

DRAFT SECOND READING SPEECH

HON MICHAEL FERGUSON MP

Appropriation (Supplementary Appropriation for 2023-24) Bill 2023

check Hansard for delivery

Mr Speaker

The Appropriation (Supplementary Appropriation for 2023-24) Bill 2023 seeks a supplementary appropriation of \$40.491 million out of the Public Account.

On 26 September 2023, the Commission of Inquiry into the Tasmanian Government's Responses to Child Sexual Abuse in Institutional Settings Final Report was released and the Government committed to implement each of the 191 recommendations from the Report. Additional funding is required for agencies to implement urgent Government actions, to address the recommendations arising from this Report.

The Government is investing more than \$55 million in 2023-24 with \$53 million identified to take immediate action on the recommendations arising from the Commission of Inquiry's Report. This level of funding clearly demonstrates that this Government takes the Commission of Inquiry's Report seriously, and that action on the recommendations is the highest priority for this Government.

In addition to the funding for the Government's initial response to the Commission of Inquiry's Report Mr Speaker, funding is also allocated in the Bill to meet two Government commitments that have been made following the 2023-24 Budget.

Additional funding is also required to meet two material Government commitments that have been made since the 2023-24 Budget. This includes a support package for Metro Tasmania to address driver shortages and improve driver safety and service reliability; and grant funding requirements associated with the Nyrstar Hobart Renewal Project. Grant funding to The Shepherd Centre is also included in this Bill to improve services in Tasmania for children with hearing loss. I will elaborate on each item shortly. The supplementary appropriation comprises \$33.491 million for operating services expenditure and \$7 million for capital services expenditure.

Response to the Commission of Inquiry's Final Report

This Bill provides funding of \$25.091 million to enable implementation of urgent Government action to address the recommendations arising from the Commission of Inquiry's Final Report.

This funding comprises:

- \$5 million to the Department for Education, Children and Young People for essential maintenance of the Ashley Youth Detention Centre, to keep children safe and a focus

on wellbeing, safety and staff recruitment and training. The Department will also utilise this funding to progress the additional planning work that needs to be undertaken to create the new Youth Detention Centre.

- \$3.3 million to the Department of Health, comprising:
 - \$2 million for the Human Resources Information System to progress a confidential case management module to respond directly to the Commission of Inquiry's recommendations;
 - \$891 000 million for the establishment of a Child Safety and Wellbeing Panel and Service. The Panel will oversee, monitor and investigate child safeguarding concerns and the Service will support a shared understanding of child safety and ensure children's voices are heard; and
 - \$450 000 to support the implementation of the Child Safety and Wellbeing Framework. The Child Safety and Wellbeing Service has committed to engaging with Tasmanian children and young people to inform Department of Health policies, the delivery of services and decision making.
- \$1 million to the Department of Justice to establish a team to implement the Commission of Inquiry legislative reform agenda.
- \$5 million to the Department of Police, Fire and Emergency Management to fund the establishment of the Western Arch Multidisciplinary Centre. The Commission of Inquiry recommended the establishment of Multidisciplinary Centres in the North, South and Northwest. These centres provide trauma-informed support services and police responses for child abuse and sexual assault victims. The multidisciplinary response to victims will ensure they can access all services in one centre and are not required to 're-tell' their story.
- \$10.75 million to the Department of Premier and Cabinet, including:
 - \$4.5 million for a Whole of Government leadership and cultural improvement program;
 - \$750 000 to develop the legislation required to implement the Commission's recommendation for an independent Child Sexual Abuse Implementation Monitor by the first week of the 2024 Parliamentary year. The Monitor will provide independent oversight and evaluation of measures taken in response to the Commission's report;
 - \$2.5 million to develop a whole-of-government child sexual abuse reform strategy for preventing, identifying and responding to child sexual abuse, including child sexual abuse in institutions and harmful sexual behaviours; and

- \$3 million to fund business and software licences, IT consultancies and additional dedicated staff to work specifically on developing the capability of the whole-of-government Human Resources Information System. This initiative seeks to transform the way the Tasmanian State Service supports its people by developing a strategic vision and digital capability for the future of work as one employer, one provider of services for the Tasmanian State Service.

It is important to note that the 2023-24 Budget provided funding of \$30 million to fund priority action areas to keep children safer. Of the \$30 million, \$27.815 million has been allocated to agencies with responsibility for implementing the reforms announced by the Government and \$2.185 million currently remains as a contingency in the Department of Premier and Cabinet. This Bill provides a further \$25.091 million following the release of the Commission of Inquiry Final Report.

Supporting Tasmanian bus drivers

The Bill provides \$8.1 million for a support package announced by the Government on 25 September 2023 for Tasmanian bus drivers, with the aim to overcome Metro Tasmania's driver shortage and restore full service delivery.

This package comprises a range of initiatives including:

- \$2 million to support a pay rise for Metro's bus drivers this financial year, outside of the current enterprise agreement. This is subject to Metro reaching an agreement with its bus operators that is reasonable and affordable;
- \$2.1 million to introduce security screens, to provide a protective barrier for drivers;
- \$2 million to extend the deployment of transit officers statewide, as a permanent safety measure. These officers will be granted new, tougher powers to deal with troublemakers, including issuing infringement notices and removing disorderly passengers, bringing further comfort to drivers and passengers; and
- \$2 million to fund a new IT system for Metro Tasmania to introduce more flexible and attractive rosters.

The Rockliff Liberal Government has made large investments in public transport, including 116 new buses, and this latest investment will ensure a step change in the delivery of vital bus services for Tasmanians.

Nyrstar Hobart Renewal Project

The Bill also provides \$7 million for the Department of State Growth to provide a grant payment to Nyrstar for its Hobart Renewal Project.

This project involves building a new Electrolysis Plant and will address safety and environmental issues as well as increase productivity. The total cost of the project is estimated to be \$400 million, with the Australian Government committing \$50 million towards the project.

Last year the Premier announced that the Tasmanian Government would commit \$20 million towards this project to help modernise the Hobart Zinc Works and secure the future of around 600 direct jobs in Tasmania. This funding was included in the Supplementary Appropriation last financial year for the Department of State Growth to provide funding through a grant payment to Nyrstar in 2022-23.

Delays in finalising the grant deed meant that no payment was made in 2022-23 and the full \$20 million was declared as a saving through the 2022-23 end of year process and returned to the Public Account.

The Department has advised that the grant deed has now been finalised and funding is required in 2023-24, with the \$20 million grant to be paid in instalments.

This Bill includes \$7 million for grant payments to Nyrstar for this financial year, with the remaining \$13 million to be included through the 2024-25 Budget development process.

The Shepherd Centre

Finally, the Bill provides \$300 000 for the Department of Health, to provide a grant to The Shepherd Centre to improve services in Tasmania for children with hearing loss and their families.

The Shepherd Centre has been providing programs for children with hearing loss for over 50 years, however, until last year only provided telehealth and visiting services were provided. The first specialist service for children with hearing loss was opened last year, providing in-person support and a permanent local presence within Tasmania.

The Australian Government provided The Shepherd Centre with capital funding for the establishment of two new centres in Tasmania - one in Launceston and one in Hobart.

This funding of \$300 000 from the Tasmanian Government, will contribute to the cost of two additional staff to work from the new centres to provide specialist multidisciplinary listening and spoken language services for up to 60 Tasmanian children with hearing loss.

Conclusion

In summary, this Bill provides the resources required by agencies to implement urgent Government actions to address the recommendations arising from the Commission of Inquiry's Final Report.

This Bill also enables the Government to fulfill the commitments it has made since the 2023-24 Budget to provide:

- a support package for Tasmanian bus drivers ; and
- grant payments to Nyrstar for its Hobart Renewal Project.

In the interests of improved transparency, and to better facilitate Parliamentary debate and consideration of the Bill, I also table further information for Members in support of Schedule 1 of the Bill.

I commend the Bill to the House.