOW (Braddon) - I rise to make my contribution with regard to Estimates Committee A and the roles and responsibility of Mr Jaensch under the portfolio area of Planning.

We only had an hour allocated to Planning and, in hindsight, next year we should have a longer period of time as there is quite a lot to get through. As was discussed during the course of the afternoon in the hour that we did have, there are significant changes right now across the planning system in Tasmania and there are a number of communities who are concerned about the way that planning happens in their local community. They are concerned about a number of the changes that are being proposed and the way in which they were able to influence and provide input into the planning process in Tasmania. There would be benefit next time from there being greater time allocated to the discussion.

The first item I will talk about, which is a significant change for Tasmanian communities, is the introduction of the local provision schedules, the public exhibition of those and the role

of councils in those. Many councils are doing the right thing, notifying residents of changes, particularly to zoning in local areas and offering lots of input from the community and interaction with the council about the proposed changes. I raised during the hearing with the minister, the need for there to be greater encouragement for that to happen across the state because it has not happened consistently. It would appear there is a need for that to be a consistent approach across the state, mainly in the information provided to communities and the way in which that is done.

After all, this is about people's livelihoods, about properties they own and about the future use of those properties. They are well within their rights, as we have said in this place before, to understand what changes will be imposed upon them and what that means for their livelihoods, and how they can go about influencing that and providing their perspective on that change to ensure their voices are heard, which is important.

We then went on to talk about the interim planning scheme and the transition to the statewide planning scheme for local provision schedules. I highlighted to the minister a number of representations that had been made to me about that transition process and we discussed the proposed legislative changes that are to come before the parliament in the new year and that there is an active consultation process about that at the moment.

There appears to be a gap in the way in which the transition to the new scheme has been administered and it is of considerable concern to many proponents and local community members as they look to navigate the planning scheme and lodge their development applications and understand what that might mean to them in the context of the introduction of the new scheme. I will be very interested to understand better what that will mean and what those proposed changes actually are. There is good opportunity for us to have a good understanding and briefing and a good period of time for us to undertake our own consultation on those changes before the legislation comes before the parliament.

The next item I want to talk about is very important and goes mainly to the role of councils as planning authorities across the state. There has been a tremendous amount of change across the planning system in Tasmania over many years. I know it is often said within the local government sector and the wider community that there is an element of fatigue about planning reform in this state.

It was interesting that the minister put on the record his commitment to see that the transition to the new planning scheme would in fact occur by the end of next year. It will be very interesting and we will be taking great notice of whether that goal is achieved because there is a huge amount of work still to be done as we look primarily towards policy development that has to happen alongside that and the review of the regional land use strategies, which is denoted in the budget. There is funding there for that and it is important that that happens across the state, across the three regional land use strategies, because currently they are out of date and an impediment to investment.

There are some issues around residential boundary growth and that has been a significant issue for some councils. There is a considerable amount of work to do and it will be very interesting to see if the minister meets that time frame.

When it comes to the role of councils as local planning authorities it was interesting to note that the minister did not rule out that there may be a change to that role and an

encouragement from Government to work towards regional planning panels or collaboration across councils when it comes to planning -

Mr Jaensch - I did not say that.

Ms DOW - You alluded to that.

Mr JAENSCH - I think you are extrapolating that.

Ms DOW - I do not think so; that is how I interpreted it. You will have the opportunity to defend that in your response, but I did not get a clear indication from you that you were ruling out the fact that there could be greater collaboration across councils when it comes to planning, the resources that are required for planning assessment across councils, and that there may be the encouragement to move towards regional panels. I am interested in any more information on that and we will be watching that with great interest.

I want to go to the independent review of the Tasmanian Planning Commission commissioned by the Government earlier this year. There was consultation undertaken throughout the period of COVID-19 and all the changes that came within that period of time across Tasmania. There was concern raised at that time about the ability for those with an interest in the review of the TPC to be able to provide feedback and if there was adequate time for consultation. I wrote to the minister about that regarding some representation that had been made to me. It was good to see that the Government extended that but it is an important piece of work. It was disappointing that it was dropped at the end of our Estimates hearing and there was no opportunity to scrutinise the contents of the report during Estimates.

Ms O'Connor - It was quite deliberate.

Ms DOW - That is right.

Mr Jaensch - I released it at my earliest opportunity.

Ms DOW - It makes some interesting points. It is note-worthy that the review of the TPC was not made public until after the major projects legislation went through the parliament. There are some issues about delegation of the directors of the TPC, and other issues about making sure that the delegation is truly independent of government. I understand there will be further consultation, but I note the timing of that, particularly when we referred in our amendments to the importance of the independence of the TPC and ensuring that the commissioners were the directors of the TPC rather than delegated public servants, for example. We were not able to fully satisfy that within our amendment.

The independent review highlights some important matters. It also goes to the heart of the issue I was talking about earlier, that people right across Tasmania quite often do not have a good understanding of the planning system unless they have a personal experience. I have heard you reference this yourself, minister, many times. Quite often, changes have occurred across local planning schemes and communities have been none the wiser. There is a point in time where communities are becoming much more conscious of the changes that are being imposed through planning throughout the state. I believe, in some instances, it is related to a lack of clear, concise information about the changes and promotion of that to local communities.

Councils can only do so much, and this reform process is the initiative of the state Government. There should be better communication about the changes and the implications for local communities, particularly when we look at the strategic work that needs to be done across the state around policy development and what that will mean for local communities. That is an excellent opportunity for local communities to be involved in shaping the character of their communities as they move forward. It is the best opportunity for them to have a say in what they want in their neighbourhood, or the amenity of their neighbourhood, or even the residential developments around them, or the type of development that they want to see in their local community. This is the opportunity they have to shape it, and it is important that the Government gets that right and communicates it effectively to communities so they have every opportunity to have their say.

Time expired.

[6.02 p.m.]

Dr WOODRUFF - I do not get a lot of joy from re-reading this transcript. It was a painful questioning process of Mr Jaensch in his capacity as minister for the Environment. It started badly and it got worse. There was only an hour available to scrutinise the minister for all of his responsibilities for protecting critically endangered species and habitat; our beautiful waterways and marine environments; the land; the sea, and the management of all of them for the future inhabitants of this island. It was a pathetically small amount of time. The fact I was only given two issues to raise during that period speaks volumes about the intention of the Government - with, I might mention, the support of the Labor Party - to keep the scrutiny for this minister in this portfolio as short as possible.

Ms Standen - You would have done better if you had shorter questions.

Dr WOODRUFF - Thank you, Ms Standen, for making that illuminating comment. We do what we can to get the issues raised for the people who raise them with us. We are the only people in this space who will raise matters to do with the environment. The Labor Party's record on that stands for itself.

Let's just talk about Westbury, while we are at it. I believe it was on the dot point where the Labor Party was completely abandoning the Westbury community when the Liberal Government changed their preferred option for another prison from being in the middle of town to being in a Tasmanian reserve estate - the Westbury Reserve. As soon as it moved into a bushland area, the Labor Party has not been seen in the community since.

I am here to talk about the minister for the Environment. The take-home message for anyone who is watching, is that the minister for the Environment will, at every opportunity, wash his hands, pass the buck, outsource responsibilities to make sure he does not get called to make a decision, obfuscate, and hide information, to make it as impossible as he can for the community to find out what the processes are for protecting the environment. He will make sure at every opportunity that the finger is pointing to someone else, somewhere else so no responsibility is sheeted home to him for anything that happens in this state to do with the environment.

That is pretty much a summation of how this minister treats the grave responsibilities he has for protecting threatened and critically endangered species. If it is a matter to do with bans on duck shooting he will point to the minister for Primary Industry -

Mr Jaensch - That is because it is not my portfolio.

Dr WOODRUFF - That's right, it's not his responsibility. If it has to do with a development that will obliterate a threatened orchid at the top of Rosny Hill - a much loved nature recreation area - he will point the finger at the Clarence City Council and say, 'I cannot make a decision on that because it is council; it is planning; it is new development; it is in court; we will wait until later'. He will never make a decision about whether the proposed development on that land is, or is not, going to obliterate the orchid. Even the right to information advice we received from his own departmental staff makes it clear that they have deep scepticism that the developer would have any capacity to relocate orchids. Orchids do not do that; they do not like to be transplanted.

His own staff provide that information. The minister refuses to hear it or maybe it never gets up the chain of command, so he can have plausible deniability when he is asked.

It started off with the minister effectively finding no problems with the statement of expectations that the EPA Board has, that governs their response to managing the environment. The minister signalled that despite the fact he has not personally issued a statement of expectation, the one issued under then Environment minister, Ms Archer still stands, and it still prioritises industry productivity and the provision of employment opportunities over environmental protection.

The minister made it clear that he is not inclined to have any change to that situation when he issues a new statement, despite the fact that the world has changed. The minister pointed to statements of expectation nearly a decade old, from the Labor Party when they were in government - as if that was the gold standard of how these expectations should be written for the EPA. It is not. The world has changed. It has dramatically changed. We are in a global biodiversity crisis. Tasmania is a refuge. We have high functioning biodiversity, but it is rapidly under threat. It is disappearing every day, through native forest logging; development; agricultural activities; feral animals; and through a whole range of human activities that must be moderated if we are to ensure we keep the biodiversity that we have intact.

That is what this minister should be doing. The statement of expectation has to be rewritten to put environment at the top to make it truly sustainable, not the cynical misrepresentation that the minister puts into the words 'sustainable' he when uses it, a cynical attempt to talk about a triple bottom line when it is only ever possible under this Government's direction for the EPA to put industry productivity first.

Every time that is what happens and it is the changes in the marine environment, it is the changes in terrestrial environment, and it is the hundreds and hundreds - I think it might be 660, maybe 700 - threatened species recovery plans that have not been prepared or that are out of date. These are just a few of the things that this minister would outsource or not even bother about. He could not care less about the hundreds and hundreds of threatened species in Tasmania. Even the most iconic like the wedge-tailed eagle either have no threatened species recovery plan at all or are woefully out of date, 10 years old. How shameful.

This Government has been here since 2014; we are in the seventh year now so there is no way this has anything to do with previous governments, but this minister cannot bring himself to talk without a smirk on his face about such an important matter as a 10-year out-of-date recovery plan for the wedge-tailed eagle.

It was a depressing experience. I am tired of seeing the minister smirk and find it amusing that there are opaque processes in the department so it is impossible for people in the community to get access to information except through right to information. Talking about the swift parrot hollows that have been blocked up in the north-east, the minister does not see it as his responsibility and Mr Crane and his department also agreed that it was not their department's responsibility to require that the Department of State Growth understand the impact on a critically endangered bird from blocking up tree hollows and chopping trees down and that it should be reported to the EPBC for assessment. They say it is not their job. Nothing in the environment is the job of this minister for Environment.

Time expired.

[6.13 p.m.]

Ms HOUSTON (Bass) - I rise to speak to Estimates Committee A for the Minister for Human Services, Minister for Housing, and Minister for Aboriginal Affairs. As is often the case in these portfolios there were many questions, not enough answers, and simply not enough time.

The first thing we went to in this committee was the child sex abuse issues. We were aware that there were historical issues but what I had been hoping to hear, given the allegations that had come to light about Griffin and the fact that he was operating across a number of departments over a number of years, was that the flaws in the system had been addressed, that they had been identified where the gaps were and that something had been done. Given that there was around a year where it was known by at least some ministers that this had occurred, there could have been some sort of collaboration to look at where the gaps were, why the communication had failed and how he had been allowed to continue to operate over a number of years across departments when there were allegations dating back to 2009 and 2017.

That information should have been shared. I was disappointed when that did not happen. There is a system in place but it is obviously broken. If we can have people still working at the Ashley Youth Detention Centre who have had allegations made against them, and that information does not flow through and they remain in that position for a number of years, then something is broken.

If we have people who have their working with vulnerable people registrations revoked and that is not addressed immediately, and that information then can be shared with all the organisations and all the employers they are involved with and all the departments they have worked for, then something in that system is not working. It is not a joined-up service model, it is not a joined-up response, and those cracks are the ones that perpetrators move through and stay active, we have found, for decades.

There is no mechanism to report perpetrators that ends up with a guarantee that it will go through because people in positions of power can decide not to pass that information on, and it seems they can do it without much consequence. Employers and organisations will only find out that someone has lost their registration when it goes to be renewed or if that person tells

them. There is no new mechanism to inform departments, the public, potential victims. There is no revised way to address this issue and it has been a year. That was very disappointing. I am hoping, given all the light that has been shone on that over the last few weeks and months, that that will be a priority, especially for the minister who is responsible for children.

Speaking of things that are broken I turn to the Ashley Youth Detention Centre. We know that those recent allegations are historical. We do not know if there were any complaints about Griffin in his time there. We do not know if the people he looked after at Ashley have been contacted and interviewed. We do not know where that will go. We are hoping it will all come out in due time.

The Ashley Youth Detention Centre is an archaic model. While I acknowledge there have been attempts to run a therapeutic model and trauma-informed practice, the reality is that the environment there is not conducive to that and nor is the centre's history. We are still seeing cases and allegations of heavy-handedness and violence against children. In reality, that is what they are: children, detainees or not.

We found out that strip-searches of minors at Ashley are still occurring. Call them partially-clothed searches if you want, but they are still strip-searches; 223 of them in all. We know that the majority of children in the Ashley Detention Centre are not there because they have had ideal lives. They are there because they are traumatised and end up in trouble. Nothing much seems to have shifted at Ashley since the first time we had this discussion a couple of years ago.

There is a contract signed, I understand, for major redevelopments for \$7 million, but that will not change the culture and the practice because a therapeutic model is an entirely different model to what is running there now. It requires entirely different people with entirely different training and a whole different culture. There are models available that can be implemented and I am sure there has been a lot invested in doing this. There are models on the shelf that involve organisational structure, training for staff, people who will come in to do the training such as clinicians and therapists who will set this model up. We can do far better than what we are now seeing.

We looked at out-of-home care and I acknowledge that there is additional funding for out-of-home care. The concern I have is that it requires additional funding because there will be more kids in out-of-home care and then I have to wonder what is wrong with a system and a society that requires that. I understand there is a redesign but we did not get down into the bones of that because we did not have nearly enough time. When it comes to kinship care there are substantial issues with that. I get contacted frequently by grandparents, by kinship carers, who feel unsupported, who do not get the financial support, who get financial support for one child and not another, who have not heard from anyone in Child Safety for months. This was before a pandemic. You can imagine the dilemma those people are in now. Something is certainly broken there.

While a worker might help with that, the model needs a good hard look at; 35 per cent of the kids in out-of-home care are Aboriginal. What it alludes to is that there is something not working in the support systems put around families and early intervention. Handing kids back is not the answer. They were removed for a reason. Obviously there is something structural there, something we desperately need to address that relates to a lack of support. The underpinnings that allow people to be supportive, good parents, they need to learn if they have

not learnt that themselves. A lot of those people have been in out-of-home care situations, so it is a generational issue that needs an intervention.

In Aboriginal Affairs we talked about the model for returning land and how it has not really moved forward. It is a difficult one, I realise. There remains a point of conflict within Aboriginal communities. However, there is an opportunity to resolve this by addressing the issue of local management for land handbacks - a separation between who the land is handed back to and holds the title and who manages it locally. I hear that a lot from different groups.

On the tough subject of treaty, the reality is that the only one who can commence treaty negotiations is the government of the day. I recognise that the minister sees a treaty as an agreement between two parties; however, those two parties could be difficult to identify. There is nothing to stop the minister from opening negotiations, in inviting interested parties to the table. Those who want to know what treaty will look like, will not know until those discussions have commenced.

Time expired.

[6.23 p.m.]

Ms BUTLER (Lyons) - I rise to speak on Committee A, Minister for Human Services. I acknowledge the great breadth of work undertaken by departmental staff through this Estimates scrutiny process. I have viewed the footage of that scrutiny committee. It was not some of your best work, minister.

Mr Jaensch - You were not even there.

Ms BUTLER - We know that you are stuck between a rock and a hard place.

Mrs Petrusma - Which part were you there for?

Ms BUTLER - I said I viewed it. Is that okay with you?

The lack of knowledge was really ordinary, minister. We have a homelessness problem in Tasmania and we have 3400 applications waiting on the social housing list. There is nothing in this Budget to address the growing need. There is huge problem and delay with new housing. This Estimates provided us with the information that there have been nine houses built.

I have written to your office in relation to the particular case of a young man with chronic schizophrenia living in a car. He also lives at City Mission of an evening with his carer father who returned from the mainland to care for his son after he had a relapse. I have received correspondence from the minister in relation to this. He advised that the constituent should stay in touch with the housing provider. The man with chronic schizophrenia and his father have been waiting for a house, accommodation or a flat, for shelter, since February. It is not a solution to tell them to stay in touch. It is not acceptable. It has been 10 months for a person with chronic schizophrenia. This is the third time I have raised it in this House.

This is not how we should be looking after our most vulnerable. It is not acceptable for a person with chronic schizophrenia to be homeless, living in a car and staying at City Mission. They were in motel accommodation but they had to leave that motel accommodation, which was meant to be temporary anyway, because of the different behaviours of the constituent. It

was not conducive to living in a motel arrangement with other guests. Their car was recently broken into and the last remaining things they owned were stolen.

I have raised this issue three times in this House but still they are homeless. I implore the minister that if that is how we look after our most vulnerable, we have a big problem.

Mrs Petrusma - You should have turned up to the committee and made these points.

Ms BUTLER - You do not think this is important, Mrs Petrusma? This is a person with chronic schizophrenia and you want to play points.

Mrs Petrusma - Why did you not turn up to the committee and make these points?

Ms BUTLER - Shame on you. You should know better.

The need is incredible. This shows the disdain your Government has for our most vulnerable people. Some of the constituents which I service in Lyons live in some of the most disadvantaged areas in Australia. About 8000 people are living in rental stress and we have some of the highest levels of inter-generational poverty, under-employment, youth unemployment, rental stress, family violence, literacy and low life expectancy.

The redesign in Child Safety Service is important. Better support for workers to address burn out, better professional development for them to stop the churn, and lower case numbers are a really good start. The area is heartbreaking. I would like to see the minister get this right.

The Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute report released in October warned Tasmania is on the cusp of returning to pre-COVID-19 levels of housing stress as government income protections are wound back. The Government Affordable Housing Strategy, to deliver up to 1000 new social housing dwellings over the next three years under our Community Housing Growth program is looking dubious. No new houses.

I would like you to get this right. I would like to see how many more times you are going to come into parliament and tell us you have this under control when we all know that the need is getting worse.

I went door knocking, which I have raised in parliament before. I was invited into 87 newly built homes in the electorate in which I serve and I witnessed some of the faults. What amazed me was that the minister was not aware of the quality issues in those houses. It showed he is out of touch with the portfolio. In 87 of the properties that I sampled, 78 per cent of them reported faults; 11 per cent reported no faults. State and federal funding was leveraged to build these properties. There is a responsibility to ensure that the new stock of housing that is being built is up to standard. Providers are obliged to reach those quality standards.

I would like to praise the housing provider. I knocked on some of the doors of the houses that had faults on the weekend and they are going to a lot of effort to rectify those faults. I spoke to people with new kitchens, new laundries, new bathrooms, new floors and new doors. They have new tenancy officers and there have been a lot of changes since raising that. That is what we are meant to do. We are meant to raise issues and advocate for people in our communities so there can be positive change for them, especially when you have a minister who is not aware of the problems. I do not know whether it is because of your portfolios.

There is a lot on your plate but really it has been a good outcome for the Labor Party raising an issue. I do not think concern about offending a stakeholder will ever be as important as making sure that we can advocate for our communities. It is very important that we do that.

Another constituent came into my office. She spent six months in jail and did not qualify for the Beyond the Wire program. We wrote to the minister about this in March. That community member applied for 41 private rentals over a two-month period. She does not drive so she had to catch a bus to each one. That community member was approved for rent assistance for \$260 but in the private market that did not cover it at all, so that is where the system is not working. The minister would be aware of hundreds or thousands of these stories because we know the need is really great. That community member has jumped through every hoop to be housed and has done everything they can. They have played by all the rules and still have not had any luck in finding a home. They found a real lack of empathy and a real haste when they were dealing with housing providers and they kept being asked to expand the suburbs, engage more with Housing Connect and they are still in the same position.

We have a very big problem and I implore the minister to grab this portfolio by the horns and make a difference with it. The need is dire and we have some of the biggest disadvantage indicators in Australia in some of our areas. It is certainly not a golden era. The need will get worse and it is our job to advocate that to the Government.

Look at what has happened in the area that reported all the faults in the new builds. If we had not taken on that line and advocated for those community members, they would still have leaky doors and leaky windows and it still would be a problem. They have done a fantastic job of addressing the issues we raised. They even have now a customer survey so they know whether they are doing a good job in meeting the needs of those tenants. That was not in place before, so I take my hat off to them. It is wonderful and, minister, the offer is still there if you would like to come out and do a day's doorknocking with me and meet some of those people.

There are some good stories where there has been change but that change certainly was not triggered by you. It was triggered by us raising the point.

Time expired.

[6.33 p.m.]

Mr JAENSCH - Mr Deputy Chair, I thank members who have made a contribution so far. A number of speakers have referred to the matters under investigation across several departments which will roll into the commission of inquiry that will commence at the beginning of 2021. Some of the portfolio areas are mine and they have been referred to in the context of this Estimates debate.

I need to put on the record that everybody cares deeply about these matters and everyone wants the truth and for there to be resolution filling the gaps and answering the questions they have. I am deeply committed to working with that process and ensuring that my departments contribute fully with any and all information required for the independent investigations and the commission of inquiry they will roll into to do its job properly.

I know there is intense interest in these matters in the public and in this place and that people want answers to their questions and want to test their theories, but again and again the advice to me over this last couple of weeks in particular and on these sorts of matters generally

is that speculation, claims made and dots joined under privilege in this place with incomplete information do not help those processes to do their job properly. I will not be going into them any further here today in my contribution.

When it comes to these Estimates reply processes, I thank all those people who have supported the Estimates process so well; the chairs and secretaries to those committees, the Hansard staff and other attendants. I thank the department secretaries and their teams for the extensive preparation that goes into Estimates week as well as their assistance on the day and at the table, preparing answers, and answering questions themselves, through me, at the table. All that excellent work is a very important part of the mechanisms for scrutiny that our democracy provides for Tasmanians. I thank all those participants for their assistance and not least the staff in my office, my advisers and my chief of staff for the incredible work that goes into getting ready for Estimates week.

Several speakers have referred to the time allocations for Estimates in the different portfolio areas. I have to say that those matters are negotiated by the leaders between the parties. I have no involvement with those processes. We try to fit a lot into a very long day and if there is any learning from that, feed it into next year's process, please. I will be there all day one way or the other and how you carve it up is somebody else's decision to make at the end of the day.

In the area of Housing, I was pleased to inform the committee during Estimates that overall the 2020-21 state Budget contains a record state investment to deliver more social and affordable housing and homelessness services in Tasmania. This is in addition to the hundreds of applicants that are supported with their housing needs each month and more than 12 500 households already in social housing right around our state. The Budget shows that housing is a key focus for our government for its ability to both increase the supply of affordable housing for people who need it whilst also stimulating the building and construction sector and creating jobs for Tasmanians.

This Budget locks in \$100 million of investment that was announced as part of our construction blitz which will build up to 1000 new homes over three years. The EOI process for that program closed just last Wednesday and we will begin evaluations of those submissions in coming weeks. We are continuing to deliver more social housing supply under our ongoing Affordable Housing Action Plan and the Commonwealth debt waiver savings. With this added to the \$100 million, we as a state are building an unprecedented pipeline of new social housing for Tasmanian families on the Housing Register. I was pleased to be able to talk through in Estimates the current pipeline and eagerly await the awarding of contracts from the EOI process to see the future works being planned.

The Budget also commits more than \$25 million for new youth foyers in Hobart and Burnie and to expand Thyne House in Launceston as well. It also delivers almost \$5 million for a new Launceston Youth at Risk Centre and a further \$4.6 million to expand the Magnolia Place Women's Shelter.

This Budget will also continue to deliver on the program of works made possible through funding saved under the agreement to waive the state's housing-related debt to the Commonwealth. This program expects to assist a further 400 households into suitable accommodation through to June 2023, including the delivery of 300 new social housing

dwelling, co-funding the purchase of the Balmoral Motor Inn for long-term supported accommodation, remodelling the Windsor Court unit complex and other initiatives.

Just on this, I know it has been referenced by a couple of speakers, Ms Standen in particular, who makes a lot of standing up here and saying that we have only delivered three homes under that program so far. I want to back that up. The housing debt waiver was signed in September 2019. We released our plan for how it was going to be delivered and what we aimed to achieve with it in December 2019, less than a year ago. Less than one year later, those three homes that Ms Standen continuously cynically refers to are real homes that have been built.

In terms of getting things on the ground in that first year, rather than starting the process of building homes ourselves - or as well as starting the process of building homes ourselves - we went out to the market and found people who were ready to build; private developers who had the approvals, the land, and the plans. We bought those, because we needed more houses. We bought nine of them off the plan - three were finished as at the end of the September quarter, and six are under construction and nearly completed. There are 312 homes that are now also under construction under our own building program, under construction or under contract to be built. We have returned 19 social housing homes to the pool, available to be allocated to people from the social housing register, through a project where we invested \$1 million and lent \$800 000 to the Migrant Resource Centre to free up those homes and get them back into circulation so we could allocate them to people on the social housing register.

We have negotiated head lease arrangements for 25 new homes under the Private Rental Incentive Scheme that can be allocated to people who need them. We have co-funded the purchase of the Balmoral Motor Inn with a long-term lease, where that facility will be taking people allocated off the social housing register over the next 20 years, with no additional outlay from Government to make that happen. This is all within the first year of having access to the first \$15 million of savings from the Housing Debt Waiver which, as we know, will extend through decades. We are frontloading that investment. We are delivering houses out of it, but we are filling the pipeline with many more that will be supported through those savings. We achieved those savings, not Labor; and I am tired of listening to the wilful misrepresentation from Ms Standen on this issue. It is not mature. It is not correct or accurate. It is downright misleading and she should stop doing it.

I have mentioned the work that has been done under the Housing Debt Waiver. In general, the most recently completed quarterly Housing Report shows that so far, this Government's programs have delivered 826 new social housing dwellings, 38 supported accommodation dwellings and 69 homeless accommodation dwellings; refurbished 104 social housing properties; and returned 19 social housing properties from other uses - that is, through the Migrant Resource Centre Project. We have helped 429 Tasmanian families buy their first home - people on low incomes who might have always thought it might be well out of their reach to be helped. Those are real homes for people who really need them; people who, in the past, have only been able to join the social housing register. However, we have helped those 429 families to build and own their own home so they become beneficiaries of the housing boom that is going on at the moment, not victims of it. I am proud of that, and I want to do more of that - and we are reviewing that model to see how it can be much more effective and who else it can help.

The other thing this quarterly Housing Report does for the first time is, it lists the pipeline of work not completed yet, but contracted and underway, and being built. People can see what is coming, not just what has been handed over with the keys handed to a new owner. In that pipeline there are 444 new social housing dwellings, 136 new supported accommodation dwellings and 38 new homeless accommodation dwellings - 618 in total. We have just closed EOIs for another 1000 social housing dwellings on top of that. Our model for delivering housing is working. We are delivering at unprecedented levels. We are investing at unprecedented levels so that we can keep this level of delivery of new housing supply up over the coming years, because that is the only thing that is going to drive the cost of housing down. That is the only thing which is going to provide more houses for those who need them, so that we can allocate people off the social housing register. What matters is delivering more homes and that is what we are doing at unprecedented levels.

I want to talk briefly about the Human Services portfolio. Ms Standen has made a number of references which are either hopelessly muddled, or totally misunderstood, or dangerously misleading. She made some references to the timing and nature of allegations regarding Mr Griffin and Ashley Youth Detention Centre which I believe were quite mixed up, but as I said before, I do not want to try to untangle that here because I do not think it helps anybody.

She referred to the Strong Families, Safe Kids redesign as if it was about Ashley Youth Detention Centre which it is not. Maria Harries' report was about redesign of the Child Safety system in Tasmania. The culture at Ashley Youth Detention Centre is a completely different matter, run from a different part of my department and not part of the Strong Families, Safe Kids system at all.

She referred to searches of children at Ashley as if the numbers that she was given were about the number of children searched, whereas in fact they were about the number of searches undertaken. Ms Standen also was concerned that the children who were at Ashley Youth Detention Centre had not been interviewed about incidents that took place decades ago. I am not quite sure what her inference was there. Again, a mix up, between concern for children now, and an understanding of the nature of allegations that some staff at Ashley have been associated with and have been stood down as a precautionary measure pending full investigations.

There is also the question that both Ms Standen and Ms White referred to. It is a very strange question, about the number of children potentially released into homelessness and the difficulty I had in answering that question. They were told that all children released from Ashley have accommodation options laid out for them. What we cannot guarantee is that they take them all and we cannot guarantee that some of those young people may not end up homeless. I cannot guarantee that I will not end up homeless one day either. What we do have, is a process which ensures that anyone who leaves Ashley has accommodation options as part of their exit plans, and support where they choose to accept them. For young people who are under care and protection orders, that is more structured and there are formal placements identified as part of their out of home care planning. For those who aren't, accommodation options are still clearly identified and we will assist wherever we can to ensure that they take them up.

During COVID-19, our Government increased funding for Human Services in key areas, \$2.1 million in total, to ensure our carers had additional support including one-off payments and extending the carer hotline. We ensured that our children in out-of-home care had the ICT

products and services that they needed to stay connected. We enhanced our child safety after-hours capacity and boosted our therapeutic residential care capacity to be able to support children needing those services during that time.

I was pleased at the Estimates hearings to alert the committee to the exceptional work the department has been doing in ensuring the delivery of essential services continued through the height of COVID-19 despite the disrupted circumstances. This work included the Strong Families, Safe Kids advice and referral line, which was available to ensure that people had a way to seek help or raise concerns about the welfare of children and young people. All necessary risk assessments and investigations into the safety and welfare of children continued, and special measures were taken to ensure there was no back log of unallocated cases. All children and young people in care and their families continued to have a child safety officer they could contact and all carers continued to have a point of contact with the child safety service or the services they are engaged with.

We spoke about the Child Advocate and her very successful and important work, providing an ear - and a voice - for individual young people in out-of-home care as well.

We spoke about the milestone with the redevelopment of the Ashley Youth Detention Centre with contracts signed with a Tasmanian contractor to commence that remodelling of the existing Ashley infrastructure, to align it with the new model of care and the new therapeutic youth justice system being rolled out right across Tasmania. Comments were made by Ms O'Connor and others of significant issues, unresolved or to be still improved on, at Ashley. We acknowledge that. That is why we are investing over \$7 million, not only in bricks and mortar but also in the model of care that applies there.

One of the things I am proudest of is the work that is about to start on building step-down accommodation units within the fence at Ashley, so that young people who are approaching their exit from their period of detention have the opportunity of receiving some assistance and life skills to help them to live independently on their departure. This helps reduce the likelihood that they will end up homeless and helps them be someone who can take up an independent tenancy somewhere.

We are investing in more of those places for them outside, in our communities, with new youth foyers to be built in Burnie and Hobart, the new Youth, Family and Community Connections facility at Burnie, crisis accommodation and transitional accommodation, the expansion of Thyne House and a range of other new supply specifically targeting young people.

Ms O'Connor talked about the processes of searching young people at Ashley. I spoke at Estimates about the new process and protocol that has been established for doing that. They are partially clothed searches. There is a strict regime of supervision that ensures the dignity of young people while undertaking this unpleasant but necessary part of keeping people safe within Ashley.

I passed on to the committee that those searches have revealed contraband, including drugs and knives, which must be kept out of a place like Ashley. I have had feedback through advocates that young people in Ashley, when the new security and searching regimes were introduced, expressed concern that whatever we do, it has to stop there being knives, weapons and contraband brought in. They are in there with it and those young people care about their own safety too.

They know some of the people and the behaviours that come in the door, that they need to live alongside at that place. They want that security to be strong as well. We make no apologies for maintaining tight and appropriate security and regimes like searching where it is required but we will always do it in the best way we can.

Time expired.

[6.53 p.m.]

Mr Jaensch - I did not see you at the hearings?

Ms HADDAD - I was there very briefly in the Parks output. The questions I had hoped to ask I did not get out in the committee because time ran out. There were a lot of Dorothy Dixers from the Government.

I want to put a few of the concerns that I would have raised in the committee on the record, specifically on DPIPWE staff and job security for those staff working in DPIPWE.

Both in the upper House and in the lower House, the minister and the representatives from DPIPWE who were at the Estimates Committee spoke about the commitment to new ranger positions. We were raising with the minister questions we had on how secure those new ranger positions were for the people employed in those positions.

We were asking specifically, how many of those positions were fixed-term positions and how many were a fixed term of less than 12 months. Many of those DPIPWE staff who work in National Parks are often employed on quite transitory contracts that guarantee 50 hours of work per year. My colleagues in the upper House went into this in more detail and the concerns we wanted to raise about that is the job security for those people who are employed in contracts that only guarantee them 50 hours a year work.

It was said that the staffing complement in the Parks and Wildlife Service varies from between 400 to 480 staff. The director at the committee table said that the department typically employs a large number of people over the summer season and then reduces their staffing throughout winter. They then increase in response to visitation but also in response to significant pressures like wildfire and planned burning. For that reason staffing varies across the year at any point in time and from season to season.

It was described as dealing with surge capacity. It is understandable that there are times of the year when there is a need for more staff to be available. The point that is lost on the Government is that increasingly we are facing extreme weather events. Until governments start to deal with the biggest issue of our time, which is climate change, we will see those extreme weather events happen more frequently throughout year.

It is an argument for there to be a permanent workforce to deal with those extreme weather events as they continue to occur. We heard that there are 50-hours-a-year contracts, but also that the department relies on requests for additional funding to Treasury to deal with those times when they do need more staff. The reason for that is that they characterise them as being unpredictable. We know that these extreme weather events are no longer unpredictable.

Something like a whale stranding could be characterised as unpredictable. Things like wildfire and flooding are things we are seeing around the country and around the world with such frequency that we need to know that our public services are well funded with permanent jobs and good job security to know that those people are there when we need them. The director at the Estimates table said he wanted to make the point that the seasonal nature of the business of the Parks and Wildlife Service is incredibly effective. He said -

The flexibility that it affords both Government and the employee is probably more so than it appears on the surface.

We have a number of employees who are part-time or permanent part-time, including those 50-hours-a-year contracts, or in seasonal roles. Particularly in the firefighting space they work incredibly hard, very long days, extraordinary hours in very remote environments for close to six months of the year. They then look forward to having some down time. Many of them have off season work and they come back to us.

I am not sure if the people filling those roles would feel the same way about their job security. These are real people with families, with houses, with children, with financial needs, and we need them. We need them and we cannot afford to lose them season on season.

The point was made at the Estimates Committee that it would be far safer for public services to have permanently funded secure positions. This means we are better prepared for those extreme weather events and better able to deal with them with an experienced work force that have the job security that they need to know that they can continue to work for the public service in the Parks and Wildlife Service.

It is not just Labor members who are raising these issues. They were also raised very well by the acting secretary of the CPSU, Thirza White, in a piece she wrote for the *Mercury* in response to the State Budget. She said -

In the last two years we have seen crises come thick and fast. The 2018 bush fires followed quickly by flooding in our state's north and north west, a fruit fly incursion, the largest whale stranding in our history and then a global pandemic. Behind every one of these incidents stands Department of Primary Industries, Parks, Water and the Environment employees, sometimes leading that response but always part of the team. DPIPWE employees are subject matter experts in a dizzying range of areas and specialists in incident management.

As I said earlier, specialists in incident management are becoming more and more vitally needed as we deal with extreme weather events. She went on to say that it is these employees who fight fires in our national parks and they are biosecurity officers who are responsible for protecting our border and ensuring tourists are compliant with COVID-19 restrictions. DPIPWE is our largest surge workforce. More DPIPWE employees were deployed to the COVID-19 response than any other agency. Despite this, austerity measures have had such a tight grip on DPIPWE that employees are often denied the resources that they need to do their job. She cites examples of employees having to dip into their own pockets to buy equipment to manage the land that the Crown is responsible for, and that is worrying.

She goes on to say the most damaging and worrying issue facing this workforce is the long-term unfilled vacancies and precarious employment within DPIPWE. She says the growing number of fixed-term seasonal contracts means staff are effectively stood down each winter. The contracts only guarantee employment for 50 hours a year, so less than one hour a week guaranteed; a permanent job with no income security.

Then there is the folly of cuts to visitor services officers on Maria Island in the same week that we opened our borders. Despite DPIPWE's vital role, it is the public sector's poor cousin when it comes to funding. It plays a fundamental role in emergency management yet it is not funded or recognised as an emergency service.

I dare say that the people sitting in this Chamber recognise that DPIPWE staff, and particularly Parks and Wildlife staff, are emergency service workers and we rely on them to deal with fire, flood and other emergency events that occur in Tasmania's national parks and elsewhere. They are vital employees who we rely on and we should be treating with the kind of job security and respect that is required in those jobs.

Time expired.

Estimates of the Minister for Housing, Minister for Environment and Parks, Minister for Human Services, Minister for Aboriginal Affairs and Minister for Planning agreed to.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIR - As members are aware, the Minister for Primary Industries and Water is absent from the House today. In accordance with standing order 200 I will vary the order of consideration of the Estimates and have the Estimates of the Minister for Health called next.

DIVISIONS 2, 5, 9 and 11

(Minister for Health, Minister for Small Business, Hospitality and Events, Minister for Women and Minister for Strategic Growth)

[7.03 p.m.]

Ms WHITE - I rise to make a contribution on the Estimates process for the Minister for Health and minister for a range of different responsibilities. At the outset I again express my frustration that we do not have the answers to questions that were placed on notice unless they have been provided at some late stage this evening which I am unaware of. To my understanding those answers have not yet been provided or shared with members of this place, which makes it very difficult for us to fully scrutinise what occurred during the Estimates process because we have not received all of the information that was requested.

A number of those questions on notice went to a substantial level of detail that would have been quite useful to have access to and be able to thoroughly examine before we do this report back tonight. I will touch on some of those because it goes to a feature of this Government, the lack of transparency. There are some ministers in this House who have been able to meet the time frame and provide those answers which has helped us during this process today. Sadly, this output group is not one that has been provided with answers.

I want to touch on the inquiry launched by the Department of Health in October this year into the allegations raised with respect to James Griffin. This is a horrific matter that has had extensive coverage both in this place and the broader community recently, but it is a matter we also examined through the Estimates process because of the concerns that continue to be raised by the community but also concerns that have been raised by the staff. I want to acknowledge the fact the Government and minister, in particular, has moved to provide access to additional support for those staff that are outside those who were previously prescribed. That is very welcome news.

I know the minister wants to do everything she can to make sure the staff across the LGH and health system are supported. The concerns we have has been the process around how this information first came to light, the sharing of that information across different agencies and departments, particularly with those agencies that have responsibility for caring for vulnerable children: the role that the minister for Police has played here and the access to knowledge he had which wasn't shared as quickly as we believe should have been shared to make sure that children across different agencies were provided with the appropriate protections as quickly as possible.

There are still questions we have with respect to the open disclosure process and investigation that began under the initial processes that were started by the department and the fact that through that process just three people have been identified. The concern we have with that is the process was quite narrow in scope and we remain concerned that at the time that process began, it was much more broadly made aware to the staff and the community who had had contact with James Griffin, not just people who had come to the hospital as patients in the paediatric ward, but we know of his involvement at the university campus and the Ashley Youth Detention Centre. We also know of his involvement with the netball association as well as other associations he had with different organisations. He also worked for the TT-Line.

The concern we have is with respect to the process and the lag between information being identified by different ministers or different departments across government and that information then being shared and the consequences it had for staff who worked with him or for patients and families who had been in contact with him in his role as a nurse. The concern is that there has been some kind of cover-up. That information wasn't acted on swiftly enough and this matter wasn't taken seriously enough until the media started to apply intense scrutiny. The Premier acknowledged in his Estimates output and the questions that we asked of him, that the podcast was a catalyst for the Government taking a look at this more closely, but it shouldn't have come to that. It should have been something that was acted on much sooner and we still have questions about how it could have been known to the minister last year yet information about what the Government was going was not publicly disclosed until October this year when the department launched an investigation.

We welcome the commission of inquiry but that does not excuse the Government from taking action now to fix the processes that have been identified as flawed, we believe, and to make sure we do everything possible to make sure our children are safe and respond quickly when we hear of allegations as serious as we have with respect to James Griffin.

A number of the questions that were asked and placed on notice deal with infrastructure projects so there were some questions we had around the Royal Hobart Hospital redevelopment. I asked questions about the number of defects that had been brought to the Government's attention through that process and whether they had been resolved and whether

there were some outstanding. I understand most of them have been resolved but there are matters still outstanding, according to the evidence we heard in the Estimates process. It would have been helpful to understand that before we had that discussion in this place because we have taken possession of a brand-new redevelopment of a wing of the hospital and it seems that there are some defects there that are causing concern for the staff working in that building and for the patients and families using that building. It is important that the Government be transparent about what those defects are and how quickly they can be rectified to make sure that building is fit for purpose and able to accommodate the needs of growing demand that we are seeing across our health system.

We also asked questions about how many beds are currently being utilised at the Royal Hobart Hospital as part of the redeveloped K Block. It is still unclear to us exactly how many new beds have been added to the configuration of beds at that hospital. My colleagues in the other House asked some questions around this as well. It is important we understand that because there were significant promises made by this Government at the last election that they would be able to recruit to fully staff the K Block and make sure that all of those beds were opened. There are 250 beds there, I think, from memory.

Ms Courtney - That is a total commitment to the Royal Hobart, not just in K Block.

Ms WHITE - Thank you for clarifying that - 250 beds at the Royal Hobart Hospital. It is important that the Government be transparent with respect to how many beds are currently opened in keeping with the promises that they made, and that they are accountable for the promises that they made.

We know that this year in the Budget we had to see a significant increase in funding for health to fulfil the promises that were taken to the 2018 election, because at the 2018 election the health promise made by this Liberal Government was over the course of six years with a significant amount of funding - about half of it - being funded in years five and six. Therefore, we had to see that allocation reflected in the forward estimates this year, in order for the government to go anywhere near keeping its promises. There is an increase in health funding but we all expected that, given the impact of COVID-19 that we have seen on the health system this year, and the necessity for the government to properly fund health.

The Government decided not to proceed with the efficiency dividend, as they called it, earlier this year - not requiring the Department of Health to find those savings. That is the most sensible thing they could have done in light of the fact the department was already struggling, and then had to deal with the pandemic.

We are worried about an issue that we have seen across a number of different agencies, where things are funded for the next couple of years and then it falls off a cliff - because the government is so desperate to show that it can deliver a surplus in the third year of the forward estimates that they have not continued funding the particular programs. That is particularly true in the preventative area, which I know does not fit with this minister; it fits with the minister for Mental Health, but it does impact on the other health services across the state and their ability to meet the demand that we are seeing.

I asked the minister a question about the protocol for transfer of patients between the Hobart Private Hospital and the Royal. It has come to my attention that that changed a couple of months ago. That change is having an impact on patient care. It is having an impact on clinicians being able to provide the kind of care they would expect. I gave an example in the

committee, and I will give again, of the case where women are birthing at the Hobart Private Hospital. If a woman goes into labour, and has to deliver at 34 weeks or less, she cannot do that at the Hobart Private Hospital; she has to be transferred to the Royal. Previously, that person could be transferred through the corridor; now they have to call an ambulance. We all know how much stress the ambulance system is facing and how frequently those ambulances are ramped. The ambulance has to be called to come to the Hobart Private Hospital to take that woman who is in labour, and probably very distressed, and transfer her to the Royal where she is admitted as an emergency patient.

That is a waste of resources. It is not good for that patient when there is a corridor between those two buildings that can be utilised to transfer the patient to appropriate care for the birth of that child. We also know that NPICU is in the Royal Hobart yet when patients have given birth and their child is in NPICU, and they are transferred back to the Hobart Private, they cannot go between the two hospitals using those connecting corridors to see their child; they have to go outside the building. If you are a mother who has given birth at 34 weeks, you are likely to be feeling fatigued and stressed. If you had a caesarian you might need to be transported in a wheelchair. That is the last thing these women need. Clinicians have raised this with me because they are deeply concerned. The reason for the change in this protocol has not been explained to them. The change seems odd so we put that question on notice.

We asked about surgical terminations of pregnancy. It is still very difficult for women to access affordable terminations in Tasmania. If you are a young woman in Marrawah who is in a family situation where there is family violence, you are not going to be able to travel to Hobart without somebody probably being suspicious about that, let alone perhaps not letting you leave the house. We need to do better. We need to make sure that this legal procedure is available for women and for them to be able to access that close to where they live in a public hospital setting. It is entirely proper that this be afforded to women in Tasmania, given it is a legal procedure and should be treated like any other health procedure. There are medical professionals across the state who could perform surgical procedures such as a surgical termination. It is incredibly frustrating that the Hampton Park Clinic promise that was made, was never delivered. In fact, no other changes have occurred to enable greater access for women to have surgical terminations in this state, particularly for those women who live outside of Hobart.

I will also talk about other portfolios the minister has, and I notice the time, particularly with respect to hospitality responsibilities and strategic growth.

Ms Courtney, there is no doubt you have had an enormous workload this year; it has been massive. As an observer, it has been very difficult watching you try to manage the conflicts between hospitality and health.

Ms Courtney - I do not think there is a conflict.

Ms WHITE - You may not regard it is a conflict but the industry certainly feels that it has been difficult for you to be their strongest advocate when you also have responsibilities to keep Tasmanians safe. I believe it was unfair that the Government did not try to find a way to share the responsibilities you had during a pandemic. I am not saying that you are not capable of doing your job. You have actually done a pretty good job but it would have been much easier for the industry and it would have been much easier, I am sure, for you, to be able to share that workload. I know what you say; but that is not what the hospitality sector tells us.

They felt it has been really frustrating and difficult for them to get the outcomes they want and to have a champion for them around the Cabinet table, when you also have those other responsibilities.

One of the other matters that we talked about was events funding and that also falls in the Premier's responsibilities. I understand it sits within State Growth, but you are Events too, are you not? I am getting confused here. Funding for Hawthorn, Dark Mofo, Mona Foma - funding for those events and activities all fall with you.

One of the other questions that we have placed on notice was whether you could provide details of the expiration dates of those events that are funded in that output group, and how soon prior to expiration do any renegotiations commence. This does matter because we are talking about funding for significant events that are drawcards for tourists to come to our state, and are also really important for the cultural fabric of our community. These events draw people out in winter, particularly our football in the north of the state and Dark Mofo for the south of the state. However, in the Budget they show as another item that is not funded into the forward estimates.

This is concerning because it means serious questions are raised about the Government's commitments to these events and the ongoing support for football in the north of the state and those other key events across Tasmania. It is also another example of the Budget black hole, where the Government has not funded the third and fourth year in the Outputs and it is, therefore, planning that they can deliver a surplus when we know in fact they will have to put money into those years if they are serious about continuing funding for these events - which we hope you are.

We have talked in previous outputs about the hardship grants and I raise it here again. The Public Accounts Committee in this place tabled quite a serious document today, and it will be tabled in the other place next week. It calls on the Government to explain why they have not published the information, and calls on this parliament to make a decision about that. We will not have a chance this year to debate that motion. That is the unfortunate reality. However, the fact is that document that has been tabled in this House provides an opportunity for this parliament to vote on whether or not that information should be disclosed. We think it should be disclosed.

We are talking about \$26 million of taxpayer funds that have been provided across the state. The Government argued that it should not be disclosed because of the mental health consequences that might be felt by those businesses which were recipients of that grant funding. Nobody is going to begrudge anybody who receives support during a pandemic - nobody. In fact, I imagine that, given what I have seen across the Tasmanian community and support for local businesses, people actually get out and support these businesses more because they want to make sure they are okay.

Nobody is talking about those people who missed out - those people who applied for \$15 000 and got \$4000; those people who applied for \$15 000 and got nothing. What about their mental health? I do not hear the Government talking about that and that is the hypocrisy of their argument. We believe this is just another cover-up and another demonstration of their lack of transparency in failure to disclose where \$26 million has gone.

Turning to the portfolio of Strategic Growth. The minister has this new portfolio and we only had half an hour for examination of this output. There is still a bit of a mystery as to the reason for its creation. Some of the important projects that are funded through this output include the jobs hubs. The Sorell jobs hub, the SERDA one, which I am sure you are familiar with, and the Glenorchy jobs hub are funded through the Strategic Growth portfolio but only for the next two years. This is another demonstration of a budget black hole where in years three and four there is zero funding for those projects.

The Glenorchy jobs hub is getting up and running but the Sorell one has proven itself. Over the last two years they have placed about 200 people into work. It has been very successful. It has proven its ability to work with people who are looking for jobs, connect them with training, connect them with employment and provide secure, good jobs for people in the south-east region. The Government only recently came to the party. It had not received government funding before now. It had received funding from the Tasmanian Community Fund; that was how it came into existence. While it is pleasing to see the Government recognise the value in a program like this, the fact is they have not provided much certainty because the funding runs out. These are examples of budget black holes and the Premier's desperate attempt to claim that he will have a surplus in a couple of years' time is all based on not funding things which we know the Government are going to have to continue to fund if they are serious about addressing some of these challenges, particularly unemployment, across our community.

We know that unemployment is going to remain stubbornly high. The Budget Papers forecast it is going to hit 8.5 per cent this year and in the early part of next year. It is already at 8.2 per cent. We need to make sure we are doing everything possible to support Tasmanians to regain employment. We are very big supporters of these jobs hubs. We would like to see the Government fund more of them based around the SERDA model because we have seen how beneficial they have been. The fact the Government has not funded them into the forward Estimates is a big worry but, of course, no doubt aligning with an election year we will see some promises made at that time which will mean that we will not have a budget surplus in the years that the Premier has promised. Next year's Budget will be quite telling to see how you plan to deal with those matters where you do not have ongoing funding.

In the very short time I have left there are the questions on notice to do with PPE which are really important and we need to have answers to those.

Time expired.

[7.23 p.m.]

Dr WOODRUFF - The time for scrutiny of the Minister for Health from the point of view of the Greens was entirely dominated by the very serious allegations of child sex abuse perpetrated by a one-time nurse at the Launceston General Hospital children's ward. Mr James Griffin worked there for 18 years. At the time we were questioning the minister on this matter and the internal investigation that has been started by the Health department to look into that, the Premier was announcing a commission of inquiry, which is very welcome news.

The purpose of our scrutiny questions was to understand what the Minister for Health knew and when she knew it, and what the response of the department, the THS and the hospital has been, to contact any potential children who may have suffered abuse who went through the

paediatric ward over that period and to support the staff who currently work at the LGH or previously worked at the LGH in the paediatric ward over that period.

That was the substance of our questions as well as seeking an assurance from the minister that the commission of inquiry would be very wide in its scope and leave no stone unturned, not simply about the systems and processes that enabled this abuser to remain in employment for 18 years, but the actions of individuals who either wilfully or passively did not act on complaints that were made, or may have altered or changed complaints that were made. That is the substance of allegations that have been broadcast on the podcast of the investigation conducted by journalist, Camille Bianchi.

The main concern we had was to understand what was known. It is clear from the minister's responses that she became aware on 31 July, the same day as Mr Griffin's Working with Vulnerable People card was revoked. What we now know is that the police investigation commenced in early May after a complaint was made on 1 May. The great concern we have is that there is a gap of around three months between when the investigation commenced and when the Working with Vulnerable People card was revoked that triggered Mr Griffin being removed from the hospital.

It is clear from the evidence that there were some months, and the commission of inquiry will determine exactly that length of time, where the police had evidence on Mr Griffin's phone of images that clearly demonstrated child sex abuse, either images that he created himself or other images he had on his phone, yet he remained working in the paediatric ward. That is a very concerning fact and in conversations I have had with staff at the LGH or heard their comments on the podcast, that is one of the things they found very difficult to understand and reconcile.

Although I accept that the minister has genuine intent to now look at the commission of inquiry's terms of reference that are broad and open, the facts are that the minister has been pushed and dragged essentially to the process of having the actions of that man opened up to a full commission of inquiry with the powers to do the job that is needed to make sure this does not happen again.

Although we spent a long time talking about the open disclosure process that was undertaken, it is clear from the evidence provided by either the minister, but mostly Ms Morgan-Wicks, that the whole open disclosure process as it currently exists in the LGH, and I assume it would be across the whole department, is inadequate for allegations of sexual abuse. It is designed for, as Ms Morgan-Wicks said -

When there has been an adverse event in terms of an outcome of a patient's presentation at a hospital or surgical procedure, for example, or otherwise to explain the care and treatment of a patient in hospital.

She goes on to talk about how that happens - 'social worker or a psychologist talking through the process with a patient as an adult or with their family'.

It is clear that it is trying to understand why an adverse event has occurred. It does not see an allegation of child sex abuse or a complaint about child sex abuse as an adverse event. It was pushed into that process but that is not an appropriate process.

It is clear from the evidence on the phone, from the police investigation of Mr Griffin, that allegations were made that he sedated children, young people, and that he touched them while they were sedated. This is not material that could be uncovered just by looking through the phone, which is what the department did. That process could not identify children where there was not a photograph on the phone.

A true open disclosure process still has not happened and it still needs to happen. There needs to be communication to all the people who went through the Launceston General Hospital paediatric ward over that period. There needs to be some form of communication. It will have to be thoughtfully considered. It is not okay for people to hear about things through the media and be triggered to remember things without having been reached out to by the Department of Health, which should have happened a year ago, to recognise what is happening, acknowledge there is a commission of inquiry and invite people to contact the department for support or to have their questions answered.

This is the minimum that needs to happen. I encourage the minister to undertake that work.

Time expired.

[7.33 p.m.]

Ms O'BYRNE - I appreciate the opportunity to participate again today. This time the Estimates report on the Minister for Health, Minister for Small Business, Hospitality and Events, Minister for Women, and Minister for Strategic Growth.

I will start on the Women's portfolio. We raised the issue of access to terminations within Tasmania, particularly within Tasmania's public hospital system. The minister was genuine in her commitment to providing access to services. What concerns me is the minister was probably genuine when she made the same commitments when she became minister in July of last year. Yet for women attempting to access services, the promised facility has not arrived. Those contract negotiations clearly broke down. There has not been another approach, other than by relying on the goodwill of a few doctors in the private sector at one of the private hospitals who have undertaken to pick up some of that work. It is wonderful that they are doing that. It can make it look as though we might have a more holistic service but we do not. If they chose to not do so, if they chose to charge a full commercial rate, or if that hospital decided to stop that being allowed to happen, then that service would once again fall over.

It is not necessarily a service that meets the needs of regional women. If you are a regional woman, and we talked before about the impact on people who might be in unsafe family circumstances, the ability to access terminations is harder. It is hard if you have other children you are responsible for. It is hard if you are young. All of those things become much harder the further you are away from the provision of service. While no one thinks that the simplest and best option for women is that the public health system should provide the only option, it does need to be the safety net for those women who can neither afford nor have the time and capacity to access services that are only provided in the south of the state.

Minister, I accept that you have a genuine desire to resolve this, but time is running out. We have spoken to many women for whom it has been very challenging. Simply to say that they can access the additional funding that is provided to some of the health networks does not pick up on the scope of the problem, which is that women from a range of walks of life still

need to access the service for a range of reasons. Some need more support than others, but we are not providing a holistic healthcare system for something which you have said on the record a couple of times that you support.

We have some questions on notice. Minister, I apologise, I have not seen if they have come in yet, but I want to talk about the LGH emergency department. It was raised during the Estimates debates, it has been raised in parliament, it has been raised by doctors at the hospital and it has been raised in the media.

There are still significant concerns around our response to the demand at the LGH. It is not simply an ED problem. ED is where the problem manifests because the flow throughout the hospital has a number of problems. People say that it not an arrivals problem but a discharge problem. It is more complex than that. Staff at the LGH did not feel listened to, they did not feel properly engaged and they are not convinced that the solutions that have been put on the table are going to be any different from the times we talked about these solutions before. Many have been committed to in the past and not delivered. That is a significant issue.

We talked about the impacts that has on people. I talked to one woman who arrived with a broken leg at hospital on Sunday and could not get surgery on Sunday night. She needed complex surgery and not done by a registrar, so they had to get a more senior doctor to do it. From midnight on Sunday she fasted in order to have surgery on Tuesday. On Tuesday night she fasted to have her surgery on Wednesday. On Wednesday night she fasted for Thursday. Day after day they were fasting this woman from midnight the night before until 7 p.m. the next day while she waited for her operation on her leg.

As we know, the longer we leave these things, the more risks there are to patients and the ability to respond, particularly complex fractures. Minister, we are looking for how many times that has happened? Because hospitals are not being staffed to the nursing agreement, how many times has a bed not been available because we do not have the staffing requirements that we need? Those waiting times are a real issue.

We have questions on the staffing and the number of people employed in the LGH ED. I am advised that it is substantially less than the positions available. We put an RTI in regarding locums. The response that came back from the RTI officer was very disturbing. They asked if we had approached the Government media office to get an answer to our questions.

Nobody thinks that is an appropriate response. I argue it is outside the terms and conditions that are attached to RTIs. It is not the Government media office that was being asked the question. We wanted the official data from government. It concerns me that they thought I would get my answer faster if I asked a media person than if I asked the minister through the RTI process. When the data came it was reasonably damning. That is concerning as well.

In the time left I will turn to the issues around 4K and the James Griffin issue. The reason we are asking these questions is not some voyeuristic, perverse approach. It is not some 'gotcha' moment. I know that in my time as minister I was not advised. I assume that is the case for the minister before me and the minister after me.

The questions that come into play for us are not only whether things happened at a hospital level to cover those things up, and that certainly does seem to be the case, but from the

time that the minister did become aware, what actions took place? Anyone who was harmed between the point of us knowing something and the point of us taking action is something that we can take responsibility for.

That is why there are questions to the minister for Police as well and I will pursue that when we get to his Estimates. It is not a gotcha moment. It is genuinely wanting to understand why, from the time Mr Griffin's death to the podcast, there was not a proper investigation conducted that had the capacity to look at the scope of concerns. That is one of the reasons that the commission of inquiry is so important because the nature of the questions and the nature of the cover-up is actually quite frightening and disturbing.

I do not do it because I want to be mean to the minister. I do it because I have spoken to staff on 4K who are genuinely distressed about what happened before they were aware of Mr Griffin's offending and the way it has been dealt with since then. They thought that with the police investigation they would get an opening up and an understanding of what took place.

I have spoken to some parents who spent quite a lot of time on 4K, one mum in particular who has cried pretty much every day since this came out. She and her child spent an awful lot of time on 4K and she would often say to other parents who had other children, obligations or came from a regional community, 'That's okay, you go, I'll keep an eye on your little one'. Now she is devastated that she may have in fact enabled some of that behaviour. She needs to know what happened and what we did.

There are friends all across the community who have in some way encountered James Griffin, either through sport or through nursing. There are also staff all the way across the hospital; this does not start and end with 4K. There are the people in ED who admitted children and sent them there. There are people who provided physio or other kinds of services throughout the time that those children were in care who are devastated. Whilst we are offering a lot of support to 4K staff - and we should; we cannot offer them enough - we need to extend that net much wider because there are an awful lot of people who have been hurt who are not going to put their hands up unless that offer is made directly to them.

It goes to the things that take place once we know that there is risk, and the fact that Mr Griffin was allowed to continue in the hospital from the time the police allegations were made, caused all of us some concern. That period from the first report to police to the Working with Vulnerable People card being removed and action being taken is a frightening time for all of us because that is a different level of liability because we knew, or at least someone knew enough. That causes an immense amount of distress.

When we have gone into these Estimates processes asking about time lines, it is not viciousness or looking for a gotcha moment. It is because we are genuinely frightened about times where we could have made a difference and kept people safe. That is the same view that people who worked with James Griffin feel all the way through the hospital; at what point they may have been able to identify something. Hindsight is an amazing thing. You look back and see things in a completely different light. That has not always been the case for all of them but the distress they are feeling needs to be examined at every level.

Time expired.

[7.43 p.m.]

Mr STREET - I felt that the first session in Committee B was a high-quality session. I thought the minister's performance was outstanding and modesty prevents me from reflecting on any other element that might have been at play that led to the high quality of the session itself.

Ms O'Byrne - I am going to make sure this is a nonpolitical thing. I thought you did an excellent job of chairing.

Mr STREET - Ms O'Byrne, thank you very much

Ms O'Byrne - Pulling me up at all the right times.

Mr STREET - That was exactly the lead I was trying to give you.

On a serious matter, the major talking point in the Health portfolio was the matter of James Griffin. I do not want to reflect on that too much except to say that I welcome the Premier's announcement of the commission of inquiry. Though uncomfortable, I trust that at the end of this process we will have better systems and procedures in place to make sure that something like this never happens again.

I acknowledge what Ms O'Byrne was saying about the guilt that many people would be feeling. Although we know that they should not be feeling guilty, it is inevitable that if you have been around the situation, that you will question your own actions and whether you could have seen something that you did not see at the time. I hope those people get some degree of comfort out of the commission of inquiry processes in getting to the bottom of this. At the end of the day, there is only one person who is truly responsible for what happened and he cannot be held accountable for his actions anymore. All we have left now is to make sure that we get processes and procedures in place to ensure it does not happen again.

With the overall Health budget we are looking at a record \$9.8 billion-worth of spending over the next four years, which is a 21 per cent increase on last year's budget. We are now at about 32 per cent of the entire state government budget being spent in Health. That is welcome. One thing I have been very pleased about is that I have had a briefing from the minister's office on the Our Healthcare Future paper that has now been released. That is a process of talking to everybody who is involved in the health system for their opinions and feedback on what we can do better.

Everyone in this place would acknowledge that we can do things better in Health. We are looking at record spending but we are still short of where we need to be in terms of the outcomes we get. There is only so much money that can be thrown at a problem before you have to look at the procedures and practices that are in place. Hopefully, the Our Healthcare Future process enables us to look at the health system as a whole and see where we can make some improvements.

For my electorate of Franklin in the health space, \$90 million for the stage 2 redevelopment at the Royal is welcome, as is the \$3 million for the new pharmacy redevelopment at the Royal. I am also particularly pleased to see that there is \$24.4 million for rural and regional healthcare facility work statewide and this includes the Cygnet Community Health Centre and the Huonville Community Health Centre. We would all agree that anything

we can do that means people do not have to visit emergency departments but can access services in their local area has to be a good thing.

In the Hospitality and Events space, I will quickly touch on the money that will be spent allowing Tasmania to return to the National Basketball League. I understand when some people see the amount of money that is spent on sport, there is some cynicism around that and some questions about the amount we spend, but I truly believe this NBL team is very important for Tasmania, just like I believe that Tasmania having its own side in the AFL is particularly important. I will touch on that as well. We need to be on the national stage as a state. The NBL has been proactive in bringing their competition to us rather than us having to chase them, and in conjunction with the development out at the DEC which will be a transformational project for the northern suburbs of Hobart, particularly for young kids interested in accessing facilities for indoor sport, this is money really well spent.

I also note that there is a further \$1 million over the next four years for Cricket Tasmania to support the hosting of Big Bash games and Women's Big Bash games in the north of the state. The Hurricanes have truly become a Tasmanian team rather than just a Hobart team and I am really pleased to see that money is being spent over the next four years.

In the Events space we have some important decisions to make regarding the Hawthorn and North Melbourne deals that are coming up. We have another 12 months to go, I believe, on them. I am very firmly of the opinion - and I have put it on the record in this place before - that we should have a team of our own. Any deals with Hawthorn and North Melbourne need to be contingent this time on the AFL laying out a clear pathway for us to get our own team, not some promise of a future discussion but a stepped pathway of what we need to do. Are there criteria that we need to meet? Tell us what they are. Let us know what we need to do instead of these vague promises about something that might happen in the future or being next in line off the rank because, quite frankly, most Tasmanians are sick of pie-in-the-sky promises from AFL House in Melbourne.

In the Small Business space, one of the topics that was touched on was the hardship grants. I spoke about that on the MPI this morning. The Leader of the Opposition pointed out that the Public Accounts Committee tabled a report in this place today. There was also a dissenting report tabled from Mr Tucker and me. We have been very clear about our reasons for not thinking that it is appropriate to release that information. Our reasons have not changed from the start and they will not change.

It is good to see in this Budget that there is \$500 000 for a new peak body support fund. One of the things that multi-nationals and conglomerates are very good at is getting the ear of the government - but it is equally important that government is listening to the thoughts of the 38 000 small businesses in Tasmania. The money for the new peak body support fund is extremely important in making sure that they are heard.

In Strategic Growth, I will touch on the Glenorchy jobs hub, and also the Sorell jobs hub. I have spoken to the Huon Valley Mayor and others in the Huon Valley, particularly at the trade training centre, and I know they have been taking a particular interest in the Sorell jobs hub and monitoring the results. The results at Sorell have been very positive. I know that the Huon Valley Mayor has had extensive discussions with the Sorell Mayor about what that jobs hub has done for the Sorell region. I will be talking to the minister and the Premier in the future about what can be done in the Huon Valley as well.

Finally, in the portfolio of Women - I have spoken in this place before about the 50 per cent target for women on government boards. It is an admirable target, and one that we are getting closer to reaching; but I have made the point in this place before, that having 50 per cent women represented on government boards and GBE boards is not equality. Equality will only come about when we have 50 per cent of government boards without some sort of predetermined ratio that the Government has set down. True equality will come about when all these government boards make decisions on who they appoint, not based on gender, but based on qualifications.

It really is staggering in 2020 that I even have to stand in this place and say that, to be perfectly honest. The fact that we have had to put this policy in place is a sad indictment on where we have been. As I said, as important as it is to get to 50 per cent, which is the government's target I want to see a point where if there is 60 per cent women on a government board it is because the 60 per cent of the people who applied to be on that board were qualified to do the job to the best of their ability.

I commend the minister on the work she has done and the previous minister, Jacquie Petrusma, who I was fortunate enough to work for when we were working towards that target. Let us hope for better days ahead in terms of gender equality in Tasmania.

[7.53 p.m.]

Ms DOW - I rise tonight to speak on Estimates Committee B, the portfolios of Health, Small Business, Hospitality and Events, and Strategic Growth. It will come as no surprise that my focus will be on Health in the north-west.

It was good to have some robust discussion about the changes at the Mersey Community Hospital. We asked some questions about the breakdown of the new staff who, as I understand it, will be appointed across the North West Regional Hospital and the Mersey Community Hospital. We sought some further information around the breakdown of locums and permanent staff, and what would actually qualify as the time of tenure for a permanent locum. It was good to have that information provided.

I asked questions about proposed capital works and election commitments that were made across the north-west region some time ago. A number of projects are delayed, including the ambulance station in Burnie. There was an announcement on the day of our Estimates Committee to say that the site had been determined at the North West Regional Hospital, but it is still not clear when that facility will be built. I believe it is important, and I have mentioned before that our paramedics have been under a lot of pressure over the last six to 12 months with everything that happened on the north-west coast. They have really stepped up and enabled patients to access the services they needed in a timely manner. It was only fair to uphold this commitment and to provide them with better amenities and facilities, as was committed to at the last state election by the Labor Party, and the Liberal Party as well. I look forward to some further information about that.

The other infrastructure projects I mentioned were the completion of the training centre at Smithton and at the ambulance station there, and the antenatal clinic at the North West Regional Hospital.

It was good to understand that there is a review at the moment of north-west maternity services. I will be very interested to understand the outcomes of that review, given the consolidation of maternity services at the North West Private Hospital, and to get a better understanding of what the Government has in mind about the future provision of maternity services on the north-west coast. I am also interested to know whether there will be a move to a facility within the North West Regional Hospital rather than the partnership agreement with the North West Private Hospital. There is some significant pressure on the configuration of the maternity unit at the North West Private Hospital. Perhaps there is an opportunity to have a new site planned for maternity services on the north-west coast. I look forward to more information about that.

The other important capital investment that I referred to was the palliative care beds. It is still not clear when those four dedicated palliative care beds will be made available at the Mersey Community Hospital. I note that within the white paper there was the recommendation to have those spread across the North West Regional Hospital and the Mersey Community Hospital. It is disappointing that did not happen, considering there have never been dedicated palliative care beds on the north-west coast and there is a dire need for that facility.

We put a question on notice about the number of patients transferred from the North West Regional Hospital to either the LGH, Hobart or Melbourne, to get an understanding of the presentations to Accident and Emergency and the number of patients who are being transferred out of the region to access health services. I look forward to that information being made available to us.

I asked questions about the Community Rapid Response Team and ongoing funding. I understand that is a pilot program that is being evaluated. It would be good to see that continue, as it provides a very valuable service in the community and importantly, it reduces the pressure on our acute care sector.

We mentioned the outbreak on the north-west coast. I again put on the record my thanks to all our hard-working healthcare professionals across the north-west region, particularly those at the Mersey who have endured a lot with the closure of the A&E. I am pleased about the reopening of the A&E facility 24 hours a day as of Monday. They also stepped up during that really difficult period of time on the north-west coast. I recently had a tour of the Mersey, and they are to be commended on what they have put in place to be being better prepared for COVID-19. I was pleased to meet with them and to understand their experience during that time.

It is disappointing, however, that the independent report into what happened during that time in the north-west has been delayed again. It would have been very useful to have had the opportunity this week during parliament to scrutinise the recommendations and findings of that report. I am very interested to understand what is recommended as part of that report, and to understand what went wrong, what led to the outbreak, how we can work to prevent any future outbreaks, and the learnings right across the state from that experience. I reiterate, we would like to see that report released this week. I call on the Government to do that. We are very interested in the recommendations from the independent report. I thank all those people who made submissions to that process.

One other matter I wanted to raise as part of Health was hydrotherapy pools, and access to those pools in the Mersey Leven region. The minister could not answer my question about

why there was no funding for a partnership with the Latrobe Council, and why that \$200 000 to ensure that the Strathdevon facility could be upgraded and the maintenance undertaken that was required to enable that to service the community again. I would really appreciate some further information on that and why the Government broke that commitment to the Latrobe Council and the wider community there. It was discussed during our Estimates committee that the North West Regional Hospital hydrotherapy pool would reopen in the new year. I hope the Government maintains its commitment to that. It is a highly valued service and if that closes there would be no hydrotherapy services on the north-west coast. I strongly urge the Government to maintain that commitment because there are a lot of people in the community very eager and keen to utilise that facility again.

That brings me to Small Business, Hospitality and Events. As our leader, Rebecca White, alluded to before, we asked you questions, minister, around your roles as both minister for Small Business and Health and whether that had meant you were conflicted particularly around the Public Health restrictions. It would have been a very difficult time for you to balance both of those responsibilities. We also spoke at length about the small business grants process which a number of my colleagues have referred to today.

We discussed the importance of ongoing mental health support for small business right across the state and not only regarding the disclosure of the details of applicants and recipients of a grants program but right through that process and how I had had some applicants raise with me the fact that in the documentation or response they had received from the Government, there was no direct reference to mental health support. I thought that it would be necessary to do that for those businesses that had found themselves not being successful at all during that grants program or receiving the lesser amount of \$4000 when they applied for the \$15 000.

I cannot assume to put myself in their shoes but it would have been a very distressing time for them. I know a number of them have raised that with me and it was absolutely paramount to me that their mental health and wellbeing was a priority at that stage in the process as well. I want to make the point that we had a lengthy discussion about the importance of that during the Estimates committee.

I was pleased to hear during our discussion about the increasing role of local chambers of commerce in providing support to business and that there is a willingness of government to continue to work collaboratively with our local chambers of commerce around the provision of information about all of the supports available to small business because there is a plethora of them. Even before this point in time there were a lot of programs available through business enterprise centres and the like, but it is always about understanding how you can get that information out to people at a time of need.

Time expired.

[8.03 p.m.]

Mr O'BYRNE - I rise to respond to the minister's Committee B Estimates hearing and in particular her role as minister for Small Business. A number of my colleagues have raised other issues within her portfolio area in terms of health expenditure, et cetera. I will not seek to traverse that ground but I will raise a number of issues in relation to the small business grants and the process and publication, or non-publication, of the details of the recipients of that program.

At the outset, I make it very clear that the Labor Party, at every point in the early stages of the response to the pandemic, gave unqualified support for programs like the Small Business Hardship Grant program. In this House we supported a number of appropriation bills to enable the Government to give them the dexterity, the flexibility and ultimately public money to invest and to respond and plug holes in our service delivery, but also in our economy. The small business grants were an essential part of that. I have spoken to many small businesses in Tasmania that accessed those grants, the \$2500, the \$15 000, the \$4000 and other forms of support and, to a person, they are grateful for any government support provided.

The member for Braddon, Ms Dow, raised issues and genuine concerns regarding some of the outcomes of that grant program; why some people were receiving \$15 000, why some people were receiving \$4000, when and how that was done, the kind of information they were given in how they made their application, and at what time and what kind of information was required. There are legitimate questions regarding the administration of that process.

As a member of the Public Accounts Committee, I know we are investigating that. We will work through that process and hopefully make some recommendations that can assist the Government moving forward. Hopefully we will not require it often, but when there is another round of small business grants they should be done in a manner which, on the face of it, is more accountable and equitable for the applicant. That will work through the Public Accounts Committee process and no doubt there will be some recommendations.

There are some legitimate questions but we acknowledge that it was at a time where stress was extraordinarily high and the demands on the department were high. The circumstances were uncommon, but the processes of these grants are not uncommon and therefore we think there were some obvious mistakes made, but it is not for us to judge here. The Public Accounts Committee will make some recommendations around learnings. We acknowledge it was in the toughest of times. People were working extraordinarily long hours and you cannot get it all right. We acknowledge that but there are some legitimate questions that need to be answered about the process around it.

The substantive part of my contribution will be about the decision by the Government not to advise the community of who received those grants and the amount of money. The process unfortunately has turned what should have been a routine disclosure of government grants and who received them, into something more controversial than it should be. There is a whole range of people who were entitled to those grants and benefitted from those grants who now, unfortunately because of the decision of the Government to keep that secret, have been tarnished with some appearance of corruption or inappropriateness. That has unfortunately dragged the whole grant program into the mud unnecessarily. It is standard procedure for governments across Australia - and in my time as a minister - that if anyone received government funds there would be public reporting and disclosure of the amounts and the name of the company that received the benefit of public money. It is routine disclosure. It is appropriate.

Whilst the circumstances were stressful, and there are other examples of government programs in stressful times where people have sought to receive grants from government, ultimately it is public money and in this case they all ticked the box which said that they were okay with and approved of the publication of their names. At no stage is the Labor Party asking for commercial-in-confidence information. It is simply a routine disclosure of the names of the businesses and the amount of public money they have received.

I am a member of the Public Accounts Committee and the member for Franklin, Mr Street, is also on that. He and a fellow Liberal member, Mr Tucker, provided a dissenting report to the Public Accounts Committee, which was a majority decision of that report by three other members of the upper House, one member of the Labor Party and two Independents in Ms Forrest and Mr Dean, the Chair. It was a majority position of that committee that the grants be disclosed. That is an indication, the public measure, the sniff-test, that there should be routine disclosure of that information. We are extraordinarily disappointed. We do not ignore the circumstances within which people received those funds. Many people were in distress and no-one begrudges anyone receiving support from government at that time from the grant program that was designed to support those businesses. Everyone was in distress, particularly hospitality and those businesses that were shut down. Some people were able to avail themselves, some made a decision to seek, or not seek, assistance from government. The routine disclosure is very clear.

I bring the House's attention to a part of the report that the PAC put to this House. The Auditor-General Special Report No 32, Assistance to Industry. There are a number of recommendations on the audit. The three most relevant ones to this circumstance are -

- (1) Industry files should contain complete documentation to allow straightforward examination of projects and to ensure transparency of management processes.

The Public Accounts Committee and the Auditor-General will no doubt look at that and work through that process.

- (2) The issue of commercial confidentiality should not take precedence over governmental accountability and Department of State Development ...

which is now State Growth -

... should document the rationale for all decisions made during the negotiation stage.

We make the point at no stage are we asking for commercial-in-confidence information. That would be, in our view, too far in these circumstances.

- (3) There should be public disclosure regarding firms or projects receiving government assistance and details of benefits provided.

Auditor-General report after Auditor-General report in every jurisdiction is clear about this: when any company, particularly when they apply for it and agree for the grant to be publicised, there should be a disclosure of public money to those companies. The fact that the Government has decided to hide it is their form. It is consistent with some of their actions in other portfolio areas. It means that a whole lot of businesses who received that grant in the best of interests and under good terms have now been dragged in.

People are coming up to me in the street and saying, 'I know such and such received a grant and I do not think it is fair'. I am a member of the PAC. I have privately and confidentially seen that list and have looked at some of the businesses on that list. I cannot tell

that person the result of that. Either they did or they did not but now it is a stain on all of those businesses. It should be cleared up.

Time expired.

[8.13 p.m.]

Ms BUTLER - I will make a short contribution on Committee A, Minister for Health, Small Business, Hospitality and Events and Women.

Minister, you did a really good job during the isolation period and I admired your tenacity. I have raised that with you personally but I wanted to put it on the record.

That said, you have a problem with ambulance ramping in Tasmania which we have not addressed properly. We have bed-block plaguing the Royal Hobart Hospital, which also has not been addressed properly. K Block is a fabulous new building but the water is contaminated with lead. That matter is still unresolved. The LGH has a bed-block issue. It is bigger than only an ED problem.

In September, emergency registrars at the Launceston General Hospital wrote an explosive letter saying patients have died unnecessarily and that the hospital is at its lowest ebb due to bed-block worries. That letter was signed by 22 doctors working in the LGH emergency department and addressed to Tasmanian Health Service Executive Director of Operations, North and North West, Eric Daniels. It was an honest plea for help in relation to the problems at the LGH. The letter read -

Our patients have died unnecessarily, they have died because we did not have appropriate space to treat and monitor them. ... The waiting room often has at least 20 patients with only a triage nurse and another registered nurse dedicated to care for them. ... A patient recently died in the waiting room under these circumstances. It is the general feeling amongst staff that if he had been in a monitored area his deterioration would have been noticed well before his death.

In 2019 the Australasian College for Emergency Medicine determined that the LGH had the worst bed block in the nation.

On a personal level, my parents moved to Victoria last year. Since that time one of them has experienced a potentially life-threatening illness. They have been able to access top quality care without any wait. I have considered what would have been their plight if they were still living in Tasmania. Would the tests that they had been booked in for been as readily accessible? Would there have been a long wait to meet with specialists? Would the follow-up treatment have been effective? These are questions that many Tasmanians, especially Tasmanians who are becoming older, are asking themselves. Are we best off staying in Tasmania with this health system, or are we better off moving to another state? They are making those decisions. That is something that went through the decision-making process with my own family.

Our medical professionals in Tasmania do an amazing job. They are often pushed to the brink and they are often overworked. We hear time and time again from many medical professionals that the cultural problems within those services are rife.

Victoria probably does have a better health care system than Tasmania. That was a consideration my family took when they decided to move to Victoria. They are bright people and they weighed it up. Many Tasmanians are making similar decisions. We need to do better.

There is \$600 million in additional funding for the Tasmanian Health Service, which you discussed during your scrutiny committee. That is a \$45 million injection into elective surgery. That is meant to provide 8500 additional surgeries. The elective surgery waiting list has increased and at its last recording it was estimated to be around 11 500 people. We consider there are probably a lot more people on the waiting list.

Minister, you have stated that you do not want to see Tasmanians languishing on waiting lists like they did under previous governments. The lists now far exceed the numbers when we were in government. It is great that you could obtain additional investment in the weekly surgery from the federal government, but that will go nowhere near meeting the need.

Another aspect of the Tasmanian health system I would like to address is the problem of people in the community being able to access GP services. As local members we continuously hear about this. People are often told that GPs are not taking new patients, they do not bulk bill, or there is a two week wait. That is the reality for many people living in Lyons, the community I serve. I was hoping when you took on the roles of Minister for Women and Minister for Health that you would have been able to improve access for Tasmanian women having terminations. Tasmanian women are still having to travel interstate to have terminations. We need to do better by them. The support services for women going through this are inadequate.

Tasmania's peak drug and alcohol sector body has expressed concern about a reduction of available beds in a state government-run medical detoxification unit. The number of beds in that unit was reduced due to the COVID-19 restrictions but there are a lot of communities struggling with illicit drugs and the side-effects of addiction with anti-social behaviour, violence, and mental health issues and we need to do more to assist those people in our communities. The waiting lists for those services are really long.

In my time working in different communities I have come across constituents who have gone back to drugs and have re-offended and ended up going back to jail and they are just on this repeat cycle. It would be wonderful to do a lot more in that area and it would be a sensible approach to preventing crime as well as preventing the issues that illicit drugs force onto families and people in our communities.

I would also like to discuss the COVID-19 cluster at the North West Regional Hospital and the lack of appropriate infection control measures around that prior to the outbreak. We need to know the outcome of that report because, as far as I know, a senior infection control person was never put into place in the north and there were not proper processes in place for them to be able to adequately cope when the infected people came through. That lack of staffing was not addressed in the early stages; it was later on. I also pay credit to the heroic response from the staff at the hospital who continued to work through this period. They should be commended.

Withholding that report into the outbreak is coming across as being secretive and lacking transparency and at the moment you guys as a government really cannot afford to do that

because there has been so much 'boy who cried wolf' when it comes to withholding information and secrecy and it is just eating into that more and more.

Other state governments have released contact-tracing data down to even the source of infections and they have genuinely addressed the issues and been quite transparent compared to us. I also note that it was revealed in Estimates last week that passengers from the *Ruby Princess* cruise ship were allowed into the state without quarantining, despite the advice of Biosecurity Tasmania. I also note that the go-to was to throw the State Controller under the bus as well as put department staff into the firing line. That was an approach minister Barnett took, I note. The north-west outbreak took the lives of 13 people and we still do not know how that cluster began.

The small business grants provided great assistance to Tasmanian businesses and really made a huge difference and they were rolled out quickly with the idea to get that stimulus and assistance out to Tasmanians. I do not think the reason given for not providing that list because you wanted to protect people's mental health was adequate, not when we have such terrible mental health services in Tasmania already. It was hypocritical.

Time expired.

[8.23 p.m.]

Ms STANDEN - The time is nearly 8.25 p.m. and it has been a long day and, for that matter, a long three weeks or so as we have worked through the Budget and the Estimates process. It is the one time of the year that we can really have a very thorough examination not just of government expenditure but also of priorities of government and when used the right way it can be a real opportunity for not just scrutiny but also challenging of ideas and priorities to bring out the best in one another.

This has been an extraordinary year. It is not the first time that Tasmania and the world has faced a novel virus like COVID-19 but there is no doubt that in my 30 years or so of work history, including a background in health and community services, it has been unprecedented. I want to place on record my thanks to the health workers in particular who have been so much on the front line of the response to the pandemic and the extraordinary efforts to not only put their own health at risk but also in the interests of keeping our community safe.

I also thank the community sector workers, those in the housing and homelessness, disability support and other sectors working away, because the issues around the pressures in our health system and in our housing and homelessness system certainly have not gone away as this pandemic has swept over the community.

I am reminded that we still face in this state a dreadful situation of around 120 000 people or one in five households or individuals living in poverty and the income support payments that were made available to some of our most vulnerable and low-income Tasmanians were a welcome relief, lifting a number of those families out of poverty for a time, but as those income support payments have wound back that again returns those children and those families into that dire circumstance.

Intergenerational poverty and chronic disease have been part of the fabric woven through my career over the last 30-odd years. I remember working on the north-west coast in Burnie at the North West Regional Hospital with people with diabetes, cancer, cardiovascular disease

and so on. I know a number of people who worked at the North West Regional Hospital as well as in other acute care settings across the state and I admire the approach of the sector to put all shoulders to the wheel. I could relate to being potentially in that position.

I am concerned now about what the response is. We have had six months or so of acute response and as we are out and about in the community it feels like that pressure has slowly eased and in some circumstances at least that people's guards have been let down a bit in relation to social distancing and hygiene. I am reminded that this pandemic is not over yet and could be with us for a long time and, given our small population and relative control, it could be 12 months or more before we have a safe and effective vaccination that potentially returns us to a state of normality, if ever that occurs.

I am concerned, as others have noted, about the delayed report into the outbreak in the north-west. Tragically a number of people's lives were lost but the families of those people, the workers who were at the front line and those still working in our health and hospital system across the state need the insights from that report to understand how to move forward and work better.

We have significant vulnerable populations. In my shadow portfolios, particularly in housing and disability support, I was reminded throughout the pandemic that there is no effective social distancing when people are homeless or living in overcrowded premises. About one-tenth of the homeless population is on the streets or in tents, but around a third of the homeless population are in overcrowded premises with sometimes three or four families living in two-bedroom houses. Hygiene and social distancing are impossible under those circumstances. I heard tales too of people with disability and carers being concerned about judgment as people with disability needed to go out and about with a carer.

Particularly, with the shared workforce across the population, I am keen to see that we do learn those lessons and that we have an effective sector-based approach to education and training, access to PPE, and flu vaccinations.

I often heard during the pandemic that those working in disability services and crisis accommodation, in particular, felt that they had been overlooked with the particular focus on acute care and aged care. Surely, with the relative reprieve we have right now, there is an opportunity for us to focus on prevention and preparation to ready those facilities for an uncertain future. Then, if and when a second wave sweeps across this state, we are in a better position. I would like to see much more effort put into that area, particularly given the relative age and vulnerability of our population. Those with poor health and literacy and underlying medical conditions, poor personal hygiene, alcohol and drug misuse, mental ill health - these are the comorbidities that often coexist and we must reach deep within those vulnerable populations to do what we can to assist them.

We have a high proportion of people with disability in this state, with around 130 000, I understand. One in four of those, approximately 40 per cent, are in the aged care setting; 80 000 or so are accessing mainstream services. We need to have a sector-specific as well as a whole-of-population approach.

I am concerned about the Government's aspiration around achieving the Healthy Tasmania strategic plan. I think it is by 2025. As a former health professional, I always thought that was an aspiration which was, shall we say, courageous - given the level of health and

disability and disadvantage across our state. Nevertheless, I agree with the Health minister when she says, 'If you don't set a goal that's lofty, how do you achieve it?' I applaud her efforts in that regard, and I hope that the Government maintains its focus on preventative health.

For as long as I have worked in this state, it is very difficult to ignore the resourcing and the demand for services, particularly in the acute care sector; whereas what we need is investment in preventative health to get ahead to address elective surgery, ambulance response times, access and bed block and so on.

In the short time I have remaining I will recount an experience I had last night taking my boy to the Royal Hobart Hospital Emergency Department, where there was an excellent response. We were taken into the waiting area and sat down and it was a little while before we went to triage and it struck me that we just need to front-end that, minister. That is when I was asked about COVID-19 related matters. I went to the Hobart Private Hospital for another procedure recently and you could not get past the front desk where those questions were asked.

Time expired.

[8.35 p.m.]

Ms COURTNEY - Mr Deputy Chair, I thank members for their contributions and for their participation in Estimates last week. The Estimates process is very valuable. It is important for members of the Opposition to be able to scrutinise the Government. It is also a very good opportunity indeed for departments to stocktake where we are up to and to ensure that we are delivering on plans that we have set out and commitments that we have made.

I am cognisant of the time I have this evening. I might start at the end of the day and work towards the beginning of the day just for something different. I will first focus on my portfolios of Women and Strategic Growth.

These are two interesting and exciting portfolios. A year like this shows how important both of them are. I am proud to be the Minister for Women, particularly when we look at the opportunities that will be created in the future by some of the stimulus packages that we have seen through COVID-19. There are also those sectors within Tasmania that we know are drivers of jobs, particularly jobs in regional areas, and importantly jobs that have permanent roles. We know for many women, particularly those in regional areas, but in urban areas as well, the benefits of having a role where you get the certainty of being able to have leave, certainty of being able to get loans to be able to support a car or a house. This can make significant positive differences for that person, can provide certainty for good decision-making going forward and can often support a family if they are a single parent.

This Budget delivers \$2.5 million over two years to support an industry-led approach to enable and empower more women to participate more broadly across the economy. I am very proud that this portfolio has been able to create strong connections with these industry sectors. This funding will help us to be able to deliver some of the things I would like to achieve in this portfolio, as well as deliver on the PESRAC recommendations.

We also have \$400 000 over two years, to enhance industry liaison. I know that in the sectors where we see a lot of employment growth, there is a strong appetite to increase the participation of women. That interest goes through all roles, from entrance and trainees and apprentices through to senior leadership. The Government is able to partner with these

industries and help create pathways, as well as sharing the learnings we have made as a Government.

We have seen that our policies have been successful. With our Women on Board strategy, increasing that to 46.4 per cent is an enormous achievement. It is something of which we are proud. We need to ensure the gains we have made and the lessons that have been learned can be embedded further across Government, and can be shared with the private sector as well. As I have said, there is definitely an appetite from senior leadership, and from the peak bodies and those who are in those roles about how we can support industries to create these opportunities for women. I am very pleased that we will be able to deliver more in those areas with the funding in this Budget.

The Strategic Growth portfolio, as all members would be aware, is a new portfolio. It is looking at ways we can ensure that local communities are resilient and also how more Tasmanians can access the opportunities being created by Government. We know this year has been very unusual, regarding the economic climate we have been operating in. Things have evolved quite rapidly from January, and went on for three months and then three months further. The outlook was quite different at varying times throughout the year. I am confident we will be able to continue on the wins that have been delivered through some of the initiatives that have been outlined, such as the Sorell Jobs Hub, but also looking forward at some of the new initiatives we need, going forward.

We know that young people and regional areas are areas where we need to have bespoke models at varying times. The initiatives we have seen within the Strategic Growth portfolio work very hard to partner with those. In this year's Budget, we had a range of different investments, including \$1.3 million for the Glenorchy Jobs Hub, \$950 000 for Sorell, we had \$470 000 over two years for Hamlet, as well as \$420 000 over two years for Troublesmiths. Many members are supportive of those initiatives, as well as ongoing funding to deliver the initiatives in George Town. I will take a moment to commend those members of the community, both the FIG and the FILT. I know how dedicated they are and how hard they have worked on their initiatives.

I will now turn my attention to Small Business. With regard to the Small Business portfolio, we have provided unprecedented support for the portfolio this year and that has been absolutely warranted because of the impact we have seen on these businesses because of COVID. We will continue to work with big chambers of commerce as well as smaller chambers of commerce. Ms Dow in her contribution commented of the small chambers of commerce and we were pleased earlier this year to have provided \$100 000 to them to help them work in their local communities.

We have also seen in this year's Budget \$20 million for the Small Business Sustainability and Recovery Assistance package. Ms White in her contribution this evening talked about the importance of mental health and I agree. Ms Dow also mentioned that in her contribution. It is important, which is why within that \$20 000 envelope we have \$1 million dedicated to supporting small businesses particularly with mental health.

It is an area we have worked hard on to make sure we are standing up the right mechanisms through the Minding Your Business program which has been delivered through Tasmanian Lifeline as well as working with peak industry bodies. It is important with mental health support for many small businesses that perhaps have never needed to reach out for this

type of support before that we look at the different mechanisms we can have to partner to be able to get the right messages out to industry and to ensure they are in a way that is accessible for those businesses.

I thank the peak bodies that have worked with us and I thank the small chambers of commerce who have been dedicated. Many of them had volunteers working for them to support their local communities. It is quite clear how much they love their local communities and we are looking forward to continuing to strengthen those relationships and work with them through this recovery phase.

With regard to the hospitality industry both Ms Dow and Ms White gave their views on me as Hospitality minister. Ms White in her contribution said this evening that perhaps I was not a champion for industry. I would like to place on the record that Ms White could not be further from the truth. I am a keen advocate for this industry. I believe in this industry. I believe in what it does for communities, I believe in what it does for the identity of Tasmania, and I believe in what it does to support our tourism and visitor economy. I believe in what it does to provide meaningful career paths for many Tasmanians, so I am a strong advocate for this industry.

While we have seen Public Health restrictions that have been made by the Director of Public Health as a government we have supported Public Health decisions throughout what is a challenging time. We have demonstrated our support for the hospitality industry. We have \$1 million in this Budget to support an RTO, we have \$10 million to support energy funding and this is above and beyond the significant funding we have provided throughout this financial year. It was only a week ago that I joined with members of the hospitality industry to launch another campaign to ensure we are promoting what is amazing about this industry.

I am very proud to be minister and it is an industry I am looking forward to continuing to support as it recovers. I also note that it is an industry that still has many parts of it under pressure. I acknowledge that there many businesses that are still not firing on all cylinders or are a long way away from that. As a government we are committed to supporting those businesses within the industry that are still under pressure because we value them and we want them to return strongly in the future.

With regard to the Events portfolio, we are very supportive of this portfolio. It has been an extraordinary year for every event in Tasmania that has wanted to stand up an event perhaps after March and indeed into next year. I commend those events organisers on their resilience through this period of time. The Government through Events Tasmania has worked closely with all the events we fund to not only help them to be able to get through this year but help them look to the future. For many of these events it is not only having the event, it is about ensuring that we retain the capacity within those events organisers, committees and businesses so we can have events in the future. That is why we have stood up a funding mechanism to be able to support those critical businesses and why we are continuing to engage actively with all our funding partners to ensure that they have a bright future.

I assure Ms White, in her absence, that we maintain active engagement with both the small and very large events which are critical to our visitor economy. Many of them are part of our way of life. I am confident that we will be able to continue the many strong partnerships into the future. I commend all those events for the work they have done throughout a very

difficult year. I look forward to the sector being able to strongly rebound as we move forward into a recovery phase.

With regard to Health, this is a year that Health has been in the spotlight like no other and I start my contribution by thanking the amazing team we have within the THS, the Department of Health, and across our entire community. The partnerships that have been forged throughout COVID-19, I very much hope are long-lasting. It has been an experience that has made me proud watching our state come together in a health response such as we have had and it has been impressive.

This year's Budget includes \$9.8 billion in health spending which is a 21 per cent increase. I have heard some comments from the Opposition members in their contributions around concern about future funding and whether we have funding to deliver the commitments we have made previously. I assure members that we are committed to the policies we have brought in previously with regard to this. That is why there is over \$299 million over four years to continue the rollout of 250 new beds at the Royal Hobart Hospital as well as \$15.4 million over four years to open and staff new beds on 4K on completion of its development, as well as \$9.3 million over three years for new services and staff at the Mersey Community Hospital.

With regard to elective surgery, there was a little confusion from one of the members on the other side in their contribution about this. I will be clear that while we are bringing forward \$15 million from the Commonwealth we also have funding from the state Government which will mean that there is \$45 million injected into elective surgery which, with the \$15 million, provides \$60 million and around 8500 surgeries. This is above and beyond what we had already planned to be able to deliver and will not only help alleviate the pressure on our waiting lists but, most importantly, this is going to help those Tasmanians who have been waiting longest and will also ensure those priority areas that we can all agree on, such as children, can be focused upon. I am very proud of that and looking forward to that being rolled out in the most clinically appropriate way.

We are also making significant investments into Ambulance Tasmania, with \$134.6 million towards AT in this year alone, which is a massive 25 per cent increase. It has been mentioned before in this Chamber that the paramedics and the volunteers that were able to continue during COVID-19 have done an extraordinary job under enormous pressure, particularly with the North West Regional and North West Private hospitals closure as well as the Mersey ED closure. I thank them for their resilience and their hard work. It has been appreciated and their work has not gone unnoticed.

We are dedicated to making sure that we are providing the infrastructure we need to support those rural and regional areas, which is why we have a \$24.4 million rural ambulance station upgrade program and we are also making sure that we are committing to other rural and regional sites.

While we are talking about regional sites I want to talk about the commitment that I discussed during Estimates which responds to one of the comments from the other side with regard to what we are doing about ramping. One of the key things we are doing at the LGH is committing 20 FTE extra staff across the district sites to ensure that we can care for higher acuity patients at those sites. This was one of the things that came out of the meetings last year on access flow at the LGH. This is on top of a range of other initiatives that we are

implementing at the LGH, including Meditasker, pharmacy charting. We have a 24-hour patient flow. We are working through our health care future, looking at outreach services for specialists. We are undertaking a significant range of initiatives.

I hope we get a submission from Labor on Our Health Care Future. Solutions in Health are often complicated and there is not one single silver bullet. If there are good ideas we would love to hear from members on the other side as well as our broader community. I am committed to ensuring that what we have outlined in Our Health Care Future, both the immediate actions and the longer term consultation questions and planning pieces for capital, the workforce and IT are fully integrated to deliver a clear projection for Our Health Care Future.

I will quickly touch on the PPE we have invested in to ensure we are protected from COVID-19. While I am optimistic about vaccines and the work being done by the department in planning for a vaccine, I am still cognisant that there is a very keen risk from COVID. We have to be careful about complacency as a community. We are continuing to ensure that we are resourced within health and that our training remains strong.

Regarding PPE, as at November we have 21.4 million sets of gloves, 8.2 million surgical masks, 2 million gowns, 1.2 million sets of eye protection and goggles, 427 000 P2N95 respirator masks with more than 3.3 million on order, 168 000 face shields and 66 000 litres of hand sanitiser. The Department of Health, the THS and our GPs and pharmacists continue to ensure that we are prepared for COVID-19.

As we move into the Christmas period and sometimes stop thinking about the news as much, I implore everyone in the community please get tested if you are unwell. Please ensure you are compliant with the COVID-safe rules. Please ensure that you are staying home if you are unwell and please continue to have hand hygiene. It is every Tasmanian's responsibility for us to keep on top of COVID-19.

Time expired.

Estimates of the Minister for Health, Minister for Small Business, Hospitality and Events, Minister for Women and Minister for Strategic Growth agreed to.

DIVISIONS 2, 3, 5 AND 11

(Minister for Education and Training, Minister for Disability Services and Community Development, Minister for Trade, Minister for Advanced Manufacturing and Defence Industries and Minister for Mental Health and Wellbeing)

[8.54 p.m.]

Ms O'BYRNE - I appreciate the opportunity to comment today on another examination through the Estimates. I am going to start on a subject matter that I spoke about in the previous Estimates and that was the historic child sex abuse issues and the issues around James Griffin. We got a little confused in our evidence in the committee last week on the engagement between Children's Services and Education on this matter.

I am stunned, if not in complete disbelief, that the minister for Education and Deputy Premier was not made aware of these allegations when they first came to light and that he was not made aware when a vulnerable children's check was removed.

One of the benefits of that card was the ability for us all to be able to respond in the most appropriate manner. One of the things that we know about young people when they are in danger, when they have been hurt, is that they often go to people they trust. Most of us in our lifetime have trusted teachers and social workers in schools.

It strikes me as incomprehensible that the minister was not advised, particularly because the Premier said that he was advised as a senior member of Government late last year. The Deputy Premier, one would imagine, is a senior member of Government but also a significant portfolio minister who over the time has held other portfolios that have implications.

I go back to the point that I made in Ms Courtney's Estimates examination, and we will follow through most rigorously with Mr Shelton, from the point of there being an allegation to the point of action being taken, the vulnerable children's check being removed or Mr Griffin's death; anyone in that period who was hurt falls into a different category from those that we did not know about. That is something that we in this House will need to take extremely seriously.

The other thing that concerns me was the fact that CSS made a request to Education to search through their records regarding an incident involving Brooks High. I thank Ms Pearce, who was very helpful with the information that she gave. Ms Pearce came to the table and explained that a specific request about a child at Brooks was made, that no evidence existed in relation to any report being made at Brooks, and that once the net was cast a little wider they discovered an allegation at Riverside. They discovered that allegation because it relates to the same child.

What concerns me, as a product of the covering-up that took place, from the first investigation to the action taken by Health to the end of the investigation when Mr Griffin took his own life through to the podcast, is that there does not appear to have been a forensic analysis of Education department records to see if other reports were made. It is not that Education has, over its time, been completely free of this kind of predator. We know that these kind of predators do take themselves to environments where there are children.

The Education minister launched an inquiry into allegations that were raised earlier this year about a particular teacher but it is that forensic knowledge of allegations that are made across Education that needs to have taken place. The fact that it did not take place, arguably because this minister was not told until the podcast came out, strikes me as a significant dereliction of duty of care to children.

Given the minister's response to the allegation that was raised about a teacher just recently, I imagine this is the type of minister who would have acted immediately to do that kind of work. It appears that he was prevented from knowing. That is an insidious and dangerous thing for governments.

When you look at the evidence provided in one of the other Estimates, from police who said that there is obviously the presumption of innocence. Until somebody has been charged there is a lot of work that police do, but they also made it very clear that they could act if there were situations where they genuinely thought children were still at risk. They acted in Health

in July. From May through to July nothing occurred, and then no one else was told. That is quite disturbing. I cannot imagine that any investigation into Mr Griffin would not have identified other relationships that he had. He had relationships through sport and, as we now know, a report was sought in terms of a child who may have made an allegation at a school.

That goes back to the point as to whether we have done that forensic work and analysed across Education to make sure we have compiled that data, reached out and supported those children who might be at risk. I hope that is being undertaken, because it scares me that the net was cast, only to discover the circumstances of one child. The investigation around the teacher that was raised before was about that particular experience again and we need to have a broader understanding.

Moving on to some of the other subjects, we made a flippant comment that the minister has not finished his homework on the workforce audit that was committed to prior to the election. The minister put forward a host of reasons about why it is complex. Once again, it goes to the pattern of behaviour of this Government - making a one-line commitment before an election, and then later on, saying it is much harder than we thought it was - so we do not have to do it. This minister would well remember the underground bus mall as something I believe he inherited and does not have to explain away any more.

The workforce audit is one of those issues. There was a genuine commitment made to have a better understanding about the deficiencies in specialist areas in education, so we could recruit to those vacancies and actively encourage people in that space and yet, we are still some time away from getting that done. I doubt we will see anything prior to the next election.

We raised issues around disability. I would normally have a host of questions about disability education. I believe many of them were probably asked upstairs. I will check the *Hansard*. It is still on its way when last I checked; and if not, we will put those questions on notice for you, minister. The issue I raised that the department did respond to, was around a practice that appears to be happening in schools where children with disability are asked to get a medical report on the nature of their disability. The answer from the department was quite genuine, in that it means some principals might need to have a better understanding of that child's needs. There is a concern that it has not always been the reason. It is becoming more of a pattern of behaviour to ask for a medical report. That is at odds with the commitments that were made around the disability education reform agenda.

We are interested to see when there will be a report into the progress of that work; but also importantly, an independent report, to ensure that it is meeting the stated aims, because a lot of energy and work has gone into disability education reform. It will have teething problems. It will have settlement problems. In that case, we need to understand how well it is being adapted and that it remains true to those issues that have been identified.

There are many other issues in education around infrastructure. We didn't get to the range of issues. In the end, 3.5 hours simply is not enough time to deal with the vast range of issues in education and TAFE. In light of more recent events, a lot of time was allocated to the issue of James Griffin and the clarifications around that; but we look forward to having a more extensive investigation in this space next time.

We moved into some of our concerns around TAFE. Interestingly, it was on the day that TAFE teachers released a report that showed significant dissatisfaction. I was disappointed

with the response, which more or less said, that is not true. It might not be what you want to hear. You may have a view that it is not representative of everybody's views. Those are responses that are quite genuine. However, it is not okay to say it is not true, because it is a well-researched piece of work. It is done by somebody who is highly qualified. It is good data and it does show that there are significant concerns and it is not okay to dismiss them. What you should be doing is to sit down with those teachers and talk about how we respond to this. How do we make this better; how do we deal with the concerns you raised for students about the transition to online learning and how disengaged and hard some of you are finding that? As teachers, how has that transition worked; and which courses do you believe genuinely should stay online?

There is a view that some of them can be taught through that medium but some of them cannot. That is one of the reasons TAFE exists, because it has always been that practical hands-on education, which is why there is so much concern nationally about the Australian Institute of Skills Commission, and their ongoing conversations about moving courses online. I know that is partly a COVID-19 response. I know there are private providers who are not going to get the practical experience up for placements, and therefore cannot finish the courses and redeem the money that they need because they are running a business. However, we cannot compromise on training, particularly those courses that are practical and skill-based.

The minister put on the record that would not apply to trades. There is a concern nationally in the industry that that might be what the minister says, but it might not be the broader intent. It would be very useful if the minister can provide an update on how that is progressing at the ministerial council level.

Some students, as part of that work, put out a petition. The petition was saying that they wanted to go back to face-to-face learning, which is not something I think any of us would be annoyed about. Of course, they want to go back to face-to-face learning. It is the type of training they signed up for. It is clearly the sort of education process that works for them and that they want to be part of.

They were told by TAFE that they had to remove the petition because it was in breach of the State Service Code of Conduct. I cannot get my head around how a petition by students could be in breach of the State Service Code of Conduct. It may have happened within their educational framework; it may have been a project that they were doing within Education; but that in itself does not breach the State Service Code of Conduct. I worry that we are using that particular phrase very broadly in order to silence any kind of conversation, concern or dissent. That is not what we should be doing. We should be giving students and teachers the opportunity to talk about the things that they are concerned about, because that will make us better at what we do. If we do not resolve those early, then we cannot resolve them overall.

We moved into the allocation of job trainer funds. I have been a little concerned about where they are going. I have a preference for TAFE, as a public training provider, to be able to do as much as possible. It sounds as if they will get less than half of that money, but we will see when the rest of the contracts are announced.

It is interesting that the minister for Education, Training and Skills has no responsibility for the new hospitality college. That is an interesting construct; particularly given it has been set up to compete with his own hospitality training college in Drysdale. That is something we all need to reflect on, in terms of what it means long-term for TAFE. I am genuinely concerned

this sets Drysdale up for failure. I accept there have been concerns about the relationship with Drysdale, but I do not think those concerns are unsolvable. I consider setting up a new college is not what the industry genuinely wanted, when you are talking to people who are worried about training. It does not resolve the problems that people have, and sets up Drysdale for a very difficult pathway ahead.

Alanvale is another subject we talked about. I was there at an event on the weekend where I was approached by staff members who were very pleased I raised the issue of D block at Alanvale, and the rats that live there. That is not a commentary on anyone in government. There are rats in that building. Those teachers were saying they have not encouraged their students to look at the fabulous new nursing area because they are having increasingly constrained areas, less quality teaching space and a huge amount of pressure. They find it embarrassing to tell their students what other parts of TAFE will look like, because the Government is focused on that while they cannot get rid of the rats. That is very disturbing.

The infrastructure spends across TAFE were something we spend a little time on as well. If you read the Budget Paper for the first time, you would think that suddenly there was \$21 million for the Trades and Water Centre of Excellence when in fact, that last \$7 million is just a reannouncement. There are concerns and it would be helpful if the minister could take us through what that particular facility is going to look like. There are certainly concerns of staff that given its multiplicity of responsibilities now it will not be able to meet all of those ones and that the design of the space is far less than they were first led to believe.

The provision of training was something we talked about quite a lot because there had been staff who had left. I have a number of examples we started to touch on during the Estimates process. There are significant concerns for people doing a Diploma of Fashion Design, who genuinely thought that they were on a pathway for getting a qualification in fashion design, only to be told that they are not included in TAFE's vocational training plan because of their location in Hobart, that they had in fact completed a Certificate III in fashion design and were looking at doing Certificate IV. They were motivated to finalise their studies for the Diploma of Fashion Design and realise the career ambitions they had and they are extremely concerned because it is not viable for many of them to travel to the mainland to finish that course. That is incredibly distressing for them.

I know a self-funded plumbing student who is pretty annoyed that he is having to pay fees now because he has not been able to access his training. He got an email to say it was delayed because of COVID-19 and then he got an email saying they cannot possibly run it because they are short a couple of teachers because they have gone. They keep postponing it. He has been told that he might be able to get that training next year but he still has to pay and he is pretty grumpy about that, as you could imagine. I would be too, if I was in his position.

We also had the academic committee endorse the removal of the Diploma of Visual Arts, the Diploma in Applied Fashion and Merchandising, and the Certificate III in Small Mining Operations. There are concerns about a failure to invest heavily in early years and care, despite the fact that is where there are emerging opportunities in industries. There is another metals teacher who has gone in Hobart, so that is two there.

Regarding disability, we raised this and I did not get an answer probably because we were running out of time. The response was simply, 'We run disability care'. This is to do with Certificate IV in Disability. TAFE informed NDS that they have traineeships available but

NDS has explained to them that they may say they have traineeships available but they actually do not. NDS is trying to advocate for increased traineeships because they need students who are more prepared for the workforce. They received funding from Skills for entry level courses and Certificate IV for those in the sector already. TAFE provided a letter of support to NDS so they could get the funding from Skills in order to run this course.

TAFE indicated their intention to support them with the provision of training, should they be successful. NDS gets the funding from Skills and then TAFE says the courses are not viable for them to run so it went off to the private sector. That actually makes no sense to me because I have also seen the list the minister is using for JobTrainer which identifies those areas of workforce shortage. I have seen the national work on the areas of workforce shortage and I have seen the other states' work on areas of workforce shortage. I cannot believe that we do not think that disability and aged care is an area of workforce shortage that we should be working towards. The fact that TAFE is choosing not to run it because it is 'not viable' makes no sense to me, other than we have to look at what might be happening in staffing.

As we are seeing, staff are not happy. There have been a lot of people leave and that may well be the reason that we found ourselves in the position we are. Perhaps the minister could address that issue around particularly the Disability Certificate IV but also the other range of courses that have been cancelled while at the same time it looks like we are funding through Skills other private organisations to run them. It makes no sense.

I will touch on the TasTAFE report and student numbers. The minister talks very much about the completion rates. They sound great, except when you look at the annual report. There are falling student numbers for all of the calendar year pre-COVID. Student numbers are down 8.2 per cent since 2017, activity hours are down 700 000 hours or 13 per cent since 2017 and enrolments were down 3801 or 12.6 per cent by 2017. What we have is a significant drop in students since this party came to government.

Time expired.

[9.15 p.m.]

Ms HADDAD - I want to make some comments in response to this part of budget Estimates around the minister's portfolio for Mental Health and Wellbeing and specifically around LGBTIQ+ mental health and wellbeing in Tasmania.

We went through some of these issues at the Estimates table last week and I noted in one of my questions that the PESRAC interim report recognised a number of groups of people in Tasmania who may be more severely impacted by the pandemic than others. The report said there was a risk that some groups already living with a range of vulnerable circumstances or social disadvantage before the pandemic are disproportionately impacted. The full impact on Tasmanians, including LGBTIQ+ people, are yet to be fully understood. They went on to note that the data is patchy and fragmented and not available in a timely way to ensure pre-emptive action can be taken across a range of COVID-19 impacted areas.

They also said that the development of an overarching data set for monitoring longer-term impacts of COVID-19 on people's housing, mental health, family violence, drug and alcohol use and a range of other critical social services and policy responses will be essential to inform an integrated evidence led recovery. They are the words of the Premier's Economic and Social Recovery Advisory Council.

The fact that they recognised in that interim report that LGBTIQ+ Tasmanians are likely to have been more severely impacted by the pandemic is backed up by evidence including an annual survey conducted by Latrobe University, in its third year now, called Private Lives. This most recent one is Private Lives 3 and is an annual survey of the health and wellbeing of LGBTIQ+ people in Australia. The 2020 survey had nearly 7000 respondents so it is a significant survey looking at the health and wellbeing of LGBTIQ+ people in Australia.

The 2020 survey had some pretty worrying results. As you would expect because of the pandemic, mental health and wellbeing has been reduced significantly across all of our communities but indeed more severely felt by LGBTIQ+ people. Just a few of the headline statistics quoted in that report are that 31.2 per cent of respondents rated their health as very good or excellent compared to 56.4 per cent of the general Australian population. That is a marked difference between people who identify as LGBTIQ+ and those who do not reporting on their general health and wellbeing.

A total 41.9 per cent of respondents had considered attempting suicide in the last 12 months and 74.8 per cent had considered attempting suicide at some point in their lives, but 41.9 per cent in the last 12 months is a heart-breaking statistic. A total 39.5 per cent of respondents reported experiencing increased social exclusion, 34.6 per cent experienced an increase in verbal abuse and 23.6 per cent experienced an increase in harassment such as being spat on or offensive gestures. I know that is something that would concern you as much as it concerns me, Deputy Chair. A total 11.8 per cent experienced an increase in sexual assault and 3.9 per cent were physically attacked or assaulted with a weapon due to their sexual orientation or gender identity in the last 12 months.

Heartbreakingly, all of those rates are far too high but for transgender and gender-diverse participants in the survey, those rates of psychological distress and other factors asked about in the survey were even higher. Importantly, 75.3 per cent of participants reported that they would be more likely to use a service if it had been accredited as an LGBTIQ+ inclusive service. That was a clear recognition that there is a distinct need for funded services that are not just LGBTIQ-friendly or aware but services that are exclusively funded to provide specific services to the LGBTIQ+ community. That is what the survey shows. The minister went through a list of extra funding to the mental health sector specifically to deal with COVID-19. I believe that the Budget was a missed opportunity for funding specifically to address the mental health impact of COVID-19 on LGBTIQ+ people as was noted in that report but also by the PESRAC interim report. In today's *Mercury* newspaper Dr Angela Dwyer, a UTAS researcher and secretary of Equality Tasmania, addressed these same issues. She said -

There is a mental health crisis in the LGBTIQ community, which the Tasmanian Government knows about but is ignoring. The COVID-19 lockdown had a significant impact on mental health, especially for people including LGBTIQ folk, who are already experiencing isolation, exclusion and stigma. Unsurprisingly demand for services to our local LGBTIQ support groups went through the roof. There was a 75 per cent increase in demand for one-on-one support and a 123 per cent increase in demand for group support.

They note that since the lockdown the demand has decreased slightly but it is still almost 50 per cent higher than at the same time last year. Dr Dwyer goes on to say that -

All that is required to address this is \$60 000 to ensure that demand is met, yet in the State Budget handed down on 12 November not one extra dollar was made available to these community mental health organisations.

It goes on to note that this cohort of Tasmanians was noted in the PESRAC report as needing specific support. Dr Dwyer acknowledges that there are members of the Government, and names Deputy Premier Rockliff as someone who does have the best interests of the LGBTIQ community at heart. I believe that is true. They feel that the 2020 Budget sends a message to LGBTIQ Tasmanians that their lives matter less than other people.

They say that the take-home message from the research, after quoting some of the Private Lives 3 report, is that there is a mental health crisis in the state's LGBTIQ community that can only be addressed if there is more funding for LGBTIQ-inclusive services. They say that if the Government continues to ignore this crisis it will only grow and the costs will escalate as more LGBTIQ people turn up at hospitals and clinics and as more families and communities lose their loved ones through mental illness and suicide. The Government will make the crisis worse and it will deepen the harm to LGBTIQ people if it proceeds down the path of rolling back landmark discrimination and gender laws.

In his Budget speech, the Premier spoke repeatedly about ensuring support and inclusions for all Tasmanians. Dr Dwyer argues that it is time for the Government to ensure that these values apply to everyone in Tasmania, including LGBTIQ people. I encourage the Government to take note of the words of Dr Angela Dwyer but also the evidence provided in the Latrobe University's Private Lives 3 report and to reflect on that in making funding allocations to mental health services specifically to provide support to LGBTIQ Tasmanians.

Mr FERGUSON (Bass - Leader of Government Business) - Mr Deputy Chairman, I move -

That you do now report progress to the House and seek leave to sit again tomorrow.

Progress reported; Committee to sit again.

ADJOURNMENT

[9.24 p.m.]

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

That the House do now adjourn.

Denise Delphin OAM - Tribute Junction Arts Festival

[9.24 p.m.]

Ms O'BYRNE (Bass) - Mr Deputy Speaker, I wish to raise a couple of matters today. The first is that I have been visiting the northern suburbs community as an MP since 1998 and

a bit before then in previous roles. One of the constants in the community who has been there that whole time is now about to have a significant event occur. This is a person who is so engaged, so connected, so passionate that it is hard to imagine the northern suburbs community centre without her.

Denise Delphin OAM is one of those people that makes you want to be a better person. She makes you want to commit as much energy to projects as she does. She also has that rare capacity to value whatever you give and recognise the value of everyone. She first stepped into a Neighbourhood House 37 years ago as a volunteer and has never stopped giving. She will retire as the manager this month.

The volunteers and staff at Northern Suburbs Community Centre achieve so much because of her fierce determination and her energy. We started off with one site in Rocherlea and then two sites in Rocherlea, the move of one of those to Mayfield, the establishment of the Men's Shed, the long-standing value of the beautiful peace garden which she established, and the new community garden. There have been groups that have been meeting for years who were brought together under her caring eyes, such as the Goldies. The health service work she does is phenomenal. Her wellbeing engagement has been incredible, particularly her work with men in the community.

I cannot possibly explain how much she has done and how much she gives. Perhaps the best sign of how valued she is are the many people who will be sad to see her go. I am going to miss her wise counsel, her fabulous colourful clothing, her genuine and passionate care, her enormous heart and her unceasing energy. None of these things will disappear when she leaves the Northern Suburbs Community Centre but I know that she is ready to embrace retirement. Her lovely garden and her beautiful grand babies await her and I am sure we all wish her the happiest of times.

I am always proud to speak about wonderful events in Launceston and north. I want to talk about the fabulous Junction Arts Festival. I have a personal ownership because the first festival came off the back of the Regional Arts Conference when I was minister. I am proud to see how much it has grown over those years. Not even a global pandemic could stop the board, staff and volunteers from putting on another inspiring festival. For many of us, after the year that has been 2020, it was a tonic we all needed. This year's festival was appropriately called 'Home Town' and was held over five days based in historic Princes Square. Over the past decade we have been fortunate enough to experience art, music and dance in our home town of Launceston. It is so important for our health and our wellbeing to have these sorts of festivals on our doorsteps. It is vital to our visitor economy, supporting local accommodation, restaurants and other businesses.

When I attend Junction in Princes Square I often think about an event that happened there long before any of us born, which heralded the start of celebratory gatherings in that park. In 1853 Launceston residents gathered in Princes Square to celebrate the end of convict transportation to Van Diemen's Land. I wonder if those residents of 1853 could have imagined the sort of festival we were enjoying in the space 160 years later.

I thank the Junction staff for their amazing efforts this year: Greg Clarke, Frith Mabin, Jess Robinson, Ryan Limb and Mary Shannon, as well as the board, Liz Frankham, Damon Wise, Ed Beswick, Liz Bennett, Rebecca Crawford, Jane Woollard and Adam Thompson, the incredible number of volunteers who gave up their time over those five days and before in order

to give us this wonderful festival and to bring it alive. We owe the staff and board a debt of gratitude for bringing hope to the people of Launceston in what has been a difficult year.

International Volunteer Day Short of a Sheet

[9.28 p.m.]

Ms HADDAD (Clark) - Madam Deputy Speaker, I am going to speak tonight about International Volunteer Day, which falls on 5 December, this coming Saturday. The day was mandated by the UN General Assembly in 1985 as the International Volunteer Day for Economic and Social Development. It is now celebrated each year to formally recognise the efforts of billions of volunteers globally. It is important to note that full name because of the enormous contribution that volunteers make to our communities, not only socially but also economically.

What is volunteering and what does it mean to our community here? The definition provided by Volunteering Australia is 'time willingly given for the common good without financial gain'. Volunteering Australia reports that there are as many as 5.8 million individuals over the age of 15 who formally volunteer their time across the country, with 93 per cent of those people seeing positive changes as a direct result of their volunteering efforts.

The theme of International Volunteer Day for 2020 is 'Together we can through volunteering'. What a fitting theme that is for this year, a year like no other, one that has thrown us all incredible challenges across the globe with the pandemic bringing people together and highlighting the need for connections across our communities.

The pandemic has also shown us clearly how and when individuals volunteer their time. In their recent Budget submission, Volunteering Tasmania noted that Tasmanians are a generous people, volunteering on average over four hours every week prior to the COVID-19 outbreak. It noted that during the pandemic 65 per cent of all volunteers across Australia had to be stood down. This was often because a large proportion of volunteers are from vulnerable age or health categories, meaning they could not at that time do their regular volunteering duties during the lockdown period. The loss of that volunteering time equated to over 12 million volunteering hours lost each week nationally, with an estimated 250 000 volunteering hours a week lost in Tasmania alone.

Madam Deputy Speaker, volunteering is fundamental not only for the social benefits it provides but is also vital to Tasmania's economy, with volunteering contributing to the Tasmanian economy the value of \$4 billion each year, an incredible figure made up of \$3 billion that it would cost to replace that volunteer labour with paid staff as well as a further \$1 billion in commercial and civic benefits contributed through volunteering.

I have spoken in this place before about some of the amazing examples of volunteering that I saw spring up in my community during COVID-19 but tonight I want to highlight one particular organisation. In the midst of the pandemic I was contacted by a young Hobart woman named Danni who had recently lost her job and was receiving JobSeeker. With more time on her hands but no work for the foreseeable future, Danni put her energy into starting a brand new charity organisation.

As a young person, Danni had previously experience homelessness and along with a group of her friends who have also experienced homelessness at some point in their lives, she identified a gap in services and was determined to fill it. She began a new charity called Short of a Sheet, which I am told is Cockney rhyming slang for 'on the street'. Short of a Sheet collects donations to provide direct aid to people sleeping rough or couch-surfing, or who are homeless in Hobart. While COVID-19 restrictions might have eased a little, conditions for those without a home have not improved.

Danni is one person with some spare time who decided to dedicate that time and not only to the task of providing people with bare necessities like sheets and bedding, clothing, toiletries and food, but also mobilising others alongside her to carry out that volunteer work. Danni is the textbook definition of an incredible volunteer, selflessly giving of her time and energy without financial gain.

Since I met Danni I have started collecting donations for Short of a Sheet at my office and am constantly inspired by just how many people in Hobart have come onboard to donate new and good quality second-hand clothing and sleeping bags, shoes, bedding and non-perishable food which Danni and her colleagues now distribute directly to Hobart's homeless. Short of a Sheet is one example that comes to mind when I think of tireless volunteers in our community, and there are countless others. They show us that what Volunteering Tasmania tells us is true - Tasmanians are a generous lot and volunteer their time and resources to help others when we are in need.

If anyone is hearing this speech or reading the *Hansard* and wants to donate any quality second-hand or new items to Short of a Sheet, you can do so at my office at 184 Collins Street, or contact Short of a Sheet on Facebook. They would be very grateful for any of those donations to come directly to them to be distributed to Hobart's homeless.

Tasmanian Land Conservancy AGM Alexandra Esplanade - Maintenance Issues

[9.33 p.m.]

Ms STANDEN (Franklin) - Madam Deputy Speaker, I will be brief. I have a couple of quick items I want to raise this evening.

A couple of weekends ago I had the pleasure of attending the Tasmanian Land Conservancy AGM and as shadow minister for the environment I was very pleased to attend that function at the Kingborough Community Hub. For those who are not aware, TLC, the Tasmanian Land Conservancy, is a not-for-profit organisation dedicated to the protection and management of natural values across Tasmania. It was a very professionally run AGM, an impressive set of financial figures, and it was a pleasure to be there. I place on the record my thanks to chief executive officer of the TLC, James Hattam, and chair of the board, Jenny Churchill, for their stewardship. As one of the largest private landowners in Tasmania, the TLC has for over a decade demonstrated leadership in environmental management and their efforts are to be applauded.

I am particularly impressed by the successful business model the TLC has created and their dedication to scientific research. It struck me how other sectors could learn a thing or two from TLC. As shadow minister for heritage I have pondered the possibilities of the TLC model

for our historic cultural heritage, but that is another topic in itself. I again thank James, Jenny and the TLC team for their dedicated work in protecting Tasmania's rich and diverse natural values.

I also place on the record my thanks to Annette, Andrea and Diane who a couple of weekends ago stood with me. A few weeks back I doorknocked the Alexandra Esplanade in Bellerive, near where I live, a public housing unit complex and spoke with several of the residents about their concerns over maintenance of that unit complex. I spoke with nearly everybody in that area and spent a lovely morning talking over some of the issues and concerns. While they were very grateful to live in that beautiful spot on the Esplanade in Bellerive close to the beautiful beaches that I enjoy most mornings as I take my dogs for a walk, there were some serious concerns, particularly over showers over baths, ceilings, guttering, paintwork, steps, lack of disability access to the units and of course energy efficiency; the kitchens and joinery were aged and so on.

They were very nervous about working with me to highlight this issue but I was conscious that other members had advocated for their communities in relation to social housing and maintenance needs. I do not think it should come down to members' advocacy but nonetheless I accept that that is the case. They were very nervous about the potential repercussions of even eviction or other consequences of putting up their hands, but I persuaded them of the importance of this because these homes, which are about 40 or 50 years old, are structurally sound and with the proper investment to improve the amenity of those facilities not only can we get another 40 years potentially out of those units but we can improve the conditions for the tenants at the moment. I was reminded by Diane who is Andrea's mum that they have lived in that place for a couple of decades and Diane is getting older. We need to accept that we have tenants who are living in these facilities needing appropriate amenities to age in place.

It is no longer appropriate for them to have, for instance, a shower over a bath. It presents a significant risk, as you would know, Madam Deputy Speaker, as a former nurse. We do not want to have these residents putting their health and livelihoods at risk with inappropriate facilities like that, so I urge the Government to look seriously at this particular facility and I would like to see a strategic approach to investment because we cannot build public housing quickly enough to meet the demand of nearly 3500 Tasmanians who are waiting on the waiting list, that is clear.

I welcome the Government's investment of \$15 million in maintenance but I would like to see that strategically spent and I would like to see an urgent opportunity net to not only improve the livelihoods of these Tasmanians but also invest in job creation for the building and construction industry.

Port Arthur Historic Site

[9.38 p.m.]

Ms WHITE (Lyons - Leader of the Opposition) - Madam Deputy Speaker, I rise tonight to pay tribute to the staff at the Port Arthur Historic Site and thank them for their hard work and patience during this difficult year with COVID-19. It has affected many tourism sites and Port Arthur is the largest in my electorate of Lyons.

I know that many Tasman Peninsula businesses rely upon visitation to the convict sites for their income and it has been a very tough year for many of them. Port Arthur, the coalmines

and the Cascade Female Factory are very special places. They remind us of where we came from, for those of us who have come from convict stock, and where we are headed.

Many of the staff who work in these places care deeply about our history and heritage. For them it is not just a job, it is a vocation, and this covers all the departments within these sites - the work crews, the cleaners, ferry operators, administration and conservation staff, the guides, retail and catering.

I place on the record, my admiration for all staff across the Port Arthur Historic site for their dedication and flexibility throughout 2020.

I also acknowledge and congratulate Stephen Large, the recently retired CEO, for his work at Port Arthur and Historic Site Management Authority. He really has been a piece of furniture down there as long as I can remember and I certainly wish him very well for his next phase in life.

Recently, I have become aware that a film is to be made about the tragic events that occurred down at Port Arthur and I acknowledge the community of the Peninsula, the staff at Port Arthur, both current and former, as well as Emergency Service workers, families of victims and the survivors of the tragedy of that fateful day in 1996. I am sure many of those who have heard the news that there is a film called *NITRAM* to be made and screened next year, will be feeling somewhat distressed.

My view is that enough has been said and written about Port Arthur, but I respect that this film will proceed. My view is that it should not be dramatised or reduced to entertainment. This is an incredibly sensitive and traumatic part of our history, and there are still human tragedies being lived by those in our community.

My view is the interests of the victims of the Port Arthur shootings, survivors and their families as well as Emergency Service workers, need to remain our highest priority. I simply cannot see how creating a film like this serves their needs. Nonetheless, it seems the production is going to proceed. I encourage the producers to speak with the community to make sure they fully understand the sensitivities of making a production like this. It will bring up a lot of memories for people that they would wish to forget.

Finally, as a member for Lyons, I am very proud of the work that happens at the Port Arthur Historic Site and it is an incredibly special part of Tasmania. I believe in the resilience, the strength and the kindness of the Tasmanian community and that we will each come together to support those who need it, during what is going to be quite a difficult time in the lead-up to the screening of that film next year.

Ordinary Seaman Edward (Teddy) Sheean - Award of the Victoria Cross

[9.42 p.m.]

Mr ELLIS (Braddon) - Tonight I wish to pay tribute to some great Tasmanians and great Australians. On 1 December 1942, in the Arafura Sea, Ordinary Seaman Edward (Teddy) Sheean went down with the ship. As it sank beneath the waves, he saved the lives of countless numbers of his shipmates. One of the most beautiful passages in all of the Bible, John 15:13

says words to the effect that 'there is no greater love than to lay your life down for the sake of your friends'.

That is what Ordinary Seaman Teddy Sheean did on that day through an extraordinary act of courage and valour. Today, so many years on, he has been worthily recognised with the Victoria Cross for Australia. One of the amazing things about this first Navy veteran from Australia to receive the Victoria Cross, is how many friends he has had along the way.

The people of Latrobe where Teddy Sheean grew up, and people I know so well today, Garry Ivory and the family of Teddy Sheean, the work they have done and the motto they live by - to fight on.

It has been a truly extraordinary campaign, and to see the results imprinted forever with the Victoria Cross for Australia for Ordinary Seaman Teddy Sheean is truly a beautiful thing.

I pay tribute to my colleague Mr Barnett, for what has been a staggering campaign of determination, grit and courage. He took the campaign for an ordinary bloke, a teenager from Latrobe, many decades ago to have him fully recognised for the hero that he was, through the impediments of apathy, lethargy and at times outright resistance; to finally have a young man receive the acknowledgement he deserved for an extraordinary act on a terrible day. There are a lot of people out there, and hopefully, Teddy, if you are looking down, mate, you would agree that we can say thank you to Guy Barnett as well.

Apologies for the late hour but it did seem appropriate that marked this very special day on Australia's national calendar.

The House adjourned at 9.45 p.m.