

Wednesday 29 May 2019

The President, **Mr Farrell**, took the Chair at 11 a.m. and read Prayers.

SUSPENSION OF SITTING

Mrs HISCUTT (Montgomery - Leader of the Government in the Legislative Council) -
Mr President, I move -

That the sitting be suspended until the ringing of the division bells.

This is for a further briefing on the Registration to Work With Vulnerable People Amendment Bill 2018.

Sitting suspended from 11.04 a.m. to 12.04 p.m.

APPROPRIATION BILL (No. 1) 2019 (No. 21)

APPROPRIATION BILL (No. 2) 2019 (No. 22)

Noting of Budget Papers

Resumed from 23 May 2019 (page 46)

Ms ARMITAGE (Launceston) - Mr President, while I had finished my contribution, I have found more overnight. It is probably not always a good thing to allow a member to adjourn.

I mention a couple of other areas that have been referred to in today's media. First, plans for the private hospital. I see that as something that could be very beneficial to the northern area, particularly because Calvary is looking at developing a private hospital in close to Launceston General Hospital - LGH - which would help in times of peak demand. It would also cater for palliative care. That is one things that has been sadly lacking for a long time.

Friends of Northern Hospice have been hoping for quite a considerable period that the Government would support a standalone hospice. That Calvary is looking to build its private hospital close to the LGH and perhaps have a more complete palliative care unit will help satisfy people concerned about that.

The CH Smith site has sat empty for quite some time. It is worth mentioning Errol Stewart and Scott Curran and the work they have done to redevelop it. I believe that Service Tasmania and many other departments will shortly move there.

Some of Henty House will have some new tenants. It is worth putting on the record the work done on the Legislative Council offices in Henty House. People are always criticising Treasury for one reason or another but Treasury has been absolutely wonderful. In working with Jo Mercer in Treasury, I am sure the members for Windermere and Rosevears can attest to how helpful and cooperative they have been with the relocation of our offices and their fitting-out. Nothing was too much trouble. They were there whenever we needed them and their help is gratefully appreciated.

We have gone from being on the fourth floor, where we were much harder for people to find, to being on the ground floor which is more accessible for many people. I really appreciate it. Jo Mercer who was in charge of our part of the refit was extremely helpful as was Treasury as a whole.

Mr Finch - Even though the member for Windermere displayed his propensity for switching all the lights off without checking who was left in the toilet in the building; they were left completely in the dark.

Ms ARMITAGE - He does it regularly, unfortunately. There is a button you can press to make sure all the lights in the office are turned off, which is worthwhile. How many times do you see lights on in offices and think, 'What a waste of money'? It is unfortunate the member for Windermere has difficulty hearing. Even though we yell out we are still there, sometimes the button gets pressed and we have to run to turn it back on. I think making that small point to ensure we are saving electricity is really important.

Finally I want to cover a letter to the editor into today's edition of *The Examiner*. It written by Alison Lai, CEO of the Alcohol, Tobacco and other Drugs Council Tasmania, who says that the budget was sending a clear message that Tasmania's issue with alcohol, tobacco and other drugs was 'not a priority for this government. I think her comments are pertinent to read into *Hansard* because they are relevant to the Budget -

Another Tasmanian budget has been tabled, and millions of dollars have been committed to areas such as business, tourism, infrastructure and health.

Yet the budget sent a clear message that Tasmania's issue with alcohol and other drugs is not a priority. With waiting lists for Tasmanians attempting to access treatment services and insufficient funding being invested into preventative programs, the lack of concern to this issue is both frustrating and puzzling. In Tasmania our relationship with drugs accounts for almost -

I will have to fill that in because it is missing -

emergency presentations and more than 2200 hospital admissions every year.

Drug use was involved in 52 per cent of burglaries, assault and public disorder crimes and one-third of our road traffic injuries, not including the 2000-plus Tasmanians charged with drink driving last year.

Going into the budget we sought a small investment of \$75,000 towards a project that would have consolidated the collection of alcohol and other drug data to ensure we are investing in the right services to meet demand, particularly in regional areas. This is information that they do not have and decisions on where to fund services are not being made with the needs of Tasmanians front and centre.

This request was purposefully modest to be considerate of a fragile budget and designed in collaboration with key community partners, including Primary Health Tasmania who would have matched the Government's investment. The state government knew this, but still didn't see it as a suitable investment despite the

\$75,000 is the equivalent of 0.03 per cent of the additional \$240 million being funnelled into the Tasmanian Health Service.

It makes one ponder that the lack of political interest is that the topic of drugs makes our government uncomfortable. Dare I say, not a vote-winner. I prefer to believe that our government is uncomfortable because they don't know where to start addressing an issue that is complex, overlaps with the justice system and amongst all the other competing health priorities is getting lost.

There are thousands of Tasmanians who should be accessing treatment who are not and there are thousands of young Tasmanians who are not learning about the risks of all drug types, regulated and illegal. The amount requested was negligible but the community impact would have been immense. We call on the government to start a conversation, because if they can't talk openly about drugs then how do we expect our communities to.

Leader, in your response could you comment on perhaps why the Government refused the \$75 000, considering the issue of drugs and when I also read in an article in today's *Examiner* titled 'Criminals up and about in North, NW' -

Tasmanian crime levels are increasing, especially in the North and North-West. Total offences statewide increased by nearly 5 per cent to 20,921 in the nine months to March, compared to the corresponding period a year earlier.

Tasmania Police figures showed offences in the police Western District increased from 3981 to 4383, and in the Northern District from 6185 to 7335.

...

The Launceston Division recorded the most serious crimes (84), followed by Hobart (59) .

The article went on to state that juvenile offenders were also active during the nine-month period. In the northern district they accounted for 17.6 per cent of home burglaries, 47.8 per cent of car burglaries, 12.2 per cent of business burglaries and 15.5 per cent of serious crimes.

I mention this because it is a well-known fact many crimes are committed by people using drugs or alcohol or both. I see the \$75 000 request from the Alcohol, Tobacco and other Drugs Council as negligible when you look at the figures in regard to crime in this state and people being able to access help for their drug or alcohol conditions.

I note the Budget.

[12.14 p.m.]

Mr WILLIE - Mr President, I was worried the member for Rumney was going to pip me at the post.

The Budget should seek to sketch the big picture. It should build an inclusive vision for Tasmania, but instead we have been presented with a vision of division. This should not be the Tasmanian way of life. Nobody wants to live in a state where families are homeless, where people

are not getting the timely help they need at hospitals, where people with mental health issues are not getting the support they need and where there are shocking levels of domestic violence and child poverty.

Even with the assault on our essential services we are going into debt. All essential services are important but education is of particular relevance to the future prosperity of the state and my work as a spokesperson for the Labor Party.

We know that parents drop their kids off at school every day wanting nothing more than for their children to receive a quality education. Education changes lives and it changes nations. Both my parents were teachers. I grew up understanding the importance of education. Our public school system is about so much more than personal achievement; it is about preparing people to work together to advance not only themselves but also society.

At this time when our media preferences, political affiliations and cultural tastes seem wider apart than ever, the cohesive value of public schools has never been greater. The story of public education has been one of hard-earned progress as children of different race, ability and socio-economic status and disability pass through the school gates each day.

We want our schools to be places where every child learns every day to master the basics and those struggling are identified early and supported. We want our schools to be places where our gifted and talented children are challenged and extended. We want our schools to be the heart of their communities, where kids who are struggling at home get refuge and support. We want our schools to be places where families who are struggling can be connected with support services. We want our schools to be places where teachers are valued for their deep understanding of their subjects and the science of teaching, and with the time to learn about the students in their care.

Schools are the hearts of their communities. Education has to be more than a National Assessment Program - Literacy and Numeracy - NAPLAN - test. Education inspires us, opens up new perspectives and new ways of thinking. Education is how we break through the disadvantage, poverty and inequality that can hold us back. Education matters because we know it is the foundation of our prosperity.

Any school in any system will reflect the demographics of its location. More than a third of government school students are from the lowest quarter of students according to socio-economic status. This is almost three times the proportion in the independent sector and these ratios are more or less reversed for the top quartile.

There are much higher concentrations in particular schools at each end of the spectrum. The concentration of disadvantaged students is substantially higher than for any comparable Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development average, as Gonski and others highlighted. Research conducted since the Gonski report suggests that the concentration of low socio-economic status students in government schools continues. I taught in one of these schools; I know the demands on staff. I know how families in these schools struggle. They make hard choices every day to afford an excursion, a new pair of sports shoes and even lunch sometimes.

Children should have equal opportunity. They should all be able to participate in sport, music lessons, go on camps, have drama and/or art lessons and get access to new technology. How has it got to the point where families are bearing more of the burden of educating their children because

we are not funding public education as we should? Poverty creates a digital divide and that in turn divides our children.

I am aware of students missing school because they cannot afford excursions or even a bus fare to get to school. I saw kids turn up to school without breakfast. I am aware of a student who came to school late each day because he left home and hid under his house until his mum's violent partner left for work. He needed to make sure his mum was safe before he came to school.

Many of our students experience trauma from overwhelming experiences. These traumatic experiences during childhood can diminish concentration, memory and the organisational and language abilities children need to succeed in school. How can you learn when you are frightened and worried about your mum's safety?

On this measure, the Government's commitment to support students impacted by trauma and with emotional and behavioural challenges is good: \$7.3 million over four years to build capacity within schools, including trauma-informed practice and training, professional learning and a commitment to long-term evidence-based inclusive practice, will certainly be supported in a bipartisan way. Trauma can result from single events - a car accident, the death of a parent or a loved one, or a natural disaster such as a bushfire, flood or cyclone.

Children may also experience complex traumas, which are usually from repeated events. Events like abuse, neglect, separation and family violence can have a significant impact on one's life. In the classroom, students suffering from the behavioural impacts of trauma are profoundly misunderstood. This can lead to lost learning time and strained relationships with peers and teachers. The health and wellbeing of students is incredibly important to the collective.

My party believes early intervention and preventative health practices, primary health, community health, education and community awareness are essential in guiding our mental health services into the future. We know more needs to be done to support people living with mental ill health conditions and that people need to be at the centre of mental health reform. Collectively, we need to work together to ensure all Tasmanians are afforded their human right to live and lead a life of contribution and value. Just like physical health and fitness, mental health is important to care for and to improve. This is true for people suffering from mental ill health but also for those who are at risk, and for those who need to maintain good mental health.

Mental health and wellbeing are vital for learning and life. Children who are mentally healthy learn better, benefit from life experiences and have stronger relationships with family members, school staff and peers. Good mental health in childhood also provides a solid foundation for managing the transition to adolescence and adulthood, engaging successfully in education and making a meaningful contribution to society.

Emotional distress affects children, young people and school communities every year. To support school communities to effectively identify and intervene early with those children and young people with mental health needs, the Labor Party will invest in providing mental health workers in all state primary and secondary schools. This was announced in the other place yesterday -

- enhanced access to mental health support of students in government schools;

- increased support for, and improved response to, mild to moderate mental health concerns through early intervention strategies; and
- to build the capacity and capability of government school workforces to support students with mental ill health issues.

This initiative will roll out 125 new mental health workers across schools and provide one-on-one student counselling sessions for students in Tasmanian government schools. These are designed to increase the availability of mental health support for students, improve mental health outcomes and assist students in finding the right support as appropriate. There will be psychological support sessions for student support services staff to promote their own health and wellbeing. Initiatives like this will promote school engagement.

I remember doorknocking one day in Glenorchy. The weatherboard house huddled next to the factory was run-down. A young mum answered the door. She recognised who I was and said, 'You have my vote; you are a teacher.' I was surprised by her passion for education. She said, 'You might be able to do something for kids like mine. If my kid had a teacher aide, he could go to school'.

Her primary school son had been excluded from school because of his behaviour, and she was struggling. She was trying to homeschool her son with few resources. I felt so sad. Regardless of their postcode, parents should be able to access a quality education for their child.

There should be clear pathways to jobs, too. Under the current Government our young people cannot see those pathways, and they are giving up hope. Our jobless rate is going backwards fast. At 6.7 per cent it is the worst in the nation by a long way. Young people are less likely to have a job in Hobart than in any other capital city in the country.

In the past few years we have lost 2000 apprenticeships and trainees. Government projects like the Royal Hobart Hospital Redevelopment use overseas or interstate workers when they should be employing Tasmanians.

The 2019-20 Budget does not do a lot to fix our jobs emergency. The Government has barely acknowledged the skills gaps in Tasmanian industries, with no significant funding commitments for TAFE.

That is why Labor, if we are fortunate to win the next election, will provide free TAFE courses across the building and construction, hospitality, aged and disability services sectors. It means a boost for our businesses, more apprenticeships and traineeships. It means it will be easier for businesses to hire qualified staff and cheaper for tradespeople who take on apprentices. It means elderly Tasmanians will get the level of care that they deserve.

Importantly, it means jobs for Tasmanians who are unemployed and who cannot access training. They are the people who deserve a fair go.

There is an inherent unfairness in this Budget, because it is not structurally sound. Economic commentator, John Lawrence had his crystal ball out the other day in *The Mercury*. This is on Tuesday, 16 April 2019. The title of his opinion piece was 'Borrow, raid or face austerity' -

The large revenue writedowns foreshadowed by Treasurer, Peter Gutwein ahead of this year's May state budget pre-empt the question whether this is just bad luck or a case of those who ignore the lessons of history getting clobbered.

I do not know whether the Treasurer saw the article, but borrow, raid or face austerity, he has had a go at all three.

There is \$1.1 billion of debt over the forward Estimates, interest payments are adding up and that is money that could be invested in essential services. It has been over 15 years since the state Government borrowed to finance its operations. Then there are the raids on government businesses, such as the TT-Line and the Motor Accident Insurance Board - MAIB - which prop up the flimsy numbers.

On top of this, the Treasurer has announced \$450 million-worth of cuts to the public service. Around 1500 nurses, teachers, park rangers or firefighters on the Government's list.

Sustainable surpluses are built on real economic reform, not just spin about some sort of golden age. There has been no economic reform. Previously government relied on better terms of trade, federal grant increases, increasing GST payments and better state revenues on the back of a global and domestic recovery from the global financial crisis.

They can no longer paper over the cracks. Surpluses need to be built on economic reform, not built on cutting schools and hospitals or short-changing housing, out-of-home care, skills and training or the future of our youth.

You can measure a government's values by how they treat our youth. For too long too many of our children have lived in poverty. We often say Tasmania is the best place to bring up children. Liberal governments, state and federal, talk about preserving our way of life, but for whom? Economic growth and being on the cusp of some mirage of a golden age has not fixed this.

In fact many of the indicators have gone backwards. Statistics tell us this is not a good place for many children to be a child. That is not the Tasmanian way of life. The Government's track record in child safety is woeful and well documented. This Budget demonstrates it is not a priority for the Government.

Yesterday in *The Mercury*, it was pointed out that \$16.9 million for this financial year was budgeted for increased demand in out-of-home care, but it does not continue through the forward Estimates. This is despite a steady projection of more kids coming into care. It is widely acknowledged within the sector that the complexity of needs is increasing through trauma and neglect. That is about a \$50 million black hole in the Budget.

This is tricky accounting and a lack of care or a lack of being up-front. Members know that last week we had an appropriation bill for a number of things, and \$20 million was for out-of-home care. We know the costs are increasing and yet it is not in the Budget.

A lack of frontline staff in the service has also contributed to the problems. We know staff are leaving as quickly as they are being recruited. It is not a productive work environment and it is not good for our children. We want to look after and nurture our children and young people. That is why I was so proud to be the first major party representative anywhere in Australia to announce during the election campaign that we would commit to the Home Stretch call to extend care to 21.

I am pleased the Government followed that. Apart from improving the children's lives, it makes good economic sense.

This is a rare highlight, though, because this is a budget that has little substance to address the drivers of deprivation. A couple of weeks ago I ran into a man I met last year begging outside Kmart.

Ms Rattray - I hope you only met him and did not run into him.

Mr WILLIE - When you meet someone that is for the first time. I know this gentleman.

The first time I met him he was outside Kmart begging. I offered him some money and made him aware of the Richmond Fellowship Tasmania, where he could get a shower. I ran into him again just a few weeks ago. He was in Moonah this time, begging again. He continues to be homeless. I crouched down with him on the footpath and he told me how dangerous it is to live on the streets and how he had been assaulted recently. He had not had a shower for eight days. I was devastated for him.

There has been a steady increase in the visibility of homelessness in the past few years and this man's story is becoming increasingly common. I have noticed tents appearing in unusual places. Just this morning on my way here, I drove past a sportsground and saw a tent set up next to the change rooms. If you drive down the Brooker Highway, and most members would to get here, you can sometimes see the tents opposite the petrol stations on the edge of Queens Domain. It is heartbreaking to see so many Tasmanians doing it tough in the Tasmanian winter.

The other day I read in the paper that there are some 30 tents on the Domain at any one time. This is happening because housing challenges have accelerated under the current Government through poor planning.

When housing supply has been relatively fixed for a period, shocks to demand such as population increases on the back of a government's taxpayer-funded mainland advertising campaign are absorbed through higher prices rather than through more houses.

Long lead-in times in the planning process keep prices high in the upsurge of the housing cycle. Owners of capital assets see their wealth rise at a rapid pace while workers without investments - that is, housing - experience record low wage growth, low wage growth assisted by the wages cap example set by the state Government.

Many workers are trying to find secure accommodation in a private rental market with rocketing prices. At the same time, the Government has deregulated the sharing economy to create a free-for-all that limits access to private rental properties, and what little regulation is left has not been enforced. Parliament only addressed the compliance issue last week despite clear warning signs for a few years now.

Adding to that is underinvestment in social housing and 3200 people on the public housing waiting list. This certainly is not a budget that invests in essential community infrastructure. Providing stable housing to disadvantaged Tasmanians saves in other areas like health care.

I thought that might be something the current Government would be interested in, given that the health and hospital crisis continues to get worse. Doctors, nurses and paramedics are telling the

Government that people are dying needlessly in emergency departments and on waiting lists. Ambulance response times are the worst in the country and people cannot get access to specialists when they need it.

The 2019-20 Budget for health is completely unrealistic, as it has been in previous years. It forecasts a paltry 0.5 per cent increase in health spending, which in real terms is a cut.

This Government has had six budgets to get some of this right, but it is still not investing in our people. Every person deserves dignity and we know investing in people contributes to our state's prosperity. Inclusion and excellence are not mutually exclusive. If a budget is not about people, what is it for? I am not here to preserve the reality of the Liberals' vision for a Tasmanian way of life. Too many people are becoming marginalised and missing out. If we are not here for our children or the future of Tasmania, why are we here?

On a lighter note, speaking of children and their future, the other night I was reading a story with my son, an experience I cherish. We were reading a book that some members may be familiar with - *Oh, the places you'll go!* by Dr Seuss. As we were reading we came across these words, which are quite pertinent to the Government's predicament but probably not the general message in the book. I think I will end my speech with them -

You'll come down from the Lurch
with an unpleasant bump.
And the chances are, then,
That you'll be in a Slump.

And when you're in a Slump,
You're not in for much fun.
Un-slumping yourself
is not easily done.

I think that is quite pertinent to the Budget and the Government's situation.

[12.37 p.m.]

Ms LOVELL (Rumney) - Mr President, I rise to speak in reply to the Budget handed down by the Liberal Government last week - a budget that sets the tone for the priorities of this Government.

The Treasurer claims this Budget is the one he is most proud of. Just 12 months ago we were told that Tasmania was on the cusp of a golden age. We were told that all Tasmanians would share in the good economic times the state was enjoying.

The Treasurer made promises that the Government would deliver on infrastructure projects without going into net debt when the reality is that not only is the state on a path towards \$1.1 billion-worth of debt but also that many of those promised infrastructure projects have been delayed.

On top of that, the Treasurer is targeting the public sector with \$450 million in cuts. This is the public sector that has kept our state running - the nurses, orderlies, cleaners and others who hold the broken hospital system together; the child safety officers who try so desperately to protect Tasmania's most vulnerable children; the Emergency Service workers, paramedics, firefighters and others who respond to Tasmanians in times of crisis and emergency; the teachers and support staff

who educate our children and keep them safe at school; and the Parks and Wildlife staff who protect and manage our natural environment. These are the Tasmanians who are holding our state together, working extraordinary hours - overtime on top of overtime on top of overtime - in systems that are badly under-resourced.

I was at a community meeting in Risdon Vale on the weekend about the imminent closure of their medical centre. At the end of the meeting I was approached by a member of the community who told me she works as a nurse in the Emergency Department at the Royal Hobart Hospital. She told me she wanted to speak at the meeting but could not because if she tried, she knew she would end up in tears. This is the level of stress we are expecting these workers to carry, but on a Sunday afternoon in her own home community, one of our emergency department nurses was unable to voice her concerns about the impact the closure of this medical centre would have on her workplace because she was literally reduced to tears at the thought of it.

Yet, the Treasurer wants to cut \$450 million across the public sector. Cuts of this magnitude can only mean jobs. Which department right now in Tasmania can absorb these cuts? Where are the jobs that can be cut without impacting upon delivery of services?

The Treasurer calls this 'small change'. How insulting to those Tasmanians who work in our public sector. It is not small change when that money pays your kids' school fees. It is not small change when that is how you put food on the table. It is not small change when that is how you heat your house, if you are lucky enough to have one. It might be small change for the Treasurer, a man who is dealing in billions of dollars and who, I have no doubt, has no trouble paying his bills each month, but it is not small change to the Tasmanian public sector workers - it is their livelihood.

A government's budget is the best and clearest demonstration of its priorities. This Budget is extremely telling at a time when we have growing numbers of Tasmanians sleeping rough as we approach the bitterly cold winter. It is a time when we have some of the worst performance indicators in Health. Tasmanians are waiting longer for elective surgery, waiting longer at the emergency departments, for an ambulance and to see a general practitioner. More of Tasmania's most vulnerable children are at risk. It is a time when more and more Tasmanians are struggling to find meaningful permanent work, even just enough work to live on.

With all of this going on, how has this Government chosen to respond? Not with increased funding to a health system in crisis. No, in fact, overall health funding is forecast to increase by less than \$11 million next year and only \$5 million the year after that. That is not even enough to meet increased costs or expected increase in demand, let alone provide any relief to the system in crisis that we all see every day - and that is not considering the cuts the health system will have to deliver.

Just yesterday the Auditor-General tabled his report into the performance of Tasmania's four major hospitals in the delivery of emergency department services. What a damning report it is. There is no escaping the evidence laid out in black and white in this report, a report that the Health minister is unable to hide - this time. There is no escaping that this report shows very clearly a significantly and deeply concerning deterioration in performance of the emergency departments across the state.

Yes, there are increases in demand, more presentations to the emergency departments and more ambulance responses, but there has been a completely disproportionate decline in services. Despite an increase of only 20 per cent in ambulance presentations to emergency departments since 2012-13

there is an increase of 149 per cent of ambulances ramped over the same period, unable to transfer the care of their patients to the emergency department because of bed block. There is a 197 per cent increase in ambulances ramped for more than 15 minutes and an astonishing 239 per cent increase in ambulances ramped for longer than 30 minutes.

There has been a terrifying increase in adverse events of 60 per cent over this same period. Adverse events are any events or circumstance that could have led, or did lead, to unintended or unexpected harm, loss or damage to any person receiving care or services from health services. This can include avoidable deaths, worse health outcomes. There was an increase of 60 per cent in the number of people suffering worse outcomes in our hospitals. The Auditor-General's report makes crystal clear that Tasmania's hospitals are suffering from bed block, which is having a detrimental effect on the ability of hospitals to deliver services to Tasmanians.

I was particularly interested in part of the report. I have consistently asked the minister for data on the number of days hospitals spend at each of their escalation levels. The minister has always responded to these requests by saying that the data is not collected. So it was of great interest to me to see confirmed in this report what I hear from those at the coalface.

Between July 2018 and January 2019, the Royal Hobart Hospital was in a state of bed block for 93 per cent of the time. The Launceston General Hospital was in an escalated state for almost 90 per cent of the time - 90 per cent of the time in an escalated state. Imagine the level of stress that places on the hospital staff.

Yet the Budget delivers almost nothing in health funding increases. The Government may claim record funding in health, but that is how budgets work. Every budget will deliver more money than the year before. It is nothing to crow about. The real and more important question is whether it is enough funding to meet demand. Anyone who believes an increase of only 0.5 per cent in overall health funding will meet the ever-increasing demand is in absolute denial.

How has the Government responded to the growing crisis in our state? Not with additional resources for child safety - no. In fact, there is a \$50 million black hole in funding for out-of-home care.

Not with the crisis response to homelessness - over 3200 Tasmanians are on the waitlist for public housing. The Government's own data shows that as of the December 2018 quarter, the average wait time for priority applicants was 56 weeks. That is more than a year for priority applicants.

This morning on my way to parliament, like many other Tasmanians, I saw the snow on the mountain. You do not have to walk far to feel the cold. Step into the airlock at the exit to feel the chill in the air. Winter is approaching quickly. I cannot imagine what it must be like to try to sleep in those icy conditions or to try to keep your kids warm in a car, garage or tent.

We saw the extent of the housing crisis last year with people converging on the Hobart Showground and other locations in absolute desperation. Young people getting ready for school and others getting dressed for work in their tents at the showground. It is shameful. Absolutely shameful. And here we are, 12 months later, and what has changed? Nothing.

How has this Government responded if not with funding to support vulnerable Tasmanians? It has responded with claims of infrastructure spending. Some will argue infrastructure spending is a

good thing. Even going into debt for infrastructure can be justified when you are funding projects that will create jobs now and into the future - infrastructure that will serve the future needs of Tasmania.

Again, the reality of this Budget is quite different. The Budget forecast is that infrastructure spending will actually go down every year over the next four years. Projects are being reprofiled. That is politician-speak for delayed.

Tasmania is on a course to be saddled with more than \$1 billion in debt with no pathway out.

As Labor's shadow minister for health, I am in regular close contact with health stakeholders - service providers, advocacy groups, consumers and workers. Over many months now those conversations have included their expectations for - and more recently, their reaction to - the Budget handed down last week.

The conversations I have had since last week have been nothing short of heartbreaking. Many organisations seeking support from the Government are not-for-profit organisations operating on the slimmest of margins. Many hours are spent preparing budget submissions, lobbying and meeting with the Health department and the minister, consulting with their members and those they are representing. It is an enormous amount of work, and now, these organisations are saying to me 'What is the point?'

What is the point in spending all that time and energy only to be met with nothing?

How do they go back to their stakeholders and tell them they have been overlooked without causing them to lose all hope?

What is the point in working hard to build relationships with government only to be left feeling they have lost all trust with those they have built relationships with?

Stakeholders are telling me what I already know. This Budget does nothing to look after people. I am looking forward to exploring many more details further in Estimates next week. It is always difficult to be able to respond fully to a budget before we have had that opportunity, but nevertheless that is the process we follow.

The Leader said in her contribution that she enjoyed reading her budget papers over the weekend and I commented I found it depressing. Let me be clear: it was not the activity I found depressing; it was the absolute lack of action on the part of this Government to address any of the most critical issues our state is facing - health, homelessness, unemployment and underemployment, skills and training. These issues make it more difficult or less difficult for people to get by, to contribute as a member of their community and to live a life of dignity.

This Budget does nothing for those people. It is beyond disappointing. This is not a budget anyone should be proud of.

Recognition of Visitors

Mr PRESIDENT - Honourable members, I welcome to the Chamber today the year 11 and 12 legal studies class from the Friends' School. I know many people who have studied at your school

and have gone on to careers in law - quite a number, surprisingly. We were blessed in this place for many years in having a former student, the former member for McIntyre, Greg Hall. He told many stories about his time at your school. I am really hoping things are a lot better now. He was always very proud of his time at the Friends' School. He continued to use some of the things I think he probably learned at school in this Chamber.

We are currently noting the Budget, so you will probably hear many different opinions from members on their ideas about the Budget. We hope you enjoy your time in the Legislative Council. Maybe one day when you have experienced successful legal careers and want to move into the next level of lawmaking, you could look at a career in the Legislative Council. I am sure all members join me in welcoming you here today.

Members - Hear, hear.

[12.52 p.m.]

Ms RATTRAY (McIntyre) - Mr President, I add my welcome to the Friends' School legal studies students.

Mr President, it has been interesting to listen to members' contributions so far. I want to pick up on a point made by the member for Rumney. It is sometimes difficult to talk broadly about the Budget we have in front of us when next week we will have four days of the Estimates and the opportunity to drill down into line items in the budget papers. I have often felt we should have this process after we have done that because we would have more to contribute. That is my view. I am not sure what other members feel, but it would allow us to have more to say in regard to individual line items or matters that come up during Estimates. I know the process was put in place by the Government, but I think it would be worth a conversation with members to see if anyone else feels the same as I do.

Mr Dean - It would be interesting to see if this is the process right throughout the Westminster system. I think it probably is.

Ms RATTRAY - I am not aware of that. It may be that we can have Parliamentary Research Service look at what processes are used in other Westminster systems when budgets are presented and then have an opportunity for members to contribute at a later time. I think it is worth a discussion, but other members may feel that is entirely inappropriate.

I note that we do not have as much opportunity to make comment in the Committee stage after the Estimates process as we did in the past. I think we were allowed quite a bit of leniency in the past in bringing up matters. Now if we have a line item, it has to be left open. We have to make sure we have our question ready to go and that we have not received information and just want to have a bit of a talkfest about that particular item. It has changed in my 15 years in this place. The member for Windermere might agree things have been tightened up for members.

Mr Dean - They certainly have been tightened up considerably.

Ms RATTRAY - Yes. It took time to get through the Estimates committee process in the past, but it was still an effective way for members of the committees to put on the public record issues raised through the Estimates process. I acknowledge we always have opportunity in this place to put a notice of motion into the process. Also, the government administration committee process

allows any committee to look at areas such as infrastructure and, where there is more detail to be fleshed out, we can have a look at it individually.

At times, we are overloaded by committee process around this place. They are all very important, which is why they tend to be supported by the House, but it takes considerable time if you are northern member to come to the south for a two-hour meeting. It can be a big commitment. I acknowledge we have the teleconference system in place in the northern office in Launceston and that is being used more and more for the committee process.

This is a little off the Budget, but I have some thoughts to share because the member for Rumney prompted me to think we could perhaps do some things differently. However, we are not the government and are not in charge of what happens in that regard.

Back to the Budget - the real question I and other members have posed is: is this Budget steady as she goes for Tasmania?

I acknowledge the issues raised, particularly by the two previous speakers, in regard to homelessness. Some people are not as fortunate as we in this place are in having a safe and warm home to sleep in at night. I absolutely acknowledge that is not the case for a number of people in our state and it does appear to be becoming more of an issue than in the past.

I listened intently when the member for Nelson, the Speaker, Sue Hickey, and a number of other community organisation representatives spoke on the ABC about homelessness. Some good suggestions were put forward in that forum, particularly some short- to medium-term solutions.

It takes time to build a house or any permanent structure, particularly in areas which lack current planning approval. We are looking for parcels of land around the state that could be freed up for social and community housing. I have talked before about solutions put forward about small unit-type houses and shipping containers converted to housing. During Agfest last year I viewed a shipping container decked out as a home. It was impressive; if I had nowhere elsewhere to be and somebody offered me a shipping container that was secure and warm, I would be in it.

There are solutions. Why not buy 200 shipping containers and refurbish them? Once permanent housing structures are in place, the shipping containers could be on sold or perhaps there will always be a need for them. I do not know. They are like the demountable school buildings we used to have in the past.

Mr Dean - Terrapins.

Ms RATTRAY - Yes, they were annexes. They used to move them around.

Sitting suspended from 1.00 p.m. to 2.30 p.m.

QUESTIONS

Bail Breaches

Mr DEAN question to LEADER of the GOVERNMENT in the LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL, Mrs HISCUTT

[2.32 p.m.]

- (1) During the current financial year, how bail breaches did police deal with?
- (2) How many people on bail were arrested/charged by police for other offences or crimes committed on bail?

ANSWER

Mr President, I thank the member for Windermere for his question.

- (1) In 2018-19 - to 31 March 2019, police proceeded against 3163 offenders under the Bail Act 1994. In the 2017-18 financial year, police proceeded against 4237 such offenders
- (2) In 2018-19 - to 31 March 2019, police arrested and charged 1985 offenders for committing offences while on bail other than offences against the Bail Act 1994.

I can see a horrified look on the member's face. I will check those figures to make sure they are right.

Early Childhood Scholarships

Ms FORREST question to LEADER of the GOVERNMENT in the LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL, Mrs HISCUTT

[2.33 p.m.]

Regarding scholarships for early childhood educators working in early childhood services -

- (1) How many scholarship positions for Bachelor of Education scholarships were made available to early childhood services?
- (2) How many were awarded?
- (3) If not fully awarded, is the funding to remain available until all scholarships are taken up? If not, where will the allocated funds be directed?

ANSWER

Mr President, I thank the member for Murchison for her question.

- (1) The Department of Education's Education and Care Unit - ECU - offered 10 scholarships to assist educators working in education and care services with an approved diploma qualification

and relevant workplace experience to gain an early childhood teaching qualification - a Bachelor of Education (Early Childhood Teaching).

- (2) The ECU received nine applications. A total of six applicants were suitable as they fully met the criteria of the scholarship program. Two of the six successful applicants withdrew prior to the start of the course due to personal reasons.
- (3) The funding for the scholarship program was from the ECU Grants Program, and the balance of the allocated funding was channelled back into the ECU Grants Program.

Tasmanian Risk Management Fund

Ms FORREST question to LEADER of the GOVERNMENT in the LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL, Mrs HISCUTT

[2.34 p.m.]

Ms FORREST - This question is part (4) of one I asked a week or so ago.

With regard to the demands on the Tasmanian Risk Management Fund, last year's budget paper 1 stated -

The expected overall increase in contributions for 2018-19 is mainly due to increases in both workers' compensation and medical liability contributions. The significant increase in workers' compensation contributions is primarily as a result of higher claim costs in recent years, higher staff costs and a deterioration in the funding level of this risk category. The contribution of medical liability has increased moderately, reflecting higher projected claim costs and incidence rates for both large and small claims in 2018-19.

The fourth question, which will be have to be answered by a different department was: what is the likely budget impact of increased sick leave, including stress leave, for staff working in emergency departments around the state?

ANSWER

Mr President, I thank the member for Murchison for her question.

Advice from the Tasmanian Health Service indicates that sick leave is largely consistent with previous years. Figures indicate that the sick leave rate is at its lowest level in three years on a statewide basis. The THS will continue working to minimise and appropriately manage sick leave of staff, including the emergency departments. Annual costs will be finalised at the end of the financial year.

Electronic Bracelets - Monitoring

**Mr DEAN question to LEADER of the GOVERNMENT in the LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL,
Mrs HISCUTT**

[2.36 p.m.]

My question relates to electronic bracelets. I would say the answer to the first question is no.

- (1) Are electronic bracelets being used to monitor bail conditions?
- (2) If so, how many are in place and what has been the result?
- (3) If not, are electronic bracelets being considered for bail?

ANSWER

Mr President, I thank the member for Windermere for his question.

- (1) As the member alluded to, the answer to the first question is no, bail conditions are not being monitored. Electronic monitoring is currently available only for persons sentenced to home detention or those who are monitored as a condition of a family violence order.
- (2) As stated, electronic monitoring is not currently being used to monitor bail conditions; however, I am advised that 22 offenders who are serving home detention sentences are being monitored, as are 23 people as a condition of a family violence order.
- (3) The Government has previously committed to reforming Tasmania's bail laws. An options paper on potential reforms released in January 2018 included a proposal that any reform could include the use of electronic monitoring as a bail condition.

Work on this significant legislative project, including the scope of any reforms, is underway.

APPROPRIATION BILL (No. 1) 2019 (No. 21)

APPROPRIATION BILL (No. 2) 2019 (No. 22)

Noting of Budget Papers

Resumed from above.

[2.38 p.m.]

Ms RATTRAY (McIntyre) - Mr President, earlier I was talking about some short- to medium-term accommodation for people who are homeless. I was informed over the break this type of accommodation is called pods. Most people will know what a shipping container refurbishment looks like, but these are called pods.

Mrs Hiscutt - Through you, Mr President, the waterfront in Wynyard has an award-winning set of pods for accommodation. They can be set up very cosily and discreetly.

Ms RATTRAY - So we already have a template in this state. I am not the Minister for Housing so it is probably easy for me to say it should not be hard to secure multiple numbers of pods and

possibly put them at a showground or something like rather than having people sleeping in tents, sleeping rough or couch surfing or whatever they have to do.

Mr Gaffney - Did you see that in Victoria they have been letting people sleep in a car park because they are warm in winter and people do not use them at night for car parking? It is an interesting concept - somebody has thought outside the square to at least have somewhere out of the wind and rain.

Ms RATTRAY - Already in this conversation in the Chamber some excellent solutions are being put forward. This was one of the points I raised - solutions are being put forward by groups dealing with people in this situation day in, day out.

Mr Willie - With a duty of care to its students, the UTAS response has been to buy up hotels, and putting demountable accommodation onsite. UTAS has acted with real urgency, in stark contrast with the state Government which is conducting business as usual even though there are low vacancy rates across the state, particularly in Hobart.

Ms RATTRAY - Very useful solutions are being put forward. They do not have to be long-term solutions, just until once the stock of more permanent accommodation becomes more available. Whatever is surplus to requirement can be sold; it is simply a matter of finding a suitable place for pods or refurbished shipping containers. Shipping container businesses are doing this. There is one in Hobart because a friend of mine purchased one, and I expect there are similar business in the north of the state.

A government contract to provide 50 or 100 of these shipping containers and put them around - there is a shipping container in Salamanca. It is used to store wood. I wondered whether it was a storage container for excess stock, but, no, a shipping container full of wood is sitting in a Salamanca street. Why not home people in refurbished shipping containers? We need to look outside the square to find solutions. We need a positive and proactive approach. I am not sure the shipping container in Salamanca had a permit to be on the footpath - that will be something the Hobart City Council can deal with.

As usual there has been considerable reporting on the Budget in the media. Like most members I have read what has been said. Labor and the Greens have made their positions clear -

The Treasurer promised a heavy infrastructure spend in today's Budget, but what was clearly missing was the investment in social infrastructure.

Not unlike what is already being touted. Comments by Kym Goodes from TasCOSS have already been touched on -

Today's budget shows us that the state government is in denial as people are falling behind faster than they ever have before and there is little in the budget to help them.

That is a compelling view. When it comes to agriculture, the Leader has a huge interest and her wealth of knowledge was very complimentary. Peter Skillern, chair of Tasmanian Farmers and Graziers Association, said -

Agriculture has been a winner in today's State Budget. Commitments to irrigation infrastructure are crucial to the ongoing success of the sector and today's commitment of \$70 million is a significant step in the right direction.

For the Police Association of Tasmania - and I am sure the member for Windermere will touch on this - there is good and bad in the Budget. It is good to see money for country policing and police housing, but there is no funding for IT services.

There has been a varied response. I picked up some information on Friday when I was looking through media reports and this one said -

If the Tasmanian community thought they were getting mixed signals from the State Government on the issue of Tasmania's finances, that is because they are.

The 2019/20 Budget shows the contradiction that we currently have - on one hand the economy continues to boom with some of the best economic numbers we've seen in the history of the state, but on the other hand revenue is falling.

That is according to reports. We heard from the member for Murchison in her very extensive contribution that this is because the state is becoming a victim of its own success. Combined GST revenue and stamp duty are predicted to fall by \$500 million over the next four years. I expect that would well and truly be on the Treasurer's radar.

It goes on to say -

GST is going down, because Tasmania is performing better relative to the rest of the nation, while stamp duty is also coming down, not because of a fall in property prices, but the fact that houses in the south aren't changing hands because they're so expensive and the boom in the north and north west is not enough to cover the difference.

That is something to think about. Hobart and a couple of the suburbs have been classed as the most expensive places to buy houses in recent times; the prices are going up.

Mr Willie - Is that comparative to the minimum wage?

Ms RATTRAY - I believe so. They were on that list. They have become not so affordable as Tasmanian properties were in the past. We often saw people coming to Tasmania selling perhaps a very meagre home in or around Melbourne, Sydney or wherever, coming to Tasmania and buying a very nice home, even on some acreage, and having some money leftover in their pockets. We saw that quite a bit about 10 years ago.

Mr Gaffney - I think in Hobart and the central business district prices have gone up, but in the rest of regional Tasmania, it is really quite affordable in comparison.

Ms RATTRAY - Yes, that is what it is saying: that in the north and the north-west they are more affordable, but it is not making up for the lack of stamp duty revenue the Government was potentially looking for. As a result it is not surprising the Treasurer has been forced to make some difficult decisions.

We know two new taxes will be introduced: a foreign investor tax to catch overseas money, which I think most Tasmanians would support; and, more importantly, and I suggest much more welcome to the vast majority of Tasmanians, a 15 per cent point-of-consumption tax on gambling and wagering, which will capture gambling online and bring Tasmania in line with the rest of the nation. I think that is a positive. It was talked about in the future gaming markets inquiry and the Government has acted on that.

I looked through the budget papers. I am not a financial guru by any stretch of the imagination, but I went to the budget paper and looked at the parameter adjustments because those come under policy and parameter statements. I thought this was a policy, and so it should be, under Parameter Adjustments, Taxation on page 64, but I cannot see any reference on that page to an increase in the tax.

When you look at the forward Estimates, there is nothing there. I may be in the wrong place. I took a bit of advice because I am not absolutely right up with all this. I looked on page 107, where it says 'State Taxation', then I looked at the taxes on provision of goods and services. There is a totalizater wagering levy but the forward Estimates are very meagre as well. The Budget for 2018-19 is \$7.4 million and in 2019-20 it is \$7.6 million, gradually going up to \$7.8 million, \$8 million and \$8.2 million.

I am not sure where I can find in the Budget what the Government is expecting to get in the increases in that 15 per cent tax. I would like the Leader to indicate to me where it is in the budget papers in the forward Estimates.

Mrs Hiscutt - You want me to look at that in the summing up or is it something you were going to ask during Estimates?

Ms RATTRAY - I am not on Committee A, so it is for my own personal information. I and other members have had representations asking how much that tax will generate. How will it be distributed? The industry is obviously looking to benefit from some of that. The budget papers say key stakeholders will be consulted. I am not sure whether it is \$7.6 million for industry and \$7.6 million for government or what those negotiations might look like. I feel sure the Treasurer would have some idea of what revenue it will generate, what those negotiations might look like and how much the state is prepared to forego to hand on to the industry itself. I know I am not the only member keen to have some understanding of that.

I have already had a couple of the representatives on the phone -

Mrs Hiscutt - Mr President, while we contemplate that question, could I ask the honourable member to please adjourn the debate?

Ms RATTRAY - Mr President, I move -

That the debate stand adjourned.

Debate adjourned.

SUSPENSION OF SITTING

[2.53 p.m.]

Mrs HISCUTT (Montgomery - Leader of the Government in the Legislative Council) - Mr President, I move -

That the sitting be suspended until the ringing of the division bells.

This is for the purposes of a briefing on the Greater Hobart Bill 2018.

Sitting suspended from 2.53 p.m. to 4.10 p.m.

APPROPRIATION BILL (No. 1) 2019 (No. 21)

APPROPRIATION BILL (No. 2) 2019 (No. 22)

Noting of Budget Papers

Resumed from above.

Ms RATTRAY (McIntyre) - Mr President, I finished on the 15 per cent point-of-consumption tax.

Moving on, in addition a \$50 million special dividend will be taken from the Motor Accident Insurance Board - MAIB - while the Tasmanian Public Finance Corporation will hand over \$39.5 million. We heard in the Treasurer's speech last week that government businesses are doing well against the backdrop of a strong economy. Our state is fortunate to have these businesses performing well.

I also note from the Treasurer's speech that Hydro and Sustainable Timber Tasmania will meet the cost of some non-commercial activities. Obviously we will not get to those through the Estimates process. What are some of the non-commercial activities referred to there? I would be interested to hear that.

The budget papers tell us that government departments will be required to provide a 0.75 per cent special dividend. It will be interesting to see which departments are likely to be able to meet that requirement and how this will be achieved when the 2 per cent wages target appears to be out of the window, given the teachers' wages decision arrived at last week. It remains to be seen how that can be achieved and which departments will be up to the task.

In summary, it moves to increase taxes and take further special dividends which are designed to cover the loss of revenue and thus allow the Government to continue on its fiscal path. Only time will tell.

The papers tell us that it is another record year of infrastructure spending at some \$3.6 billion. While some question the ability of the Government to spend this amount, a drive down the Midland Highway and through the Hobart CBD certainly proves something is happening.

I refer to the leaflet on infrastructure which contains a significant list of roadworks. The question was asked about whether Tasmania has the skilled workforce to undertake many of these projects. I hope we do and that we do not have to rely on interstate contractors taking jobs. Let us upskill Tasmanians, if need be, to pick up these jobs. I will be interested to see how that unfolds.

I also note the infrastructure program contains repeat announcements of projects that are already underway. For instance - and I know I share my interest in the Great Eastern Drive with the member for Prosser and anyone else who travels up the beautiful east coast - according to this, the estimated cost was \$6.3 million. We have spent \$3.3 million and \$3 million is still to be spent. I am interested where that \$3.3 million was spent. I have not seen those extensive works in my travels. I do not travel the bottom part of the east coast as much as when I was the member for Apsley. I certainly have been down that way in recent months and cannot see the work. I will follow this up during the Estimates next Tuesday with the Minister for Infrastructure.

Many of those programs are re-announcements. A re-announcement, a good news story. Are the works undertaken? Is there a problem providing the skilled labour to roll out those programs?

Mr Dean - Further on those re-announcements, it should clearly state this was announced in the previous budget and we are re-announcing.

Ms RATTRAY - Or has been started. This is the remaining funds. At the announcement, whether it was in last year's budget or the one before, it would have been over forward Estimates and we would have known at the time, but we have so much going on. A re-announcement, part way or halfway through, would be useful.

Mr Dean - Would be.

Ms RATTRAY - Health continues to receive record funding at \$8.1 billion which is now 32 percent of the total budget. Education is not far behind at \$7.1 billion. In terms of numbers, these are remarkable figures for those studying the long-term economic growth of Tasmania. A gross state product figure of 2.75 per cent was revised up by 0.5 per cent since last year, and is 0.75 per cent better than the long-term average. I acknowledge the \$8.1 billion. I attended the delivery of the Auditor-General's report, which had some alarming figures in regard to the health system. These will be thoroughly explored next Tuesday, when Estimates Committee A has the opportunity to fully examine the Health budget.

Any government in any state and community should be concerned when there appears to be significant problems in their health systems and solutions have been put forward and possibly not acted upon.

Mr Dean - We know the Auditor-General is very controlled in any statement, and to make those strong statements about the problems and issues is a real concern.

Ms RATTRAY - The Audit Office actually seconded somebody from the mainland who has experience in this area of auditing. He was very frank and clear about the information received and compiled under the audit. I do not for one minute stand here and say the Health minister is not doing absolutely everything he possibly can. I am sure he is because I know how seriously he takes his job and his role.

It is not hitting the mark, for all the reasons cited yesterday in the report.

Mr Dean - It is high time Health was looked at closely from the bottom to the top and issues and a number of matters can be changed. It needs considerable work.

Ms RATTRAY - There have to be some changes and no state, certainly not our state, can continue to spend 32 per cent of its total budget on health and not meet the needs of the community. It is as plain as it is, and I hope they are able to turn this around in the interests of a healthy community.

Population growth is running at double the long-term average, which has continued the strength in tourism numbers, and a respectable 6.5 per cent unemployment rate. It is not a high unemployment rate but there must be people who need, want and cannot necessarily find a job. I suggest that sometimes you cannot obtain your preferred job straight up and have to take something which builds your work ethic.

Please, to those who say, 'I cannot get a job', think about what you are looking for. Sometimes you have to take anything you can and have your foot in the door to something else. You might eventually gain the job you have always aimed for.

Mr Dean - The sad thing is too many believe rocking up at Centrelink to pick up their cheque is their work.

Mr Valentine - There are those who have tried a hundred times to gain a job; filling out numerous applications is soul-destroying.

Ms RATTRAY - That is not the case for every situation, but I travel past a shed full of backpackers who are living there because they are working on the back of spud harvesters. There were eight cars and I counted 12 backpackers sitting around the table in the workshop. That tells me nobody locally is willing to or is looking for work on the back of a spud harvester.

Mr Dean - When you, Mr President, and I were looking at the north-east rail at Lilydale, the caravan park was mostly full of backpackers who working in the orchards and around the farms and so on. I spoke to many people from countries around the world.

Ms RATTRAY - Recently when I came out of a Tasmanian Irrigation water meeting at Cressy Hall, opposite the pub a whole load of backpackers was getting off the bus. They live at the back of the Cressy pub while they are working. Again that tells me - a job in Cressy area, not far from Launceston. Yes, perhaps people do not necessarily want to come into the far north-east and work on the back of a potato harvester, but it is not far from Launceston. Is there any real excuse for not picking up at least some seasonal work to adopt a work culture?

There are interesting situations in all our communities, but I acknowledge there are people, as the member for Hobart said, who genuinely try to get jobs and are not successful.

Tasmania's population is almost at 530 000. Births in our state are down and deaths are up, possibly not surprising considering our ageing population. Couples are having fewer children and with our ageing population, there is an increase in those passing away.

This year we have a budget surplus of \$41 million and next year there will be a surplus of \$57 million, which will not remove net debt until 2021. Given the circumstances, and as I quoted 'steady as she goes' budget from the Treasurer, it is not such a bad thing. I accept that putting money

into infrastructure is a reasonable investment, particularly when you look at it over the long term, while acknowledging that roads and bridges do not necessarily address the housing shortage.

At a glance, the economy grew 3.3 per cent, exports were at a new record of \$3.76 billion, up by 6.6 per cent, and growth is expected to continue above trend at 2.75 per cent. There is a \$500 million writedown in revenue from GST and stamp duty. I have already talked about that in regard to the cost of housing with people not being able to get into the housing market in the south of the state and the north and north-west not topping this up.

We have talked about the new foreign investor land tax and new point-of-sale gambling tax. I do not have any more to say on that at this point. The energy rebate for mid-sized businesses is to continue and I think the business community will be pleased with that. Electricity is something that really hits any business, whether it is a small or medium business, so I am pleased to see that is still going on.

Health spending is now at 32 per cent of the Budget or \$8.1 billion over the next four years.

It is pleasing to see additional funding of \$390 000 to complete better accommodation for health professionals on Flinders Island. These professionals are nurses, and medical and allied professionals working on the island. We have had a couple of upgrades at the Multi-Purpose Centre over recent years that have certainly made it a more contemporary building. To have that accommodation for health professionals who head to the island is very pleasing and welcomed.

Another pleasing allocation is \$60 000 over two years for the island for the better transport pilot partnership program with Community Transport Services to extend transport operations on the island. I will explore that more next week so I can get more details about it. It is \$60 000 over two years so I guess that is \$30 000 for each year.

The second year of the Community Defibrillator Fund will be welcomed. The aim is for 90 defibrillators to be distributed in communities each year. The question is whether that target was achieved last year because the program was slow to become operational. My assistant, Melissa, kept calling the Premier's department asking 'Can we send our applications yet?' and we kept on getting 'No, not yet' in response. It was finally opened and made operational, but I am not sure whether they met the 90 target first up. It looks like we will be on target for this year given the number of applications.

Mr Dean - It is a good rollout out, isn't it?

Ms RATTRAY - It is terrific. They have them everywhere and the service clubs have been heavily involved. In the past, the Premier's Discretionary Fund was where community groups headed to seek some funding. They may have had \$500 and needed more; I think it is about \$2500 for a defibrillator, quite a bit of money. It was very welcomed.

Palliative care initiatives are important. Palliative Care Tasmania will continue to assist families and train staff to deal with this difficult time in a family's life. I recently attended the opening of the St Helens District Hospital. The palliative care area of the new hospital was suggested to be the best in the state and it was first-class. It is a beautiful space at the end of the new complex and is quite private. It had its own little courtyard and families can make a cup of tea or cook something with their loved one. It is a delightful space away from the ward. It would be my greatest wish that all hospitals around the state could have a state-of-the-art palliative care

centre; that would be ideal, though it is not possible but it is something the Health department is aiming for.

The funding of \$3 million for a new ambulance station at Campbell Town was in last year's budget. The \$2.2 million in this year's Budget is to include accommodation for relieving paramedics. I hope the member for Prosser does not mind me saying how important it is - this ambulance service actually services Conara, Avoca and surrounding areas which belong to the McIntyre electorate. It is important to have a fit-for-purpose ambulance station with paramedics able to be located for their shifts. It is very important to areas surrounding Campbell Town.

The Health budget talks about the increase in the number of nurses, which helps relieve some of the pressures with emergency, ICU and ward upgrades. If we have the staff, beds and the right processes in place, hopefully we will not have another poor Auditor-General report on the state of our health system. I commend that because three years ago, a number of nursing graduates headed to the mainland for nursing opportunities not available in Tasmania. An allocation of \$11.7 million for 120 more nursing graduate positions across Tasmania will be welcomed within the Health department. The same situation occurs in the health system as in the prison system where people have to do double shifts, which is not good for their health and wellbeing. Wages blow out, and more nurses and prison officers will alleviate the double shift scenario. While it is probably nice occasionally to do a double shift, you would not want to do it end on end or very often considering an eight-hour shift in a hospital or prison is very hard work.

There is an investment of an additional \$125 million for the Affordable Housing Action Plan, bringing forward \$20 million to accelerate the provision of affordable houses. While welcome news, unfortunately the waitlist for social housing does not seem to be diminishing. The home share economy appears to be having a significant impact on the availability of private rentals. That is certainly the case in some of the areas I represent. I acknowledge that we spoke about this last week when we debated the Short Stay Accommodation Bill.

On a positive note, two more units in Scottsdale have commenced under the CatholicCare housing initiative. This adds to the recently completed three units. I noticed as I drove past last week that they have all been tenanted; there are cars in the garage. I understand two more blocks have been gifted to CatholicCare where four more units will be built under the same initiative.

Dorset Council has been very proactive in this space. I would like to see other local government areas identify surplus pieces of land and consider putting them forward for social housing. CatholicCare will only build on land that is gifted.

Mr Dean - It would be interesting to know where the residents came from.

Ms RATTRAY - Tenants in the three recently completed units are around the age of 50 to 55 years old. I know one tenant had a three-bedroom home but was a single person. Hopefully they are starting to use some three-bedroom homes more suited to families and provide accommodation for people who are possibly empty nesters or single parents. These people have found themselves without a permanent home anymore and need to rent.

That has been quite a successful program. It was identified as a need in the Dorset municipality. I am not sure whether the next six units will all have the same tenancy requirements or whether they might be looking for something else. They are only two-bedroom units. They are not large units but they look very nice.

I will be interested to see whether other members can encourage their councils to identify surplus land. The units are pleasing to look at. It is a good thing for your community if you can do that, particularly by scattering these units around. The three completed are in George Street; you will know that well, Mr President. The other two new units will be in the cul-de-sac where Arnold Place and Hookway Place join. That has been a vacant block of land for many years with a playground just around the corner. They do not need another playground so it is an ideal scenario in that setting.

Another area I will follow up next week is the Office of the Ombudsman. It has been allocated a small increase in funding of \$287 000. I expect this will do very little to address the significant backlog of cases the office still has unresolved.

I have a couple of wish list items, which I cannot go past without sharing with members. I went to the opening of St Helens District Hospital last week. That piece of land was provided to the Government by the Break O'Day Council. It has an adjoining piece of land it would like to give to the Government to build a new St Helens police station. I have been asked to support a new purpose-built, state-of-the-art police station in St Helens, one which accommodates all the needs of a growing area. I have been talking about the age and the inadequacy of the current station in this place for a long time now. It no longer meets the needs of the local police. The holding cells in current station are no longer compliant. When someone needs to be taken to Launceston, it takes two police officers out of the area for quite some time.

Mr Dean - I can add to that and I will talk more about it later - in a divvy van that is not constructed for long-term transportation of prisoners.

Ms RATTRAY - It is heading on to three hours to get to Launceston from St Helens. The mayor, Mr Tucker, goes on to say -

With the expected future growth in population and visitor numbers to Break O'Day, with the growing visitation due to the further growth with the opening of the new St Helens MTB Trails, it will be a necessity to have the appropriate services available to enable the local police to undertake their duties effectively and efficiently.

Council currently have a greenfield site available to suit the needs of a proposed development such as this. Discussions have already commenced with the appropriate representatives within the agency to explore its suitability and meet their needs.

A proactive council again provided land as a greenfield site for a hospital. There was no disruption to the current hospital while it was being built and, here we are - it is commissioned and ready to go.

Every time I hear about the situation with the Royal Hobart Hospital, I ask myself why on earth a new hospital was not built in the Glenorchy area. Bunnings could have found somewhere else to move to. With a new hospital on a greenfield site, I think we would have been done and dusted by now and might not be dealing with the situation in the Health department now. Again, I am not a minister, I am not in the Government; you can only make suggestions - and I believe I did suggest at the time that a greenfield site was the way to go, but others saw better.

The member for Prosser certainly will be on the case of this one, as will all the Lyons members. It is a much-needed facility to service that east coast community. I know they have to leave their rescue boat out on the nature strip because there is nowhere else to put it. They actually have one that is pretty useful these days. There is no PV *Fortescue* at St Helens. We need to look after this. This is key infrastructure. It sits out on the nature strip beside the street where the council is, where you go up and around past the childcare centre and the school. I am sure it is there because they have nowhere else to put it and it needs to be accessible.

Another issue I want to talk about is that for a number of years now I have supported the Pioneer community and Mr Tim Slade, who has been a strong advocate for the Pioneer community on water quality. I continue to follow up on his behalf after he has written letters to the minister. In this case he sent a letter to Dr Veitch and Mr Hunt who are in the Department of Health and Human Services and look after public health.

We sent on a letter asking for a response to Mr Slade's concerns about the quality of the tank water at Pioneer. That has been an ongoing situation for many years because some lead contamination has been identified in the area. Unfortunately, I received a letter just this last week from the minister, who proceeded to reply on behalf of Dr Veitch and Mr Hunt so I did not get anything back from them directly. All it said was that Mr Slade had been provided with a letter from the Premier in 2018. They pretty much were not entering into any more correspondence on this matter. It is somewhat disappointing to receive a letter sent in 2018 about the same situation. I will follow up with the minister about that. I know he has a heavy workload, I understand that, but I think out of courtesy I should have received a letter from Doctor Veitch and Mr Hunt explaining why they decided they were not prepared to enter into any more correspondence about the water quality at Pioneer.

It says at the bottom of the email, 'I am happy to hear from you regarding any new matters you wish to raise'.

When you have not had the old issue addressed, it is highly unlikely you will feel as though you will get very far with any new issues.

I make that point because Mr Slade has been a very strong advocate for the Pioneer community. He is a member of that community and he has been a strong advocate and a strong voice for the community over many years. We have continued to allay some of the concerns raised by that community. I will continue to make contact with the Minister for Health.

I did the right thing. I put my request through the minister's office to make sure he understood what I was asking for in regard to information. To receive back a letter from the minister acknowledging that I have asked but that the reply was an old letter from the Premier of September 2018 was somewhat disappointing.

Mr Dean - I have supported the Pioneer community for the last three or so years for the axemen's event. It's a great event and I support it financially.

Ms RATTRAY - It is a very small community. Around Easter they have an axemen's day and get quite a few axemen there. It is a great day out for the community. I thank all members who supported it in the past; it is very much appreciated.

I have the opportunity, so I would like to talk about the Skyline Tier project at Scamander. Todd Dudley, who is president of the North East Bioregional Network, has done an enormous

amount of work on this project. I have highlighted this project for a number of years. Some members have even been good enough to come and look over the Skyline project at a field day at Scamander about three years ago now. Time marches on.

That was a wonderful initiative because it gave some employment to people displaced from the forest industry. They were still using some of the skills they had used when they were in the bush and when they were harvesting. It was something they felt very comfortable with. As I have always said in this place, not everyone is able to turn their hand to being a barista. They say, 'Get another job'. Sometimes it is not quite that easy. In some smaller communities you may have worked in the bush most of your life, probably from when you left school at 17 and then all of a sudden you do not have any work anymore.

The Skyline Tier project pursued by Todd Dudley, the re-establishment of native forest, has been fantastic. I know he has been working really hard to expand the project into other areas where some plantations have been harvested to put them back to native vegetation. It only needs some work in certain areas and the skills are there. I commend him on the work done. Some are privately owned pieces of land and others still belong to Sustainable Timber Tasmania. More work to be done on the Skyline Tier project, but it is all about money. I will contact Senator Jonathon Duniam, who has taken over the portfolio for forestry, and invite him to look at the Skyline project in the Scamander area to see whether some federal funding can support the initiative. It has wound right down now the funding has run out, but this is a great opportunity with a number of harvested plantations requiring work to be restored to their natural state.

Congratulations to Todd because not long ago he received an award that identified and acknowledged his work in this area. I look forward to seeing whether the new assistant minister is able to take this initiative back to Canberra and possibly receive some funding so Todd and his team can continue with their great work. It is a real joy to see the Skyline being regenerated through the work they have undertaken. I acknowledge the work Todd has done.

Is it steady as she goes? Are there more issues than we see in the Budget? Other members certainly have given some details, particularly the member for Murchison. I was reading through some of her speech earlier because she suggested Estimates Committee B would be able to ask some questions on a couple of areas. I am following up to make sure they are the right questions. I read where she said this Budget is a disaster, so some members certainly feel it has not hit the mark. I cannot say it has hit the mark in every area. Is it steady as she goes? The general consensus appears to be that it is steady as she goes, but if we are spending more money than the revenue we are receiving and we do not have much surplus, it does not take a financial guru to work out there will be a day of reckoning. There always will be. We only have to look at our own budgets to see this. I look forward to next week and the opportunity to really drill down into some line items.

Mr Valentine - Look out to those ministers.

Ms RATTRAY - A really effective process we undertake in the parliament is scrutinising the budget. The advisers and the ministers virtually spend all weekend in Hobart getting themselves ready and having briefs ready to hand over when questions are asked. I look forward to this opportunity next week, and I note the Budget.

[4.55 p.m.]

Ms HOWLETT (Prosser) - Mr President, I begin by congratulating the Treasurer, Mr Peter Gutwein, for delivering his sixth budget for the Hodgman Liberal Government.

Since 2014 Tasmania has come a long way. Our economy is one of the fastest growing in the nation and our tourism and construction industries are booming. Business confidence in Tasmania is high and Tasmanian businesses have the optimism to invest in themselves and employ more workers.

The Tasmanian Chamber of Commerce and Industry - TCCI - described this Budget as one that 'keeps the economy moving and keeps a foot on the accelerator'. Over the past six years Tasmania has come a long way and this Budget is designed to maintain this momentum. This Budget invests record amounts into infrastructure to ensure that Tasmanian economic growth is maintained, allowing the Government to deliver record levels of investment. This Budget sees increased investment in Tasmania's health, education and emergency services sectors.

This increased investment will enable the hiring of more doctors, nurses, paramedics, police officers and teachers. It also sees investment in tourism to ensure that the growth in our tourism sector is maintained and that more Tasmanians benefit from our booming tourism industry.

It is a budget that invests strategically so all Tasmanians share in a growing, prosperous state. In his speech the Treasurer described this Budget as one that unashamedly invests record amounts into infrastructure. This Budget sees a record \$1.6 billion invested in transport infrastructure growth which my electorate of Prosser will significantly benefit from. This Budget provides funding to a large number of crucial infrastructure projects that will significantly alleviate traffic congestion issues in the fast-growing municipalities of Brighton and Sorrell.

These infrastructure projects will underpin the south-east region's continued population and economic growth. A sum of \$294 million has been committed in this Budget along with \$461 million from the federal government to deliver the new Bridgewater Bridge. As it currently stands, planning approval and geotechnical studies for the bridge will commence this year. The Bridgewater Bridge replacement project will see the construction of a four-lane bridge with a speed limit of between 100 and 110 kilometres per hour. The new bridge will seamlessly connect the East Derwent and the Brooker highways. It also has design provisions for pedestrian and cycle traffic.

The 2019-20 state Budget also invests \$25.7 million in the South East Traffic Solution through the ongoing delivery of a number of very crucial projects, including the Hobart Airport interchange project, which, following detailed geotechnical work, will see the roundabout replaced with a flyover. This will remove one of the region's major bottlenecks.

The replacement of the Midway Point roundabout with a new intersection will enable a free flow of traffic. This project is currently in its design phase, as is the construction of an overtaking lane on the Arthur Highway.

Mr President, \$231 million has been committed to upgrade roads of strategic importance across the state, including funding to further advance the Sorrell to Hobart corridor project. As it currently stands, heritage field surveys and environmental studies for this project have been completed. A consultant has been engaged to assess the current condition of the Midway Point causeways and develop duplication options. A concept-designed construction is currently being completed. Additionally, \$130 million has been committed by the federal government for this project. The South East Traffic Solution is an ambitious, long-term comprehensive project that, once completed, will alleviate traffic congestion issues between Sorrell and Hobart.

This Budget commits \$112 million to continue the delivery of the Government's Midland Highway 10 Year Action Plan. In Prosser, currently eight projects are underway, being planned or planned for the future as part of the 10-year action plan.

I am also very pleased the Budget has provided \$1.5 million for the construction of a pedestrian underpass in Campbell Town. Campbell Town is split by the Midland Highway and crossing from one side to the other can be extremely dangerous, particularly for children and the elderly. After representatives from the Department of State Growth met with representatives from the Campbell Town District High School, Northern Midlands Council and the community, it was determined that an underpass under High Street was the most favoured solution for this issue. This is now a project of priority.

The Government is investing \$58.6 million in the road package to support the Tasmanian visitor economy by addressing infrastructure issues relating to increased tourist numbers. This includes \$17.1 million that will go towards funding the construction of new overtaking lanes and other safety upgrades on the Great Eastern Drive, and \$4.5 million to extend the Great Eastern Drive to Binalong Bay Road.

Additional infrastructure commitments in the Budget include -

- \$83 million towards an urban congestion fund, including a new dedicated incident response team and intelligent transport solutions to better manage congestion
- \$292 million for infrastructure maintenance to renew or rebuild road surfaces, replace faded line markings and damaged signs, and maintain the roadside vegetation across Tasmania
- \$304.9 million for improved rail infrastructure and upgrades of priority sections of the state freight rail network.

The Hodgman Liberal Government is delivering on road, rail and bridge projects across the state to address congestion in our cities and towns and to deliver safer, more efficient freight corridors to our world-class producers.

Education is a critical component of the Government's plan to grow the economy, create jobs and protect the Tasmanian way of life. This is why the Budget delivers a record \$7.1 billion-worth of investment in education over the next four years, a \$349 million increase from last year's budget.

This Budget commits to crucial investment in education infrastructure in Prosser. These investments are designed to provide the education facilities that the growing south-east needs. The Government is providing \$25.85 million for a complete rebuild and redevelopment of the Sorell School. This investment will transform the school into a key education facility in south-east Tasmania.

The first round of public consultation for the Sorell School redevelopment has closed and the project has entered its initiation and planning stage. It is anticipated that a concept master plan will be developed by mid-2019, at which point a second round of community consultation will commence for the community to have further input into the development of the new Sorell School.

An amount of \$3.5 million is being provided for a new Sorell child and family learning centre, just one of six new child and family learning centres that will be constructed across the state.

In Brighton, the Budget is delivering \$4.3 million for the Jordan River Learning Federation School Farm redevelopment. A number of other education investments will benefit the entire state, including -

- \$145 million in recurrent funding, which allows for an additional 358 new staff across Tasmania's schools, including 250 new teachers
- \$7.25 million in additional funding for government schools to increase support for children and young people impacted by trauma who have emotional and behavioural challenges
- \$220 000 to ensure a nurse is provided to each senior secondary college throughout the state.

The 2019-20 Budget is investing to meet increasing demand in our health system with a record \$8.1 billion for health services across the next four years. This will include \$352.6 million for new and upgraded health and hospital infrastructure across the state and \$132 million to progressively open and staff 250 new beds at the new Royal Hobart Hospital.

This Budget also provides a number of direct investments in Prosser's health and emergency services including -

- \$2.82 million for a brand-new Campbell Town ambulance station
- \$1.87 million for the completion of the Midlands multi-purpose centre upgrade at Oatlands
- \$11.4 million for the new Sorrell emergency service hub.

Prosser will also benefit from the Government's \$21 million new rural and regional paramedics program. This program will see 42 new paramedics employed in rural and regional areas right across our state. The first 18 recruits from this program will commence this year. In Prosser new paramedics will be stationed in Bicheno and Dodges Ferry.

It is pleasing to see the Budget is providing \$921 000 to Rural Alive and Well. This investment will enhance the organisation's ability to provide mental health support in Tasmania's rural and regional areas. This is a crucial, life-saving service in the communities of Prosser and throughout rural Tasmania.

Along with these critical investments in infrastructure, education and health, a number of other investments will benefit my electorate of Prosser, including investments that will drive the growth of tourism in Tasmania and industry, which is important to Prosser's economy. The Budget provides funding to launch the \$20 million Regional Tourism Attraction Loan Scheme. This scheme will provide low interest loans for up to \$1 million for regional businesses to undertake projects to grow the local visitor economy. The aim of this scheme is to drive visitor growth in regional Tasmania.

The Budget also continues to deliver the Government's record \$12.6 billion investment in tourism marketing. This investment is designed to give Tasmania a competitive edge in the international tourism market and attract visitors from new markets. To deliver Tasmania's next iconic multi-day hut-based walk, \$20 million is being committed. As part of this investment feasibility studies into possible walk sites will be conducted around our entire state. Included in this will be a feasibility study of the Freycinet National Park to determine whether a multi-day walk

could build on existing tracks that take in one of Tasmania's most photographed natural assets, Wineglass Bay.

A number of other pleasing investments in the 2019-20 Budget should be highlighted. One of the most exciting initiatives is the Government's continued investment in the Battery of the Nation project. The state Government is committed to making Tasmania Australia's renewable energy powerhouse and ensuring our state continues to enjoy low-cost renewable and clean energy. The Budget contains investment of \$56 million to progress the Battery of the Nation project and the Second Bass Strait Interconnector project. This funding commitment will see further investments in renewable energy development, including pumped hydro and wind farms. These investments alone will inject billions of dollars into the state's economy and deliver thousands of jobs over the years to come. With these initiatives Tasmania is well on its way to achieving 100 per cent self-sufficiency in renewable generation by 2022.

I am also very pleased to see that the Budget commits \$2.5 million towards the Sorrell Council's Pembroke Park redevelopment plan. This funding, combined with funding of \$6 million committed by the federal government, will see the upgrade of the Pembroke Park indoor sporting facility and the construction of a new car park and a number of new facilities at Pembroke Park.

Tasmania has come a long way since the Hodgman Government came to power in 2014 and this Budget will ensure that the momentum is maintained. The Government is investing strategically so all Tasmanians share in a growing and more prosperous state. I conclude by congratulating the Treasurer for delivering the 2019-20 state Budget and commend him for his shrewd management of the state's finances over the past six years.

[5.11 p.m.]

Mr ARMSTRONG (Huon) - Mr President, from conversations I have had with constituents, it seems the Budget has been reasonably well received. In saying that, health issues remain the main talking point in my community. That is despite the wonderful health and aged care facilities in my electorate of Huon.

It is recognised that health will remain top of the agenda for many more years regardless of what colour government is in power, because we have an ageing community and most people are exiting private health cover because of its cost. It seems to me that a long-term strategy needs to be considered to relieve the pressure on the system. Premiums of about \$400 per month are out of the reach of most families, and we see families exiting private health insurance almost every week.

I note we also recently passed a request for additional funding to pay for bushfires that heavily impacted on my electorate and others. I will touch on the fire matters here. First, I recognise the tremendous efforts of all the firefighters and volunteers both during and after the fires. Thankfully, there was no loss of life and property damage was limited, notwithstanding the mental stress on the people involved must have been terrible.

The fires also significantly damaged the Ta Ann and the Neville Smith timber processing facilities, with the future of the former facility still unknown, which is a real worry for the people of the Huon. I welcome the independent review of bushfires which will hopefully satisfy the concerns raised with me. While tourism continues to strengthen in my electorate, the effects of the fire on the popular Tahune Airwalk is of real concern to many tourist operators because so many other operators hang off those 80 000-odd visitors Tahune receives each year.

Mr Dean - A drawcard.

Mr ARMSTRONG - It is a drawcard; it is a major icon in the Huon Valley.

While it is noted the Government has committed funds to the MONA experience, which we possibly all saw last night on television, to somewhat offset the temporary closure of Tahune, it cannot replace it. The resilience and hardworking tourism operators should be commended in what has been a trying time for all of them.

Another issue constantly raised with me is that of a port in the south of the state that facilitates export of our forest products. It has been talked about for years now by both the former government and this Government, but nothing has really progressed that I know of. I note that there is \$575 000 in the Budget to establish a weighbridge at Parattah, but a long-term solution needs to be found in the south. I hope this firmly remains on the Government's agenda.

I note some infrastructure funding in my electorate including key safety upgrades, projects on the Channel and Huon highways, and the diversion of the Channel Highway at Huonville. That money was allocated last year's budget. I believe the carryover is because of work with the Huon Valley Council on a suitable route because some new subdivisions are possibly going to go into the Huon area. I understand why that is being held over but that is not new money - it is money allocated last year, as I believe was some of the funding for sealing of the Bruny Island Main Road and Hastings Caves Road. Sealing the Hastings Caves Road is vital because so many tourists come into this state and drive a hire car that cannot travel on gravel roads because that voids the insurance. So it is really important to seal that road.

Mr Dean - How much road is yet to be sealed?

Mr ARMSTRONG - I am not too sure of the actual kilometres. I have travelled it a lot but I have never actually timed it or set my speedometer to see what the distance is.

Other money was for improving Arve Road and Jefferys Track and also for funding upgrades of Snug Primary School and Illawarra Primary School. I also welcome funding under the Greater Hobart Traffic Solution for the Southern Outlet and funding under the Hobart City Deal to deliver better bus facilities and more park-and-ride facilities around the Kingston area.

I think that needs to be done because so many people travel from my electorate into the city for work, but they do not want to drive their cars into the city because parking is a real problem. If there is a decent park-and-ride position, with a good surface, good lighting and some undercover parking, it would stop many people driving their car into the city. You must follow that up because we need a transport service that links the city to Glenorchy or the Eastern Shore for people if they work in those areas.

Mr Dean - What sort of support from your area was there for the Incat ferry hopping from different places back to Hobart?

Mr ARMSTRONG - It was more talked about in the Kingston area because it was going to leave from Kingston Beach. That was the original one. You still have to find parking. Kingston Beach is pretty limited for parking. A good park-and-ride facility would certainly ease traffic on the Southern Outlet.

In saying that, it is great to upgrade the Southern Outlet but it is the Macquarie Street end where the traffic backs up. As soon as you get to where the outlet meets Davey Street and crosses over to Macquarie Street, you have traffic coming up the Southern Outlet at 100 kilometres per hour or whatever it may be, then you come into a 50 kilometres per hour zone so you naturally get a bottleneck. Until they make clearways down there, it is always going to happen.

Mr Dean - Traffic lights every block to go through.

Mr ARMSTRONG - Going the other way of an evening, there is a pedestrian light at the top end of Davey Street. People push it to cross over at the bottom of the Southern Outlet. As soon as they push those lights, it backs the traffic up back down Davey Street. An overpass is needed there to fix that, too.

It is important for the Huon, my electorate, that bipartisan support continues for the aquaculture industry. That industry is perhaps the most major economic driver for the Huon electorate. I thank both major parties for their continued support in that area.

I acknowledge the continued investment in biosecurity to protect our iconic agriculture, such a vital part of our economy in the area, through investment and employment.

These industries bring hundreds if not thousands of backpackers to my electorate each year. The flow-on effect from those backpackers goes through the whole community. Most backpackers spend nearly everything they earn apart from saving a bit to move on to their next area. You only have to go into the shops during the cherry season, which lasts anything from six weeks to two months, then the apple season and they spend a great deal of money in my community.

Although I have touched on roads, it is necessary to mention the Huon and Channel highways. Little money has been spent on these highways in the last 20 or 30 years or even longer. These highways are the lifeline of the region and have been neglected for many years by all governments. The tourism, aquaculture, agriculture and forestry industries rely on these highways for transporting their products because they have no other alternative. There is no airport or wharf facility, so it is the highway or nothing. I call on the Government to take a good look at these two highways because the products that are transported on them are significant to this state. There is also the safety aspect for tourists looking about, and you often come across one on the wrong side of the road.

I listened to some of the debate regarding the Budget. There has been support and criticism and the Opposition has highlighted its concerns. It is disappointing the Opposition has not tabled an alternative budget to this or last year's budgets. It is easy to criticise, but the public could view an alternative budget to see what the deficit would be or what services would be cut to balance a budget.

The Budget has been reasonably well received, but people are still worried about Health. There are good experiences in our health system and it is not all bad. I hear from people who have been in the hospital system that it was fantastic.

The infrastructure spend will send us into net debt, but it will be job-creating. Infrastructure needs to be built - this is a positive - and we will still have an operating surplus from what I have seen.

Our economy grew by 3.3 per cent last year, a good result for the Government and Tasmania. I note the Budget.

[5.24 p.m.]

Mr DEAN (Windermere) - Mr President, I still have my mouth agape from figures I heard in question time where there were 3163 occasions on which bail was ignored. Offenders have ignored bail placed by the courts. They are the ones police have caught up with, so how many other bail faulters have there been? That would be probably the tip of the iceberg. It is astounding. To have 3163 until 31 March 2019, and we still have 31 March 2019 through to the end of June for the financial year.

Last year there were 4237 breaches. Something is not right somewhere. We need to do something.

Mrs Hiscutt - I will make sure those figures are checked.

Mr DEAN - They are probably right, having read the figures for last year financial year as well, but they do need checking. These persons breaching bail are also committing offences and crimes. This year so far it is about 1985 offences or crimes. I am not sure what offences have been committed by people on bail. It is quite astounding. I am glad to see money in the Budget to assist police and police numbers. I will talk a little more on that in a moment.

Mr Finch - There could be a new prison too - to keep them in prison rather than letting them out on bail.

Mr DEAN - I am not saying they should not be on bail, but some other control methods need to be in place. Electronic monitoring probably needs to be considered, but there needs to be something in place to ensure these people, in most cases, are doing the right thing. You are right - they cannot be put in jail. I agree with that.

I want to say the obvious thing. As a person said to me the other day, if you have 20 people looking at a budget, you will have 20 different opinions. That is exactly what happens. It is not unusual at all. When we have a Labor government, the Liberal team criticises it and does not say anything good or says very little good about it. It is the same here, when we have a Liberal government, of course the Labor Party is criticising it and saying very little good about it. In fact, if Labor members were to compliment the Government, it would be a diabolical situation for them as an opposition to support the Government.

Mr Willie - I did; I complimented the Government on the trauma funding for schools.

Mr DEAN - On one or two things. This is a rhetorical question: what really is the position of an opposition, what is its function? I was asked this question when I was over at Westminster a few years ago, and the answer was 'To get rid of the Government'.

Mr Willie - To hold them to account.

Mr DEAN - No, it is to get rid of the government. That is what the real function of an opposition is. There are also people who are not strong supporters of governments, and some of their comments are going to be fairly obvious in their criticism of practices of governments.

I am going to make a few comments that the member for Elwick might well challenge me on, so it will be interesting.

Mr Willie - I am glad I am here.

Mr DEAN - This is the problem when you speak later in a budget reply session. Information keeps coming at you all the time; you keep looking at it and you keep coming up with information you want to talk about. That is what has happened with me.

Mr Valentine - You get more interjections.

Mr DEAN - You are right. The Budget is presented in accordance with the Uniform Presentation Framework agreed nationally as well as Australian Accounting Standards. A budget is produced on those conditions and positions.

The Government runs an operating cash surplus just like any other state. It is no different to any other state, and people have commented on this.

In Monday's *The Mercury* on Monday morning by John Lawrence said that the Treasurer is disingenuous about the \$41 million plus because he failed to disclose it is an operating balance figure.

That is consistent with the Uniform Presentation Framework in the Australian Accounting Standards and anyone who works through the budget papers methodically will know to look no further than the fiscal balance to see the answers to Mr Lawrence's position.

You need to look at the fiscal balance. Who is the one being disingenuous? I ask that as a rhetorical question. Economics 101 tells me that in any year when a government undertakes major capital works, a fiscal balance will be significantly lower compared with the net operating result.

Even earlier today the member for Elwick expressed discontent with dividends being received from government businesses and suggested it was a raid on GBEs by the Government.

Mr Willie - In April, John Lawrence wrote an opinion piece asking what options are available to the Government. It was borrow, raid or cut.

Mr DEAN - We will go into that in more detail. When a business you own runs a profit, you make some judgments about prudent level of cash retention and appropriate use of dividends to fund investments in other parts of your business. That is simply what we do. But wait, it was okay when the then treasurer David Crean took a special dividend of \$254 million from Hydro Tasmania to put into his economic and social infrastructure fund without any accountability as to how ministers dipped into that fund.

That was David Crean's position at the time. He was an astute treasurer and I had the greatest admiration for David Crean. Most of us here would have been serving here when he was in this place.

Mr Finch - He would often say when the questions came to him, 'But you do not understand'. He knew Treasury matters better than anybody else.

Mr DEAN - He did; there is no disputing that. The member for Elwick further said it was tricky accounting. That is a direct attack on the very public servants he proports to protect. Treasury officers are constrained by the requirements of the Australian Accounting Standards and the Uniform Presentation Framework. The member for Elwick would do well to familiarise himself with the process.

Mr Willie - Are you saying governments never massage budgets to reflect well on the government?

Mr DEAN - I am making that clear unequivocal statement. The member for Hobart has heard enough. The Victorian Government has a massive infrastructure spend in this financial year's budget, not to mention an efficiency dividend of \$1.8 billion. Some of us would have looked at this, and I suspect the member for Elwick would support that is a good budget, because it is a government of right colour in the circumstances. He might want to comment on the Victorian Government's position at some stage.

Mr Willie - The Victorian Government has a good track record of building things.

Mr DEAN - On the matter of an efficiency dividend, 0.75 per cent - 75 cents in every \$100 - in this Budget, the member for Elwick and others have suggested this is a \$450 million cut to the public service. We need to get this straight - that can be achieved by measures like vacancy control and more astutely managing supplies and consumables, to name a couple of areas where they can make these gains. The member for Elwick and others try to make out it is all about job losses but is not necessarily be the case.

Mr Willie - You bought the spin. It is not a \$450 million efficiency of supplies and consumables it is adverting; it is government spin.

Mr DEAN - That is your spin on it. Every business looks at how it can more efficiently be run and government is no different. It is a requirement and something they should be doing all the time.

One area where I have concerns is Health, which I will talk about later. I do not believe the Government is doing that within its structure, looking at how it can run health services and what they are more efficiently.

The member for Murchison started her contribution by saying the Budget is a disaster. That comment from the member did not surprise me at all.

The statements made by John Lawrence in Monday's paper raised many of the same issues the member for Murchison refers to in that paper, if you look at them. I was not surprised the member for Murchison made that statement.

The GST distributions to Tasmania - the Productivity Commission produced a report in response to Western Australia's GST allocation problems. The federal government responded with a three-step plan to ensure that 'no state is worse off.' Basically, there will be top-up payments in the short term to 2022 inclusive, with a new, more inclusive distribution methodology after that. The sleeper is that with an expected continuance of Tasmania's declining percentage of the total population and any external shocks to the national economy, the projected GST pools in the outer years of the forward Estimates are uncertain at best. I am not absolutely 100 per cent satisfied with some of the things that are happening. I have some issues and some concerns.

Mr Finch - Did you say falling population?

Mr DEAN - Yes, falling population generally in Tasmania. In fact, there was a piece in the paper recently about that. It made it clear in the future we would be relying very heavily on immigration.

Mr Finch - I would have thought that was not the case.

Mr DEAN - That is the information I have been provided with. I am not quite sure what media that was in or where it was but the comment was made that we would be relying very heavily on immigration to move forward with numbers.

Mr Finch - You know we struggled for years and years to get to the 500 000 mark.

Ms Rattray - Now we're almost at 530 000.

Mr Finch - I would say 528 000, or something. I hope that is not the case. I would like to think we still kept increasing exponentially even if ever so slightly.

Mr Armstrong - It went to down to under 500 000 in 2012.

Mr DEAN - That is the information I have read.

There is already evidence of slowing in the building industry and softening of consumer spending. National economic growth of 2.75 per cent, which is above the trendline, is optimistic in the current climate, and is based on forecast wages growth. Costs continue to rise for families with no meaningful relief in sight. The CPI bears little relation to street level prices.

In summary, I feel the Budget GST growth will contain significant downside risk. Compared to previous 2018-19 forward Estimates Tasmania is to receive some \$480 million less than prior estimates. In other words, prudent management will be required to help maintain budget outcomes in the outer years, should the national GST pool fail to grow as forecast.

My view on the current infrastructure Budget is that to maintain its programs the Government has had to borrow \$1 billion to cover the \$530 000 decrease in GST and conveyance duty from the 2018-19 Budget. Economically there is nothing wrong with debt finance for capital works projects as it facilitates an equity spread across future years as they are used.

The Treasurer, in my view, is quite correct in stating that the debt is manageable within the current framework at about 5 per cent of general cash receipts. However, should debt servicing levels get over 10 per cent, it will begin to impact on spending programs.

Some of the information I referred to comes from the Productivity Commission report included in the Australian Government response. That information is available there.

Demographics: the state has an ageing population, the most rapid in Australia, in addition to a low birth rate. Current trends indicate that in 15 years we will rely on immigration to maintain our population and workforce. This is not unique to Tasmania, but the relative magnitude of the workforce, maintenance and growth is.

The Budget's overall strategy is to focus on long-term fiscal principles that will enable continued delivery of services and infrastructure programs across future economic cycles.

Some key principles are maintaining government operating expenses at a level lower than the long-term trend in revenue growth; maintaining general government debt - including superannuation defined benefits - servicing levels at less than 6 per cent of general government cash receipts; and maintaining a tax system that is fair and equitable. I see those points as very important.

Tasmania is very dependent on government grants, including GST, and has little scope to grow tax receipts. Consequently, the Government has to look to increase grants or borrowing to cover investment and services growth.

It should be noted the defined benefits scheme debt is \$7 billion, but as outlined in budget paper 1, part 7 - Assets and liabilities, is manageable. American ratings agencies Moody's and Standard & Poor's questioned the defined benefit scheme level of debt. This is a culture-based comment where the US would trash the scheme to the detriment of employees whereas we look after ours - there is a big difference in the cultures of the two countries. The scheme is closed and will wind down over the next 30 years. Payments are managed in operating expenses. There has been a lot of talk about that here; the member for Murchison raises it and other members also talk about the carrying of that liability. Seven billion dollars is a huge amount.

Mr Finch - Just looking at the Australian Bureau of Statistics figures on the population of Tasmania, in 2012 our population was 507 600; in 2013, 513 000; in 2014, 514 800; in 2015, 516 300; in 2016, 518 500; in 2017, 519 166; in 2018, 520 830; and in 2019, 522 327. My apologies for taking up your time, but those figures do not show a diminution in population since 2012.

Mr DEAN - I will go back to my source in relation to this. I suppose in those figures there would be immigration but not to that extent, you are right. We know very well that Tasmania has had an influx of people from some of the other states and more mature people coming here.

Mr Finch - In discussions, I always try to project the idea that Tasmania is the haven for people who want to get away from the heat of the mainland. While we lose our young people going for the big adventure and just to broaden their horizons, we have the overbalance because of people wanting to come to Tasmania.

Mr DEAN - Yes. I want to mention the new accounting standards, the Australian Accounting Standard AASB 15. This standard affects the recognition of National Partnership grant payments. Revenue is only recognised as the project, or projects, are progressively completed. Initially the receipt is recognised as a current liability and then progressively brought to account as projects are completed. The net outcome is to spread the recognition of NPP revenue across the future years of the project. The differences are manifest as accrual accounting timing changes across the forward years of the budget.

It is important to understand what the new accounting standards are. Specific purpose payments are still recognised in total as revenue received. Then we have AASB 16. Previously finance and operating lease liabilities were recognised separately on the balance sheet. From this financial year, all leases are recognised as debt. The immediate effect is to increase accounted debt liabilities by about \$300 million per year, a similar increase in net debt and likewise a decrease in net worth.

The General Financial Statements as used by the Australian Bureau of Statistics do not account for lease liabilities. The GFS net debt is borrowings less the sum of cash deposits and investments, as was the case pre-AASB 16 for all grants.

These changes will make a significant difference to the Budget. I am referring to a table in the budget papers, the Underlying Net Operating Balance taken from budget paper 1, Table 1.2. This table highlights the effect of deducting one-off government grants from the operating revenue. The expenditure on capital items is accounted for in the balance sheet such that revenue recognition on the operating statement distorts the results. The outcome is an underlying net deficit that serves to highlight Tasmania's overall dependence on government grants. Other members have mentioned this as well, I think.

Although the position improves in outer years the one-off grants have increased by around \$100 million. For 2019-20, 62 per cent of the state's revenue is from government grants. That is a large amount - 62 per cent. The 2019-20 operating surplus is supported by special dividends from government-owned enterprises.

I refer now to another table, Government Financial Estimates, Table 4.1 - that is in the general government income statement. To reach the 2022-23 net operating surplus, government grants are expected to grow by 11 per cent in total, while employee entitlements will grow by about 6 per cent. The low growth in employee entitlements is due to vacancy management natural attrition. The growth in the net operating balance flows on to the fiscal balance outcome in the year 2020-23 and the tripling of the net operating balance in conjunction with lower net acquisition of non-financial assets. The risk here is whether \$3 million is achievable given its dependence on mainly the growth of grant income - that is GST in the main.

I refer to Table 4.1, General Government Income Statement, Other Expenses line item. The negative numbers from 2019-20 onwards represent budget savings other than employee entitlements. In my view, that is a sloppy way to account for undetailed assumptions. I question whether there is in fact \$100 million-plus per annum in the outer years to be saved from consultants, travel or advertising. I think that is what the Government said: that it intends to make these savings from those areas - consultants, travel or advertising. Or does this include some components of employee entitlements?

Borrowing costs rise from 2019-20 as debt finance is undertaken. I have some issues -

Mrs Hiscutt - Mr President, when the honourable member sees fit to pause, would you mind calling an adjournment?

Mr DEAN - If I could just conclude my part on the overall Budget, I will look at some independent items tomorrow.

Mrs Hiscutt - Thank you.

Mr DEAN - Table 4.2, General Government balance sheet: the big ticket items are in the infrastructure asset line item. The total infrastructure budget is \$3.6 billion. There is to be an outlay of \$1.6 million for roads and bridges and \$1.2 million for other agencies, as detailed in Table 6.1.

Also, there are to be equity investments to support statewide infrastructure programs - the TasRail revitalisation, the Tasmanian Irrigation schemes, TasWater and the replacement of two

TT-Line vessels are involved here. Leases are recognised as a right-of-use asset and also as a liability for disclosure as per AASB 16 accounting standard, one of the new accounting standards, which raises net debt by about \$300 million per year.

Other liabilities are essentially accounting entries to reflect grant revenues received in advance of capital projects yet to be completed. As projects are completed in total, all stages, the requisite revenue will be progressively brought to account.

To make a few points on some comments made in the media by some commentators - and I will then adjourn proceedings from there if I can -

- Spending on health continues as a large item operationally and infrastructure-wise, but lacks vision and strategy as to how the current problems will be overcome. Buildings alone are but a part of the problem. Staff recruitment and retention are still to be addressed.
- Some 40 per cent of the 2019-20 infrastructure spend is on road and bridges, maintenance and upgrades. There appears to be little or no vision as to where we are headed. We should be addressing outcomes that solve chronic traffic issues, rather than simply renewing what we have got. It is all very well to renew what we have got but we should be looking ahead and looking at those bigger things and the things we need to resolve, those very chronic problems we have got. They are not only here in Hobart some of these traffic issues. Launceston is developing very quickly in that area as well.
- Infrastructure spending declines in the out-years although increases in the last year as TT-Line new vessels are acquired.
- In uncertain times the Budget is set to deliver surpluses as debt levels rise. Our economy unduly depends on both grants and government spending, spending that is forecast to rise at less than the rate of inflation.
- Growth is expected to slow and revenue forecasts come under pressure while the state continues with the highest unemployment rate in the nation.
- Homeless people are appearing on our streets as rental housing is near non-existent. This is a contradiction to the booming economy as assumed in the budget papers.
- If debt is being used to support roads infrastructure maintenance and upgrades what major transformations has it brought? Is the financial risk worthwhile if the debt brings no major transformation to the state after the spend?

It appears we are maintaining and upgrading what is in existence rather than solving problems, as I previously said. We have a housing crisis and we are spending on roads, bridges, rail and so on. We need to spend some there but we need to fix this housing crisis. I will comment on that shortly.

Moody's rating agency commented that the state's ability to deliver such an extensive capital works program in such a short time frame is doubtful. That is what Moody's is saying. Slippage will be most likely. Rising health costs and employee expenses in uncertain economic times could also lead to increased debt burden especially in the outer years.

Debate adjourned.

ADJOURNMENT

[5.55 p.m.]

Mrs HISCUTT (Montgomery - Leader of the Government in the Legislative Council) - Mr President, I move -

That at its rising the Council adjourn until 11 a.m. on Thursday 30 May 2019.

Motion agreed to.

Tribute - Kathleen Joan Venn OAM

[5.55 p.m.]

Ms SIEJKA (Pembroke) - Mr President, today I take a moment to honour the life and many achievements of Kathleen Joan Venn OAM.

Born in Hobart, Kath Venn was educated at Campbell Street Primary School and Ogilvie High School. She found employment with the Australian Workers' Union. She married in 1951 and was a foster parent.

When Kath first became active in Labor politics as a young union delegate in the late 1940s, women party members tended to be consigned to the invisible work of politics, such as making tea, fundraising and manning the polling booths. Some of us still do some of those things.

Kath recalled it was very unusual for a woman to get up and speak at a meeting in those days; however, she did, setting a pattern for her future career as a highly visible politician and community activist. She achieved national prominence in 1969 when she became the first female state secretary of a major political party in Australia.

Kath was also federal secretary of the Labor Women's Organisation, president of the RSL Women's Auxiliary - and she was to serve on this auxiliary for 34 years - federal secretary of the Housewives' Association, and consumer representative on the Tasmanian Milk Board.

In 1976 Kath became Tasmania's fourth female politician elected to the seat of Hobart in the Legislative Council after the retirement of Phyllis Benjamin. She served as an MLC until 1982, including three years as deputy leader for the government.

Her next political move in September 1984 was to stand for the Senate as a member of the Harradine Group. A press statement released on 20 September cited her major concerns: youth unemployment, the availability of hardcore pornographic and violent videos, struggling war veterans, the erosion of the institution of marriage, consumer protection, and the sanctity of human life. However, her bid for the Senate was unsuccessful and she did not contest another election.

Kath remained active in the paid and volunteer workforce after her retirement from parliamentary politics. In addition to working as a marriage celebrant, a career she had begun in the mid-1970s, and as a justice of the peace, she was state president of the Housewives' Association

until 1991. Other roles included being a volunteer at the Repatriation Hospital for 37 years, including at the Alice Elliott Day Centre; a member of the Prisoners' Aid Society; past president of the Mount Stuart Progress Association; state treasurer since 1970 of the Australian Forces Overseas Fund; and chairwoman of the Ogilvie High School Hostel Board. Venn House at Ogilvie High is named in Kath's honour and she regularly hosted meetings of the Old Scholars Association.

For 25 years Kath was involved in Caroline House, a crisis accommodation centre for women, and was its president. She was the president of the Masonic Widows Association for many years. In 2004 she was appointed state president of the Catholic Women's League. Kath was a member of the state committee of the Order of Australia Association and was its secretary and treasurer for nine years.

Kath was awarded the Medal of the Order of Australia in 1990. In 2002 she was made Anzac of the Year. After a long illness Kath passed away on 26 May 2019. Vale Kathleen Joan Venn OAM.

Mr Valentine - Hear, hear.

Mr PRESIDENT - I thank the member for Pembroke. I am sure all members in this Chamber send their thoughts and best wishes to Kath Venn's family and friends.

The Council adjourned at 5.59 p.m.