

PARLIAMENT OF TASMANIA
DEBATES OF THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL

DAILY HANSARD

Tuesday 23 June 2026

Preliminary Transcript

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Tuesday 23 June 2026

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

MOTION

Wilkinsons Point Proposed Sale of Land - Adjournment for Matter of Public Importance

Ms THOMAS (Elwick) - Mr President, I move -

That the Council does now adjourn for the purpose of discussing a Matter of Public Importance; namely the proposed sale of public land at Wilkinsons Point and the State Government's handling of negotiations with LK Group over the past seven years.

Mr PRESIDENT - As our Standing Orders dictate, three members need to rise in support of your MPI.

Motion agreed to.

Mr PRESIDENT - We have a two-and-a-half-hour time limit and there is no right of reply at the end of the consideration of the matter.

MATTER OF PUBLIC IMPORTANCE

Wilkinsons Point Proposed Sale of Land

[11.02 a.m.]

Ms THOMAS (Elwick) - Thank you, Mr President, and I thank honourable members for standing in support of the debate on this motion today. I rise to speak about the proposed sale of land at Wilkinsons Point as a matter of public importance, not because I oppose development, not because I oppose private investment, not because I oppose LK Group or its proposal to develop the land at Wilkinsons Point, and certainly not because I oppose seeing one of the most significant waterfront precincts in southern Tasmania reach its full potential.

I rise because Wilkinsons Point has become a case study in how not to manage the sale of public assets. It has become a story about secrecy, a story about accountability, a story about process, and ultimately a story about whether Tasmanians can have confidence that their government is acting in their best interests when dealing with assets that belong to every single one of them. Because Wilkinsons Point is not the Premier's land; it is Crown land. It belongs to the people of Tasmania.

When governments propose selling public assets, Tasmanians are entitled to expect transparency, accountability and due process. Yet after almost seven years of negotiations, announcements and re-announcements, media releases and promises, Tasmanians still do not know the full cost of this proposal. They do not know the full terms. They do not know what

protections exist for taxpayers. They do not know why alternative options have never been properly tested. They do not know what obligations the government may be assuming on behalf of taxpayers, and they do not know why the government continues to pursue an exclusive arrangement that appears to have no end date, no performance benchmarks, and no obvious exit strategy.

I rise to speak about this as a matter of public importance because I have pressing concerns that the Premier will proceed with selling the land without demonstrating the level of transparency, accountability, consultation and due process the sale of public assets legally requires and morally warrants.

To understand how we got here, we need to understand the chronology. This story did not begin in 2025, when the Premier announced the government had agreed to sell the land at Wilkinsons Point to LK Group, even though no such agreement had yet been finalised. This story began in 2019. In June 2019, Glenorchy City Council considered an unsolicited proposal from LK Group for the purchase of the Derwent Entertainment Centre and the land at Wilkinsons Point, and for the development of Wilkinsons Point. I know this, not only because I was an alderman on the Glenorchy City Council at the time, but also because it is well documented that this is the case.

Glenorchy City Council kept meticulous records on this matter, as any level of government should when it comes to the proposed sale of publicly owned assets.

In June 2019, council resolved to enter into a 120-day exclusive negotiation period with the proponent, LK Group. Importantly, this was not an open-ended arrangement. It was time limited. It was publicly disclosed. It was subject to governance arrangements. It was overseen by an independent probity adviser. It was intended to determine whether an acceptable outcome could be reached. The proposal was centred around securing a Tasmanian national basketball league team and developing a broader sports and entertainment precinct. Council's correspondence at the time noted that government support would be critical to the proposal proceeding.

That is where the story should perhaps have remained if there was any chance of following the rules when it comes to the disposal of public land. The council was assessing a proposal, negotiating within a defined timeframe, determining whether a deal could be achieved.

But then the state government became increasingly involved and it is important that we are accurate about how that occurred, because the government's current narrative is that it merely inherited a process established by Glenorchy City Council and simply continued down a path already set. The documentary evidence suggests something quite different. Let me make this abundantly clear. The proposal that the state government purchased the Derwent Entertainment Centre and associated land and continued negotiations with LK Group was the government's idea, not Glenorchy City Council's.

Mr President, I seek leave to table a series of documents detailing exchanges between Glenorchy City Council, the state government and LK Group relating to the Wilkinsons Point and Derwent Entertainment Centre negotiations.

Leave granted; documents tabled.

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Ms THOMAS - These are documents that were tabled during the Public Accounts Committee (PAC) inquiry and provide important context as to how we arrived at this point, and they are also published on the Public Accounts Committee web page.

As members will see from the correspondence, Glenorchy City Council wrote to the government on 28 June 2019 following its decision to enter into a 120-day exclusive negotiation period with LK Group.

In that letter, then-mayor Kristie Johnston stated:

Close co-operation between Council and the State government will be critical to a full exploration and realisation of the potential of this exciting proposal.

She went on to say:

I look forward to meeting with you in the near future to discuss ways in which Glenorchy City Council and the Tasmanian government can work together on this transformative project.

That letter did not ask the state government to take over the process. It did not propose that the government purchase the assets. It did not propose that the government assume responsibility for future negotiations. Rather, it sought cooperation and partnership in exploring the proposal.

What happened next is critically important. On 20 December 2019, then-premier Peter Gutwein wrote to Glenorchy City Council proposing a pathway forward. That pathway included the state government purchasing the Derwent Entertainment Centre and surrounding land and continuing negotiations with LK Group regarding the future development of Wilkinsons Point. In other words, this was not a situation where the government simply inherited a process established by council. The government actively shaped the way forward. The government proposed acquiring the assets. The government proposed assuming responsibility for negotiations. The government proposed the framework under which the matter would proceed.

This point matters enormously because the Premier's current explanation is that the government is simply continuing a process established by Glenorchy City Council. The documentary record tells a very different story. It demonstrates that the state government made a conscious decision to intervene in the process, purchase the assets and continue negotiations itself. That was not something done to the government, it was something chosen by the government.

Eventually, the government proceeded with the purchase of the Derwent Entertainment Centre and surrounding land. In doing so, it inherited both an opportunity and a responsibility - a responsibility to manage public assets in the public interest and a responsibility to follow the process set out in statute for the disposal of Crown land. It inherited a responsibility to act in accordance with the legislated process when it comes to the disposal of public assets.

At that point, the government had choices. It could have paused and reassessed. It could have tested the market. It could have undertaken an open and competitive disposal process. It

could have sought fresh proposals, considered alternative uses; instead, it chose to continue down the path of exclusive negotiations. That is where the problems begin, because the council's exclusive negotiation period lasted 120 days. It was time limited. It was not open ended. It was not perpetual. It was not unlimited. It was a 120-day exclusive negotiation period, and that fact is on the public record.

The Premier frequently attempts to suggest that his government is merely continuing a process that began under, and reflects the wishes of, the Glenorchy City Council. This is revisionist history. The Premier is seeking to rewrite history, because somewhere along the way the Premier appears to have forgotten that council's authority was temporary. Again, the council entered into a time-limited, exclusive negotiation process. The government chose to continue exclusive negotiations long after council's process had expired. The government chose not to test the market. The government chose not to seek competing proposals. The government chose not to pursue an open disposal process. A 120-day negotiation process somehow became more than six years of exclusive dealings. Those were the decisions of the state government, not Glenorchy City Council, and accountability for these decisions rests squarely with the government. On Thursday last week, during Question Time in the other place, the Premier stated:

First, the pathway for the redevelopment of Wilkinsons Point originated with the Glenorchy City Council, not the state government.

I agree with that statement. The original proposal did indeed originate with Glenorchy City Council and the LK Group; but the Premier then went on to say:

Second, the state's involvement occurred at council's request and within negotiating parameters that were already well advanced between council and the private proponent.

It is this statement that causes me great concern, because the documentary record does not appear to support that characterisation of events. Whilst it is true the council sought government involvement, the evidence shows the government subsequently established a very different pathway from that which council had originally contemplated. Fundamentally, council's negotiating authority was time limited. The negotiating parameters the council set are there in black and white: limited, confined to a 120-day exclusive negotiation period. That limitation was fundamental to the council's decision, yet the government's approach has continued for more than six years. To suggest that the government remains operating within the same negotiating parameters established by the council simply does not appear consistent with the documentary record. Council's process had a beginning and an end; the government's process appears to have neither.

Accordingly, I would urge the Premier to review the documentary record and, if necessary, correct the record, because this matter is far too important for Tasmanians to be left with an inaccurate understanding of how we arrived here. Wilkinsons Point is a significant public asset. The people of Tasmania deserve an accurate account of the decisions that have been made in their name, and they deserve a Premier and a government that is prepared to accept responsibility for its decisions.

Like many Tasmanians, I'm enormously proud of what the JackJumpers have achieved. The club has delivered extraordinary economic and social benefits. The players, staff,

volunteers and supporters have built something truly remarkable. Nothing I say today should be interpreted as a criticism of the club; but success does not exempt governments from scrutiny. Success does not eliminate the need for accountability, and success does not justify abandoning accepted principles of public administration.

In fact, one of the most important findings made by the Auditor-General in his inquiry into this matter is that the proposal evolved substantially over time. The Auditor-General observed that the proposal was originally considered unique because it involved the creation of a Tasmanian NBL team, the redevelopment of the Derwent Entertainment Centre and the construction of additional sporting facilities on the site. However, as the proposal evolved, many of those elements disappeared. The community sports facilities were relocated elsewhere. The high-performance facilities were relocated elsewhere. The very features that help justify the proposal being treated as unique no longer existed.

That brings me to the first smoking gun: the Auditor-General explicitly observed that the uniqueness of the proposal had fallen away. Think about that: the rationale for bypassing an open-market process progressively disappeared, yet the government never stopped. It never reassessed whether the proposal should now be exposed to competition. It never tested the market, never asked whether there might be alternative proponents capable of delivering greater benefits for Tasmania. The exclusive negotiations simply continued.

The second smoking gun relates to the quality of decision-making itself. The Auditor-General found significant shortcomings in advice and process: failures to adequately define scope; failures to adequately identify risks; failures to adequately identify taxpayer-funded costs; and failures to properly establish key parameters of the proposal.

This was not a minor administrative oversight; this was a proposal involving valuable public land and substantial public resources, and yet the Auditor-General concluded that key risks, obligations and costs had not been adequately defined. How can any government claim with confidence that a proposal is in the best interests of Tasmanians when it has not fully identified the risks and costs involved?

The third smoking gun should concern every member of this parliament. The Auditor-General revealed that he was unable to access Cabinet documents necessary to provide a complete picture to the parliament. As a result, he specifically stated that he could not assess the quality of advice provided to the Cabinet or whether subsequent actions were consistent with government decisions. That is extraordinary.

The independent officer charged with scrutinising government decision-making was prevented from obtaining the information necessary to complete that task. If parliament's watchdog cannot even see the full picture, how are Tasmanians expected to have confidence in the process?

The government's February 2025 announcement marked a turning point. The Premier announced that the government had agreed to sell the land at Wilkinsons Point to LK Group. The announcement spoke of a \$500 million development, a transformed waterfront precinct, thousands of jobs, an economic boom for the northern suburbs. Listening to that announcement, many Tasmanians would have concluded that the deal was done, the land had been sold, that all key issues had been resolved, that contracts had been signed. I know I thought that when I heard the announcement. I thought it was a done deal; so much so, I felt compelled to

immediately raise concern about the lack of transparency. It appeared there was no detail on the cost to taxpayers or the protections in the deal.

But we now know there was actually no cause for immediate alarm: the land had not been sold. What the government actually meant by 'agreed to sell the land' was that it had entered into a non-binding term sheet or something similar. According to the acting secretary of State Growth at the Public Accounts Committee hearing, it would be difficult for Tasmanians to understand this legal language in a media release. In the same hearing, the Premier rejected the assertion that it was misleading to Tasmanians to announce that the government had agreed to sell the land. He rejected that assertion.

Well, I'm not sure about you, Mr President, but I interpret 'agreed to sell the land' to mean deal done, ink dried. Forgive me for not being cynical enough or reading further into what the government really meant when it said it had agreed to sell the land. This is important because this is how trust in government is eroded: when they don't say what they mean or mean what they say, because when this announcement was made in February last year, the truth was that the negotiations were continuing. Key issues remain unresolved. Land hadn't even been declared surplus, as the first step required, and it still hasn't, according to what we heard in the Budget Estimates recently. And more than a year later, the government is still negotiating.

I ask members to consider how extraordinary this is: a government publicly announcing the sale of Crown land before the sale has actually occurred. A government creating the impression that a deal is done when negotiations are in fact continuing. A government making repeated announcements while withholding the detail necessary for Tasmanians to understand what is actually being proposed. That is not transparency. That is misleading spin.

One of the most concerning revelations to emerge over the past 12 months is that departmental advice appears to have favoured an open-market process. Internal material released through right-to-information requests indicate senior officials recognise the possibility of taking the site to market rather than continuing indefinitely with exclusive negotiations; that should surprise nobody.

Open-market processes exist for a reason: competition protects taxpayers. Competition tests value and it drives better outcomes. Competition reduces the risk of governments becoming captured by a single proposal. Yet despite those principles, the government appears determined to continue an arrangement that has now stretched for more than six years.

The obvious question is: why? What is so compelling about this proposal that it cannot be tested in the marketplace? If it is genuinely the best proposal, surely it would survive open competition, surely it would emerge as the preferred option and surely it would withstand public scrutiny.

Another area of concern relates to taxpayer-funded infrastructure and site preparation costs. The Premier's announcement made clear that the government would proceed with a common use infrastructure, including ferry facilities, services and associated parking. Subsequent documents reveal extensive discussions regarding ferry terminals, parking facilities, road layouts, land transfers and other infrastructure requirements associated with the proposal. But what remains unclear is the total cost. How much infrastructure will taxpayers be required to fund? How much site preparation will taxpayers fund? How much remediation

will taxpayers fund? How much risk will taxpayers assume - because the proposed sale price alone tells us nothing?

The true value of any deal is determined only after every taxpayer contribution is taken into account. A government can claim it has secured market value for land but if taxpayers are subsequently required to spend tens of millions of dollars facilitating the development, the equation changes dramatically. That is why transparency matters. That is why full disclosure matters. That is why Tasmanians deserve answers before any sale of their land proceeds. It might be a good deal, but how do we know? After recent events, how can we trust that this government will ensure it is?

Recent Budget Estimates hearings have only further reinforced concerns. We learnt through Budget Estimates that LK Stadiums pays approximately \$200,000 per year in base rent under the MyState Bank Arena lease. We also learnt that, since 2021, almost \$800,000 has been paid through a taxpayer-funded contribution intended to support non-commercial use of the venue. The government has paid back to LK Group almost \$800,000. The government subsequently suggested, in response to questions asked about this, that there is a performance or percentage rent mechanism that brings in additional revenue to the government. If so, release the figures. Show Tasmanians the formula. Show Tasmanians the return. Show Tasmanians the net benefit, because this pattern is becoming familiar: information is withheld, questions are asked, pieces of information emerge, further questions arise, more information is reluctantly disclosed, more questions have to be asked to get the full story. That is not transparency. Transparency means putting information into the public domain before decisions are made, not after.

The more one examines this saga, the more it appears the government has become trapped by its own decisions. It has invested years in defending this process, years in justifying exclusivity, years in resisting scrutiny and years in avoiding competition. Now it appears unwilling to step back and objectively assess whether this remains the right course. The government appears determined to proceed regardless. Regardless of the Auditor-General's findings, regardless of departmental concerns and advice, regardless of community concerns, and regardless of the fact that the original rationale for the proposal and the deal has substantially changed.

I support appropriate development at Wilkinsons Point. I support investment and jobs and economic growth. What I do not support is secrecy. What I do not support is indefinite, exclusive negotiations involving public assets. What I do not support is asking Tasmanians to blindly trust a government that continually refuses to provide the information necessary for informed public debate, because the fundamental questions about this proposal and this deal still remain unanswered. Why has the market never been tested? Why has there been no open and competitive process? What will this proposal ultimately cost taxpayers? What infrastructure obligations will government assume? What risks will taxpayers carry? What protections exist if the promised benefits fail to materialise? After almost seven years, why are Tasmanians still being asked to take so much on trust, take so much on faith?

This debate is about much more than Wilkinsons Point. It is about standards of government. It is about all the concerns that were raised in the other place just last week. It is about honesty, it is about transparency, it is about accountability and it is about whether due process matters. It is about whether the people of Tasmania can have confidence that public

assets are being managed in their interests rather than according to the preferences of the government of the day.

Almost seven years after this process began, there is still no completed deal, there are still unanswered questions, there are still concerns raised by the Auditor-General, there is still a lack of transparency, and there is still no evidence that alternative options have ever been properly considered or tested.

The Premier now faces a choice. He can continue down the path of secrecy, exclusivity and endless negotiations, or he can finally provide Tasmanians with the transparency they deserve. Release the advice, release the costs, release the risks, release the protections, consult with the community on what is being traded as part of the deal. Or test the market. Ultimately, the Premier must demonstrate with evidence, rather than rhetoric, that any proposed sale is genuinely in the best interests of Tasmania because public assets belong to the people of Tasmania, not to the government of the day, not to the Premier, and certainly not to any preferred proponent. The people of Tasmania deserve transparency, they deserve accountability and due process.

Tasmanians are entitled to know whether this proposal genuinely represents the best outcome for the sale and development of valuable public land at Wilkinsons Point. They are entitled to know why, after all this time, the government continues to negotiate exclusively with a single proponent. They are entitled to know what costs they will bear, what risks they will carry, and what protections exist if the development does not proceed as promised.

Accordingly, I call on the Premier to do five things:

- (1) To explain why the government continues to pursue an open-ended, exclusive negotiation process more than six years after acquiring the site, and to identify the timeframe within which a final decision will be made.
- (2) To release the key advice underpinning the government's approach to the proposed sale of land at Wilkinsons Point, including advice relating to risks, liabilities, taxpayer costs and alternative disposal options.
- (3) To publicly disclose the full extent of any taxpayer-funded infrastructure, remediation, site preparation, and other commitments associated with the deal being negotiated, as well as any other development guarantees and any other protections being negotiated for taxpayers.
- (4) If the government cannot clearly demonstrate that continuing exclusive negotiations remain in the best interest of Tasmanians, I call on the Premier to pause the current process and undertake an open, transparent, and competitive process for the future sale and development of this significant public asset.
- (5) To correct the public record regarding the role of Glenorchy City Council in this matter. The documentary evidence clearly demonstrates that while council initiated discussions regarding the proposal, council's exclusive negotiation process was time limited and subject to specific parameters. It also demonstrates that the proposal for the state government to purchase the assets and continue negotiations with LK Group originated with the state government. The Premier

should acknowledge that the government's current approach is not simply a continuation of council's process, but the result of decisions made by successive state governments over many years.

This is not about opposing development. It is not about opposing investment. It is not about opposing LK Group. It is about ensuring that public assets are managed in the public interest. The people of Tasmania are entitled to transparency, they're entitled to accountability and to due process, and after almost seven years, they're entitled to the truth about how we arrived at this point and whether the path the government continues to pursue is genuinely the best one for Tasmania.

Mr President, I thank you and members for allowing this matter of public importance to be debated today. Given the government's apparent determination to continue exclusive negotiations with LK Group on the sale of land at Wilkinsons Point, despite all the concerns raised regarding the costs, risks, terms, and lack of accountability and transparency, it is both appropriate and necessary for this House to consider this matter today. I welcome contributions from other members.

[11.29 a.m.]

Ms LOVELL (Rumney) - Thank you, Mr President. I rise to contribute to this matter of public importance concerning Wilkinsons Point. I want to begin by acknowledging and thanking the member for Elwick not only for bringing this matter forward today, but for her sustained interest in this matter and her tenacity in pursuing it. As members would know, matters of public importance are not something we debate often or lightly in this place. In fact in my nine years here, I can't remember another matter of public importance that we have debated. I hope that highlights for the government how important this is and the level of seriousness that this issue is attracting.

The Public Accounts Committee has also been examining this matter for some time. Labor has repeatedly questioned the Premier about it in the other place as recently as last week, and it has rightly attracted significant public scrutiny.

At the outset, I want to make Labor's position very clear. We support development at Wilkinsons Point. We want to see investment. I think all of us would like to see investment. All of us would want to see jobs brought to Tasmania. We want to see underused public land put to productive use in a way that benefits the community.

But as the member for Elwick has so rightly pointed out this morning, supporting development does not mean abandoning good process. It does not mean ignoring advice. It does not mean exposing taxpayers to risk. It certainly doesn't mean selling valuable public land behind closed doors without testing the market. That is the real issue before the parliament today; this is Crown land we're talking about. This is land that belongs to Tasmanians, and I have to say I'm a little surprised and disappointed that the minister responsible for Crown land has made the decision to not be in the Chamber to hear this debate today because I would have thought -

Ms O'Connor - Couldn't be bothered.

Ms LOVELL - I would have thought it was something he should be interested in and might like to hear what his colleagues think about this matter.

The government is dealing with a public asset that belongs to Tasmanians and that means a higher standard should apply than if the Premier was just doing something like selling off part of his farm to a friend from Melbourne. This land must be handled transparently, competitively and in the public interest. The Premier has repeatedly tried to suggest this all began with Glenorchy City Council and that the state government is simply continuing a process that was already underway.

And, as we've heard from the member for Elwick this morning, Glenorchy City Council entered into a time-limited exclusive negotiation process with LK Group in 2019 and that period was 120 days. The state government then made its own decision to continue exclusive negotiations after it purchased the site. It's the state government that is responsible for whether this land is sold, for how it is sold and for whether Tasmanians get value for money. The Premier cannot outsource responsibility for his own government's decisions. We've seen him try to do this before; I'm sure we will see him try to do it again, but he cannot do that.

The facts are very serious. The Auditor-General has found significant shortcomings in the advice and process around this proposed sale. The Department of State Growth advised the government to stop negotiations and to test the open market. That advice also warned that activating the site could expose taxpayers to around \$100 million worth of risk, with no certainty of development and no guarantee of contribution from LK Group. That advice was provided to the Premier's office in a briefing note.

Despite that advice, the government is still negotiating exclusively with the billionaire from the mainland. There is no final sale agreement. There is no settled price. There are unresolved questions about infrastructure costs, site preparation costs, planning changes, rezoning and value uplift. There is still no clear explanation from the Premier about why an open and competitive process has not been undertaken. That is the central question.

As the member for Elwick also said this morning, if this is such a good deal for Tasmania, why is the Premier so determined to avoid the open market? If the opportunity is as strong as he says, why not test it? Why not let all potential proponents put forward their best offer? Why not make sure Tasmanians receive the best possible value for their land?

Instead, after 13 years of Liberal waste, Tasmanians are watching another deal unfold behind closed doors, with taxpayers potentially carrying the risk and a billionaire potentially receiving the benefit. Labor asked the Premier about this last week in the other place. There are very serious questions about potential rezoning. Wilkinsons Point has previously been valued at around \$6 million under its current recreational zoning. Labor asked the Premier whether the government is actively exploring rezoning the land and whether modelling has been done on new valuations for the land. Why does that matter? Because if the land is sold at one value and then rezoned or activated with infrastructure investment at taxpayers' expense, that uplift could be worth tens of millions of dollars.

LK Group could buy the land, have it rezoned or activated, sit on it and then sell it again for many times the value. That value belongs to Tasmanians. It should not be handed away through a closed negotiation. The Premier has been asked to rule out selling the land unless any zoning uplift is independently valued and fully returned to taxpayers, but he has not given that guarantee. He has talked about opportunity, he's talked about jobs, he's talked about aspiration, but he has not answered the basic question, will Tasmanians receive the full value of their land?

Labor's position is clear. If there is any zoning uplift, planning uplift or value created through taxpayer-funded activation of the site, Tasmanians should receive the full value of that. No discounts for billionaires. The Premier has also said there will be guardrails. That is not enough. What are the guardrails? Will they prevent land banking? Will they require development milestones? Will they guarantee taxpayer value if the land is rezoned? Will they protect Tasmanians from carrying infrastructure costs that should properly sit with the proponent? Will they ensure the land comes back to the public if the promised development does not happen? These are not unreasonable questions. They are the minimum questions any responsible government should answer before disposing of valuable public land.

This issue must also be viewed in the context of the MyState Bank Arena lease. The information now before the parliament shows base rent of around \$200,000 per year, with the government contributing around \$175,000 per year for community access. That's a net return of \$25,000 per year. That is less than the median rent for a home here in Hobart. The government also remains responsible for building insurance and other major capital works.

The government is entitled to 20 per cent of turnover above a set threshold, but it will not say what those thresholds are or what the returns have been in recent years. The Premier disputed the characterisation of this in Question Time in the other place, but the documents speak for themselves. At the very least, these arrangements show why the parliament is right to scrutinise the government's dealings at Wilkinsons Point. Tasmanians deserve confidence that public assets are being managed carefully. They deserve confidence that taxpayers are not being left with the costs while billionaires receive the benefits. They deserve confidence that when valuable land is sold, it is sold transparently, competitively and in the public interest.

This is not about criticising one private proponent. It's not about opposing development. It is about the conduct of this government. It is about whether the Premier has met the standards of transparency, accountability and due process that Tasmanians expect and deserve. The Premier's answer appears to be 'trust me', but haven't we heard that before, and hasn't it been proven over and over again that we can't? We've heard again today from the member for Elwick why we can't trust the Premier on this, backed by evidence. It's not good enough when dealing with valuable public land for the Premier to just expect us all to trust him, and it's certainly not good enough from this Premier given his track record.

After 13 years of Liberal waste, Tasmanians cannot afford another secret deal where taxpayers carry the risk and a billionaire gets the benefit. If this proposal is genuinely in Tasmania's best interest, it will withstand scrutiny. If it is the best deal, it will survive a competitive process. If it cannot survive transparency, then Tasmanians are entitled to ask why the Premier is so determined to push ahead behind closed doors. The government should take Wilkinsons Point to the open market. That is the best way to protect taxpayers and it's the best way to make sure Tasmanians receive full value for their land.

I want to again thank the member for Elwick for bringing this matter of public importance before us today. This should give Tasmanians confidence that while the Premier might prefer to operate behind closed doors, the parliament will not allow it.

Recognition of Visitors

Mr PRESIDENT - As the member for Hobart makes her way to the lectern, I'd like to welcome to the Legislative Council this morning grade 6 students from Lenah Valley Primary School. We're currently debating a matter of public importance, and all the members of the Council will get to have a say. I think Lenah Valley is in the Hobart electorate?

Ms Thomas - Elwick.

Ms O'Connor - It sits right on the boundary, I think.

Mr PRESIDENT - This is a motion that's been raised by the member for Elwick, who is your local representative. Welcome to the Chamber and I'm sure all members will join me in making you feel welcome today.

Members - Hear, hear.

Ms Thomas - I am sure many of the students live across both of our electorates, member for Hobart.

Ms O'Connor - That's right. I'm absolutely sure that there'd be many residents of the beautiful electorate of Hobart in here today.

[11.40 a.m.]

Ms O'CONNOR (Hobart) - Mr President, I also want to thank the member for Elwick for bringing on this debate and for exercising the opportunity that we have in the Standing Orders to have a debate on a matter of public importance.

Trading in Crown land secretly and not honestly answering legitimate questions is a matter of public importance. I believe we should be having more of these debates in the Legislative Council. There is no doubt about it: the proposed sale of Wilkinsons Point, the process for what it is, of negotiation around Wilkinsons Point, is a matter of very significant public interest and unease and uncertainty about what exactly the government is up to.

I listened very carefully to the excellent contributions of the members for Elwick and Rumney, and they ask all the right questions. They're questions that we don't yet have sufficient answers to, and the problem that we have here now is a Premier who has lost the trust, not only of the electorate, I think, but of a lot of people in this place.

We all, to one degree or another, watched events unfolding downstairs last week, and we saw a Premier and a government suffering from a crisis in integrity. Two ministers who were not honest with the parliament fell, lost their jobs, and we have the Premier, who ended the week before the recess, subject to an unprecedented censure motion brought on by the Greens. So, little wonder that there is an absence of trust in this Premier.

We're not talking about any old asset; we're talking about Crown land, land that belongs to the Palawa people, that belongs to the people of Tasmania, and there's just no question that there has been an absence of accountability, openness and transparency for nigh on seven years

now about the state government's dealings with the LK Group, so it is unarguable that the Premier and the government on this issue, as with so many issues, have failed the test of transparency, accountability and open government.

The issue, though, is when you have a look at the *Hansard* from last week, the Premier just doesn't see the problem. He doesn't see the problem. The Leader of the Opposition, Mr Willie, asked some very good questions on this topic over the course of Question Time, and you can just tell from the Premier's answer that he is blithely unaware, oblivious to why this might be a problem: six, seven years of secret dealing over a prime piece of Crown land that could deliver so much to the people of Greater Hobart and Tasmania.

Mr President, I will just take you to some of his answers. I mean, Mr Willie rightly observed that the Premier is a pushover. When developers walk in the door, the Premier certainly gives them a hearing and usually gives them whatever they want. So, when Mr Willie asked:

If it's such a good deal, Premier, why are you so determined to avoid an open competitive process?

The Premier says:

Because we had an agreement - the wishes of the Glenorchy City Council - the member for Elwick, both through documents and her contribution, has demolished that - ... and I will not renege on that agreement.

It's an agreement that's being made without reference to the Tasmanian people. The Premier goes on to say:

I see opportunity, which happens to be a half-a-billion-dollar opportunity of investment in an area that has been underdeveloped for decades.

Well, how do we know whether it's half-a-billion-dollar opportunity for investment, because as we do know, there's been no testing of the market, no open and competitive tender process for one of the finest pieces of Crown land in Greater Hobart?

Mr Willie persisted. He said:

In response to a question I asked you in Estimates about potential zoning changes, you said the government is looking at the best way to activate the precinct. Can you confirm you are considering zoning changes, planning scheme amendments or Crown land changes while the Wilkinsons Point land is considered for sale to the LK Group?

The Premier fudged around that answer. I don't want to say he was pretending he didn't know, but it reads like he was buying some time. He says:

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I thank the honourable member for the question. I'm happy to provide further detail for you. I understand there is work in terms of appropriate zoning for the site, but I will follow that up and provide the answer for you.

Mr Willie goes:

Is that a commitment to release all of the advice you receive, Premier?

Mr Rockliff responded:

I will seek advice on what I can release, but what I am committed to is opportunity, growth and a way forward for this state to ensure that our young people want to stay here, grow up here, live here, raise their families here and invest in this wonderful state of Tasmania.

Cliche after cliche after cliche, and no transparency whatsoever. It was pointed out to the Premier that any rezoning, of course, could lead to a massive windfall gain for the developer, LK Group. The Premier goes:

I thank the honourable member for the question. I've answered a number of these matters over a long period of time because I see opportunity and I want to progress that opportunity as thoroughly as possible in the best interests of the Tasmanian taxpayer.

I will just pause there for a moment. How would we know? What the Premier is expecting us to do here is to take him on trust; and, as we know, trust has been severely eroded in this Premier. He said:

As I've said before, I've been in this place almost 24 years and nothing has happened with that site - nothing, zero - over successive governments. What I'm doing -

I, I, I:

... is ensuring that agreements made by my predecessors can give the best chance.

What we've established here is numerous unknown unknowns but, almost certainly, public funds will be further expended on rezoning and site preparatory works should this negotiation proceed to a final deal. How does that come out? Through, again, the processes of this place; nothing that was volunteered by the Premier. It's like extracting teeth one by one: one Estimates hearing, one Question Time. This Premier does not openly volunteer information about trading in public land and the use of public money to achieve what is arguably, in this context for that site, a political objective.

I'm not going to make a particularly long contribution on this matter of public importance. I think it has all been really well said so far; but I do want to point out that we have a history here, in Tasmania, where governments are pushovers to vested interests. I'm in this place because a developer called Walker Corporation, under a previous Labor government, swanned into the premier's office and said, 'Hey, see that conservation area over there on the eastern

shore? I've got a plan for a Gold Coast-style canal estate there; can I have it?' And the government of the day said, 'Leave it with us'. They did everything that they could to trade away, to shrink, a conservation area that is a critical habitat for migratory birds, apart from a place that is beloved for people who live on or around the South Arm Peninsula. No transparency: just a developer, the white-shoe brigade, walking into a government office and getting what they want. Well, the community, of which I was a part, defeated that proposal, and in significant part because we had friends all over politics: Liberal, Labor, Greens, Independents, local government, state parliament, federal parliament. We had friends because plenty of people recognised that was a major wrong.

We have a process, without mandate, of attempting to divest the Treasury Building, one of the most beautiful heritage precincts in the state, a central place in our history, the centre of the colonial administration of the state of Tasmania. At least that process is going through some kind of notionally open process - although you can't get any information on who's putting in expressions of interest. But, again, it's a major public asset, not tested at an election, and now it's up for either long-term lease or sale. It belongs to the people of Tasmania, who've never been given a say.

Of course, I cannot let the moment pass without acknowledging the role of Gil McLachlan in shafting this island. When he walked into the premier's office here under premier Gutwein, I believe it was three or four years ago, and said, 'See that place down there on the waterfront? If you want your team, that's where you're going to put your stadium.' And the government of the day, behind closed doors up on the 11th floor, said, 'Sure, no worries.' And Gil said, 'and you will pay for it, all of it pretty much.' Premier Rockliff: 'Sure,' he said. And there was a vote on that project without the true risks and ultimate costs being known.

Then we have the extraordinary secret dealings between this government and Firmus Group. Oliver Curtis, who is the senior operator in the Firmus Group, was sent to jail 10 years ago for two years for insider trading, for fraud. The same Oliver Curtis walks into the 11th floor, or wherever the meeting was, during a recent state election campaign, I think it was the 2024 election campaign. He said, 'I want to build data centres here. I will need cheap power, lots of it and plenty of clean, drinkable water', which you need lots of for data centres because they run hot. And what do we have now? Three planned Firmus data centres in the state, St Leonards, the old Tamar site and up at Wesley Vale. And it was only through a process, actually of Greens questions in Estimates the week before last, that we found out what a massive power draw those three data centres would be: 400 megawatts of power for three data centres that are being negotiated and effectively approved without any adequate regulatory or legislative framework, a planning scheme framework, for these very large, very resource-intensive, and arguably unpopular, developments.

But it's the same thing where someone with a lot of cash goes and sees the Premier, Treasurer or minister for State Growth or the minister for Resources and says, 'I have all this money and I want that.' And this government, as Mr Willie observed last week in parliament, is absolutely a pushover for that sort of thing.

Now it's impossible to know, because of the lack of transparency, whether there's been improper dealings over Wilkinsons Point. It is impossible to know. It is possible to know that the Auditor-General found very significant issues with Wilkinsons Point. He says in his report in September last year:

I found significant shortcomings in advice and process. Failures that State entities must address to maintain public trust. The failures started with not adequately defining scope, risks and State-funded costs of the individual projects that made up the proposal.

Due to a restriction placed on my access to Cabinet documents however, I was unable to assess the quality of advice provided to Cabinet or whether State Growth's implementation of Government decisions was consistent with the parameters set. This restriction results in such investigations not being able to provide a full picture to the Tasmanian Parliament.

He continues:

It is unfortunate that the creation of JackJumpers is related to this investigation by being part of the proposal. The team's success since the 2021-22 NBL season speaks for itself. Its creation has also resulted in wider benefits, such as jobs and volunteer opportunities, and increased participation in basketball.

He concludes in his opening statement:

When our State entities use appropriate processes to support and implement Government decisions, they not only manage risk, but ensure [that] positive outcomes to Tasmania receive appropriate recognition. This has not occurred in relation to the proposed sale of Wilkinsons Point land.

I feel the need to say, in noting the Auditor-General's report, that in this last state Budget, the Auditor-General had his office's funding cut. Given the quality of the work that comes out of the Auditor-General's office and what it tells us about the administration of state entities and agencies and arguable maladministration from time to time, it is not difficult to understand why this government might feel antagonistic towards the Auditor-General. We should all be very grateful on behalf of the people we represent for the work of the Auditor-General. We should not let the government off the hook for what seems to be punitive action towards the watchdog.

There was a statement, as I understand it from the Treasurer, that if the Auditor-General wants a bit of extra funding in order to be able to complete his work plan, he just needs to ask the government for some money. Actually, he did that in his pre-budget submission and was effectively - as we established in Committee A Estimates a couple of weeks ago - told to choof off.

In closing, this is most certainly a matter of public importance. This Council has an opportunity to send a really clear message to the government that the process around Wilkinsons Point, the complete lack of transparency, the uncertainty about public benefit, the uncertainty about what it will cost the people of Tasmania, are unanswered questions. It is simply not good enough for this Premier, who was censured for not being trustworthy, to tell us to trust him on these issues. It's pretty clear that enough of us in here don't. We should be thankful for the member for Elwick's tenacity on this issue, for making sure it's raised in the Public Accounts Committee and in this place. We should also be thankful to the Labor opposition last week for putting the spotlight on the Premier over this issue, because it is

ultimately our job in here to defend and protect the public interest. There are so many questions about whether this proposed arrangement is in the public interest - unanswered questions.

I hope that the government responds to this matter of public importance debate. I hope somewhere in the building the minister responsible for Crown lands, who is not in the Chamber now, is paying attention to this debate. He has been absent from the Chamber for the duration of this debate.

Ms Thomas - Shame.

Ms O'CONNOR - Shame. It is not good enough. It speaks of an arrogance and a dismissal of the community concern that we are in here expressing.

I commend the sentiment of the matter of public importance that we debate today.

[12.00 p.m.]

Ms WEBB (Nelson) - Mr President, I rise to speak on this matter of public importance and thank the member for Elwick for bringing it and the opportunity for us to discuss it in the Chamber today. It is unusual. I haven't experienced a matter of public importance in this format in this Chamber in my time here. Now that we've let the genie out of the bottle, who knows?

Won't it be interesting to see - because there's an important context here. The context is this is parliament doing its job. This is parliament, on behalf of the Tasmanian people who each of us represent, doing its job in holding the executive government of the day to account. That's exactly what we're here for. It's precisely what's expected of us by those who put us here. It's simply not good enough that we find ourselves in a situation where we have to go to the nth degree, to the extremes of our processes, to try to do this job properly in the face of a government that obstinately refuses to openly be accountable for itself to the Tasmanian people. It's just not good enough, quite frankly. I'm glad that we're here speaking about it today. I thank the member for Elwick for bringing it. I thank the members for Rumney and Hobart for their substantial contributions and comments made in support of this motion.

I'm not, in my contribution, going to go into a great deal of detail on the particulars of the Wilkinsons Point matter, because it's not one that I'm intimately familiar with in the same way that the member for Elwick is - it's in her patch, she's on the PAC, which has been looking at this closely. I appreciate the information that she has drawn our attention to, and it's disturbing. I'm going to speak in a general sense about that because I think it's incumbent on us. When matters about good governance, when matters about decision-making in the public interest, when matters about the honesty of government are brought to our attention, we should give due attention to them, and we should do everything in our power to hold the government of the day to account for them.

On this, I'm highly disturbed that we have an absolute exemplar illustration of what looks like poor governance, unaccountable decision-making and a dishonest government. That's what Wilkinsons Point looks like at this point in time. It's the Premier, as leader of his government, and his refusal to properly answer questions on this, who is allowing this perception to be there and to continue into the future. That's simply not good enough. That is not leadership. That is not in the public interest, and it is entirely unbecoming of a premier of this state to act in this way.

When I think about good governance and appropriate, accountable decision-making, we have to think about what's required for that. The fundamental building blocks of that are openness and transparency. It's being prepared to provide information in the public domain in a way that can be examined and questioned. It's being prepared to answer questions openly and honestly when they're put to you. It's certainly not refusing to fully give, for example, information to one of our integrity entities, our Auditor-General, when he's investigating the arrangements around a particular decision and a particular policy direction the government is taking.

I'm highly concerned that when the Auditor-General looked at this situation around the Wilkinsons Point decision-making process and development process, the Auditor-General identified not just one or two but numerous instances of questionable process and of questionable accountability around decision-making being undertaken. One of the reasons there were those questions hanging over it all is because the Auditor-General could not access information that would allow him to properly assess the full circumstances of this process and this decision-making.

Ms O'Connor - He was denied access.

Ms WEBB - He was denied access by this government, by this Premier. That is absolutely shocking. It should be in a democracy. It should be from a government who absolutely, two-facedly calls themselves the most transparent government of this state. Absolute rubbish. It's proven over and over again. As observed by the member for Hobart, and it has been commented here in this place many times, this government is only brought to accountability, is only prepared to be open or transparent with information when it is forced to be so; when this parliament and those in it who relentlessly pursue integrity around good governance and decision-making force them to actually put information into the public domain, to be open and accountable, even then it's done reluctantly and even then they'll do it to the least extent they can get away with. That's simply not good enough.

I'm disturbed that the Auditor-General's report highlights all these numerous potential failings around this process to do with Wilkinsons Point. As the member for Hobart said, it's impossible for us to know if there have been improper dealings. If the government can't demonstrate that there haven't been, then I think we have to assume that there may have been. There is no other conclusion we can come to, and that's unacceptable.

So many Tasmanians in recent years have rightly been asking themselves of this parliament, why on earth did no-one pick up the fact, for example, on another project to do with some ships, some boats, why did no-one figure out that there wasn't somewhere for them to dock that was being built appropriately and in time, in the right position, et cetera?

Why didn't that come to light? Well, part of the reason that didn't necessarily come to light, I would say - because we all have to take some responsibility here - is that this parliament didn't interrogate that process, that project, that decision-making sufficiently. I believe everybody in this parliament does not want to see a repeat of that circumstance. Because while, first and foremost, it was an utter failure of the government of the day, the ministers who were the responsible ministers - and the GBEs who were responsible, yes, of course, first and foremost it was their failure - it was also a failure of this parliament, because we do conduct GBE scrutiny hearings, we do conduct Budget Estimates hearings, we do have mechanisms available in this place to scrutinise decision-making.

But one of the things that is absolutely essential for us being able to do our job, the job that Tasmanians put us here to do, is information being provided into the public domain openly and transparently about accountable decision-making. A government that refuses to provide information in that way is preventing the parliament from doing its job. It's preventing the Tasmanian people from being able to trust the good governance and decisions that are being made on their behalf. That's a government that's working against the Tasmanian people. That's a government that's working against the public interest. We of course have to ask ourselves, in whose interests is this government working? When we have to ask ourselves that, inevitably it raises a few possibilities.

It raises the possibility that first and foremost this government, and I have no doubt about this, is working in its own interests, its own political interests. It will do, it will twist, it will turn, it will turn itself in knots to not be held accountable for bad decisions, for self-interested decisions and for decisions made in the interests of vested interests. In doing that, it will try to get out of providing information into the public domain, it will mischaracterise things that have happened, processes that have occurred. It will do everything in its power to gaslight us in this place and in the Tasmanian community regarding its actions. So, political self-interest, I think, absolutely is right up there.

But then we also have to ask: if it's not public interest being served and it cannot be demonstrated that public interest is being served, who else's interests? The member for Hobart, in her contribution, alluded to this. We have seen time after time that it looks like this is the flavour of government that will bend over basically for vested interests who come to them asking for special deals and special favours and that is writ large, potentially, here. Unless the government starts to provide accountable, open information about this, we can conclude nothing else: that this is delivering for vested interests a special deal yet again.

I believe the honesty of government is something that many Tasmanians are despairing about at the moment and many in this place are despairing about. This is absolutely not just about a lack of candour, which we do see consistently from this government, but it's also about how, in the face of being asked to provide information or explanation, this government twists and turns, mischaracterises, gaslights, avoids and then pretends we're the ones who have some sort of issue because we don't understand what's going on.

Well, in this case, I believe we can see exactly what's going on. This is a government that is prepared to mischaracterise a situation that began with the Glenorchy City Council but certainly did not end with the Glenorchy City Council. The government has been in charge of this process for years now and cannot blame the council for it, or suggest that the council had locked it into some sort of six-year-long process here. It's entirely up to the government to progress this, and it looks like they're progressing it - not in the public interest, but certainly in somebody's interests, and potentially in the interests of the billionaire developer who has been working with them behind closed doors on it. We don't know.

Again, it's worth probably me stating here, on the record, as others have done quite clearly, I'm not opposed to development at Wilkinsons Point at all. I'm not opposed to it, but I am opposed to it, because it's Crown land, because it belongs to the people of Tasmania and it's a very, I would imagine, valuable and unique piece of Crown land belonging to the people of Tasmania. It should only be progressed when it can be overtly demonstrated that we can get the best possible deal out of that piece of land for the benefit of the Tasmanian people - not for the benefit of this government, not for the benefit of any billionaire developer, but for the

Tasmanian people. That most certainly is not the case when we look at it here and now on the information we've had made available to us.

It has come up in this context around the Auditor-General because the Auditor-General did an excellent piece of work looking at this decision-making process and these arrangements, raising numerous concerns and failings. It does, of course, come at a time, as the member for Hobart and others have said, that we have seen the Auditor-General's office have a cut in funding. This is our independent integrity body, the Auditor-General, who looks to work for this parliament, essentially, by providing expert advice and information via their auditing functions, both the financial auditing and the performance auditing. The information provided in the reports from the Auditor-General's office are for the benefit of this parliament and ultimately for the benefit of the Tasmanian people, and when the work of that office is curbed by a government that deliberately decides to cut its funding, you have to ask yourself whose interests are being served, because it's not the Tasmanian people's interests, it's not this parliament's interests, it most certainly only looks like the government's political self-interest that's being served there.

What it cannot but do is reduce scrutiny on the government of the day. To cut the budget of the Auditor-General and then, to not even be honest enough to say, 'Yes, that's what we did. We cut the funding', to then turn around and try to pretend that the Auditor-General's office has been growing in recent years by, talking just today in the media reports, trying to assert the Auditor-General's head count has in fact grown and mischaracterising that situation badly by not putting context around it.

Just for the record, what we heard this morning when we were briefed on the Auditor-General's annual plan is that, yes, in recent years the staffing headcount in the Auditor-General's office has increased. That is because there has been a distinct decision made over the last couple of years to reduce the use of external consultants, particularly mainland consultants, and to staff internally the capacity to undertake the work of that office. So, instead of buying in, at great cost and potentially less efficiency and effectiveness, work from external to the office to do its auditing works, it's now staffing and resourcing that internally. An increase in headcount in recent years, then, does not equal an increase in resources for the office. It indicates a distinct policy decision within that office to build capacity internally and to staff internally for its work. So, for the government to be out in the media trying to pretend that an increase in headcount in that office is somehow counter to the fact that they have cut its funding is - it's worse than disingenuous, disingenuous goes nowhere close.

Ms O'Connor - It just says it all.

Ms WEBB - It says it all because it says that this government is prepared to get out there and spin and twist and turn and try to put out a misleading, mischaracterising narrative to its own benefit at any point in time that it can.

This is a line-in-the-sand moment. I'm really pleased that the member for Elwick has given us the opportunity to talk about this here today, because we are seeing a pattern of behaviour. The member for Hobart mentioned also the Treasury Building, another important publicly held asset that is also being, it would appear, disposed of. Again, it would appear with a slightly more open process around it, but there is still plenty we don't know about that.

Ms O'Connor - There's a process - can't get any information out of it.

Ms WEBB - I don't believe there has been any sufficient community conversation about whether the Tasmanian people wish to see that public asset disposed of and in what way. There certainly hasn't been a distinct policy taken to an election overtly for the people to have a say on that.

I believe we have to ask ourselves at every turn what we can do in this place, within our role, to hold the government to account, particularly on matters of public interest and particularly on matters that relate to the disposal of public land or public assets. When we dispose of a piece of public land or a public asset, it is gone. It is done. It is a final decision. We're not going to get it back. So, there has to be absolute assurance around that, that we have seen good governance, accountable decision-making, honesty from the government and an absolutely overt demonstration that public interest is being served. Anything less is unacceptable.

I don't know where to from here on the Wilkinsons Point matter. I don't know whether the debate here today on this matter of public importance will have any sway whatsoever on the government, on the Premier, on the minister, who's not in the Chamber but, potentially, to be fair, may be listening from elsewhere. I hope he is. Perhaps he's gone back to his office to listen to it there rather than be here in the Chamber. But we can't see him doing that. He's not here responding to it. What a shame.

I don't know whether the government is intending to make a response to this matter of public importance, but shame on them if they don't because, quite frankly, that's what this parliament is here for. It is to hold the government to account. The executive government of the day is answerable to this parliament. Parliament is supreme over it, and this is, I believe, time for the government to sit up and take notice. Because on this matter of public importance, which is absolutely unusual in this place, I think we can take this to be the first of perhaps a series of ways in which this parliament and this Chamber are more active in their role of holding the government to account.

If the government does not respond openly and accountably to these sorts of efforts, the only thing to do is for these efforts to escalate, and for this parliament to be even more active in undertaking its role. The government should be on notice of that, quite frankly, and I would have thought given its experience in the other place in recent weeks, that this is now an additional clear message: it's time for this government to be open, honest and accountable to the Tasmanian people, and to this parliament on the Tasmanian people's behalf.

Thank you, member for Elwick, for this MPI. We will see what becomes of this mechanism. It might be one we become more familiar with in this place, but I'm hoping that the next person to stand up is going to be someone on behalf of the government. Let's wait and see, shall we?

[12.20 p.m.]

Ms RATTRAY (McIntyre - Leader for the Government in the Legislative Council) - Mr President, I thank all honourable members who have made a contribution, and particularly acknowledge the member for Elwick for her efforts and continued advocacy around this matter. I've certainly seen her on the TV, on social media, other media outlets and her advocacy in this place. I want to acknowledge that.

Questions about the use of public land, the management of public assets, the transparency of government decision-making and the protection of value for Tasmanian taxpayers are entirely legitimate. They are also matters currently before the Public Accounts Committee, and that has been mentioned a number of times through contributions as well, which has taken public evidence, published transcripts and received a significant volume of documentation. The government respects that process.

The Premier has appeared before the committee alongside senior officials from the Department of Premier and Cabinet (DPAC) and the Department of State Growth (DSG). The government has also cooperated with the Auditor-General's review and accepted the need for improvements in the way complex land transactions of this kind are managed. I also attended part of the Auditor-General's briefing this morning and took note of what was provided to those who attended. The government certainly thinks it's important that the Chamber recognises the PAC process underway. That is the first and most important point.

No Crown land at Wilkinsons Point has been sold. There is no final binding land sale agreement. The parties have not settled on a final master plan. The Crown continues to own Wilkinsons Point, including MyState Bank Arena. The government's position is that any future decision must be made in the public interest and must protect the Crown's interest.

The second point to make is about the history of this matter. Wilkinsons Point is not a simple or ordinary land transaction; it sits within a broader sequence of events that involved the former Derwent Entertainment Centre, the establishment of Tasmania's NBL team, the upgrade and ongoing operations of MyState Bank Arena and the longstanding ambition to activate a strategically important waterfront site in Glenorchy. The history is complex, but the basic context is this: the Glenorchy City Council had been considering the future of the Derwent Entertainment Centre and the surrounding land. In 2019, council resolved to enter into exclusive negotiations with the LK Group, acknowledging the time-limited negotiations, and that has been outlined by the honourable member for Elwick. The state then became involved, as a former premier sought to achieve positive outcomes for the state: redeveloping the arena, the establishment of the JackJumpers and the future development of the precinct.

It is fair to say that the state made important policy decisions through that period, including the decision that public ownership of the Derwent Entertainment Centre would be required if public funds were to be invested in its upgrade. This is not a case of whether the state was simply passive; the state made decisions. Successive premiers and successive governments progressed elements of this proposal, but it is equally important to acknowledge the state's involvement occurred in the context of what the ambitions of the Glenorchy City Council were and where a number of related agreements were already put in place. The government did see eye to eye in wanting the precinct developed; those agreements helped deliver the upgrade of the arena and the establishment of the JackJumpers.

Whatever view members take about the future land sale question, it is difficult to deny that the JackJumpers have been a significant success for Tasmania. They have brought people together across the state, increased participation and interest in basketball and helped activate a major public venue that had been underutilised for a long time. That has been acknowledged by the honourable member for Elwick in her contribution.

The motion also raises the length of time over which negotiations have continued, and the Premier has acknowledged publicly that progress has not been fast enough. There have

been changes in the project over time and there have been changes in infrastructure priorities, including ferry terminal planning, and there have been changes relating to community facilities and high-performance sporting facilities. There have also been disruptions and pressure of the COVID-19 period, which affected normal government processes and priorities. It helps explain why this has not been a straight line from proposals to a final agreement. Again, Mr Premier - Mr President, I'm not sure that that's an elevation or not, but -

Mr PRESIDENT - I won't make a comment.

Ms RATTRAY - the Premier has fronted the Public Accounts Committee and answered questions about those decisions. The committee will no doubt report in due course and the government will consider - will consider - any findings or recommendations carefully. The government wants to address the question of value for money and public risk, and this is plainly one of the central issues. There has been public discussion about potential infrastructure costs - site preparation costs, ferry infrastructure, road access, parking services, and other enabling works.

This means clear allocation of responsibilities between the Crown and the proponent: it means retaining the public assets and land that need to remain in public hands; it means ensuring MyState Bank Arena remains in public ownership; it means sufficient Crown land remains available for the current and future needs of the arena; it means protecting public access and amenities; and it means futureproofing transport corridors, including access to the ferry terminal, park-and-ride or park-and-sail facilities, Loyd Road, and any long-term requirements related to the Brooker Highway. Where shared or common-use infrastructure is required, the government must consider that carefully. There may be public infrastructure that has a broader public purpose, such as ferry access, transport connectivity, or services that support public use of the precinct. This is more important given the now huge opportunity with Dowsing Point. The federal government sees this opportunity and is embracing it, and the state should too.

The motion also refers to lease arrangements for MyState Bank Arena. The Premier was asked questions about those matters in the other place last week, and that also has been referred to in previous contributions. The Premier indicated that there are performance components and community-use arrangements and that further details could be provided. I also note that the Public Accounts Committee has asked a series of questions on this, too. Where members have questions about the lease, those questions can, and should be, answered through the appropriate processes, including briefings, questions on notice, and the Public Accounts Committee process. I express to all honourable members that they can always send questions through to the Leader's office and I will do my best to have those questions answered.

Ms Thomas - I have them ready for this afternoon.

Ms RATTRAY - Sorry?

Ms Thomas - I have them ready to table this afternoon.

Ms RATTRAY - There you go. I only have to ask and I receive.

Ms Webb - Putting questions is easy; getting answers is the hard part.

Ms RATTRAY - I've made the offer. At the centre of this debate is a balance. On one hand, Wilkinsons Point is a significant public asset, albeit recently transferred to the Crown. It is a riverfront site. It is in public ownership. It has potential transport, recreation, event and economic development importance and the community is entitled to expect it will not be disposed of lightly.

On the other hand, it is also a site that has been underutilised for many years, and that point has been made a number of times. Successive governments and councils have looked for ways to activate it.

The current proposal, if it proceeds, could deliver substantial private investment, jobs during construction and opportunities for local suppliers, and broaden activation of Hobart's northern suburbs. These potential benefits are real, but they do not remove the need for proper process.

The government's task is to ensure that any development opportunity is tested against the public interest, not simply against the desire to see something happen on the site. That is why additional governance safeguards have been put in place and why negotiations remain ongoing rather than concluded. That is why no final land sale agreement has been executed.

The government understands why members want transparency and it understands why the community wants assurance. The government's assurance to the Chamber is this: no land has been sold, no binding sale agreement exists. The MyState Bank Arena will remain in public ownership. Land required for public access, transport, ferry infrastructure, future arena needs and public amenity must be protected. The government does not shy away from scrutiny on this matter. Indeed, scrutiny is already occurring through the Auditor-General, through the Public Accounts Committee, through parliamentary questions and certainly through the debate in this place today.

That scrutiny should continue. It should not pre-empt either the committee's findings or any future statutory decisions. Wilkinsons Point has the potential to deliver long-term community and economic benefit, but potential alone is not enough. The government must make sure the process is sound, the public interest is protected and Tasmanians receive proper value. That is the government's position. It is a cautious position. It is an accountable position, and it is a position the government will continue to take as this matter progresses.

Thank you for the opportunity, Mr President. I hope I didn't let members down.

[12.33 p.m.]

Mr EDMUNDS (Pembroke) - Thank you, Mr President, I was just waiting to ensure members had an opportunity to contribute, considering my colleague has already put essentially my exact position on the record and acknowledging we're in a time-limited debate.

Mr President, the land has been sold, no land has been sold. I think if you wanted to encapsulate this whole issue into perhaps two statements is that those are both statements of the government. The government has told Tasmanians that the land has been sold. The government has told Tasmanians that land has not been sold. We talk about the levels of spin around the attempted scrutiny of this project. Almost concurrently, those two statements are apparently both true according to the government this state has.

I acknowledge, I just want to reflect and perhaps echo some comments of other members here. The member for Nelson's comments, I think you are being a bit rough on the parliament around the scrutiny of the *Spirits*. Those questions were asked by a lot of us, including up here and yourself, I even believe, but I also know that you did juxtaposition that with the speaking about gaslighting. The questions were raised and we were told things were going okay, nothing to worry about. They have come in, they are on time and the port facilities will be ready as well. Even the comment about playing in the same sandpit, I think, was six months after the real questions had started to be asked on that project. I think it was another six months before we saw any ministerial accountability.

Again, it's just to reflect on these concurrent, completely contradictory statements out of government around this and other infrastructure projects.

I think a few people have reflected on the JackJumpers. We are all supportive and have seen the change in attitude that club has brought. I certainly have enjoyed being able to see that success - whether in person or on television - myself and seeing the interest in particularly young people, but also older Tasmanians.

Back to my original point, even the comments around the ferry infrastructure at Wilkinsons Point and the comments from the government about the opportunity about those ferry terminals. In our PAC hearings, we've been told that those ferry terminals are not planned to be used for passenger use and perhaps will be used for one-off events. That was the evidence given to PAC: that these are one-off things for big events.

Ms Thomas - Event services, not commuter service.

Mr EDMUNDS - Thank you. Event services, not commuter services. That certainly raised my eyebrows. It was taken up with the minister, but we got a slightly different answer to that. And then today's comments seem to say that, no, this will be commuter services. Perhaps we will put another question in about that.

That then brings me to my next point about scrutiny and questions, the motion of today, the PAC referrals, et cetera. Perhaps what I'm most concerned about is that this scrutiny of failures of government is somehow now being used as a shield by government. 'Oh, it's okay, questions are going to get asked at the committee and the committee will make its report, and we look forward to that. Isn't it good to see all this scrutiny occurring?' All of that scrutiny has only come about because of the pathetic attempt at answering questions through the more run-of-the-mill mechanisms of the parliament. It speaks volumes that we're doing something that hasn't been done in about a decade and certainly predates half the people here, probably more.

To encapsulate those comments, it is so frustrating that two things can be completely opposite and both true according to the government, which is why we end up in positions like this. I'm certainly supportive of any mechanism to get correct answers and to hold government to account but, ultimately, we might just need to change the government.

[12.38 p.m.]

Ms THOMAS (Elwick) - Mr President, I thank members for their contributions to this matter of public importance.

I seek leave to withdraw the motion.

Leave granted; motion withdrawn.

QUESTIONS ON NOTICE - ANSWERS

No. 37 - Right to Information Timeframes

[12.56 p.m.]

The following answer to a question on notice was given.

Ms THOMAS question to MINISTER for EDUCATION, CHILDREN and YOUTH, Ms PALMER

Minister, in correspondence to my office dated 15 April 2026, you confirmed that the Department for Education, Children and Young People is currently managing approximately 537 personal information applications, with indicative processing timeframes of 12 to 15 months, due to what is described as a significant backlog.

- (1) What specific measures are currently being implemented to reduce this backlog, and what timeframe does the government expect for bringing processing times back to an acceptable standard?
- (2) Does the minister consider that delays of 12 to 15 months in processing right to information applications are consistent with the requirements and intent of the *Right to Information Act 2009* and the *Personal Information Protection Act 2004*?
- (3) Has the government received any advice as to whether these delays constitute a breach of statutory obligations under those acts?
- (4) If not, will the minister seek such advice?
- (5) Does the minister agree that it is unacceptable for individuals, particularly those seeking records relating to childhood care and potential redress, to face delays of this magnitude?

ANSWER

- (1) The Department for Education, Children and Young People is allocating additional positions specifically to ensure Right to Information requests can be responded to efficiently. These positions have been prioritised given the importance of releasing information, especially to victim/survivors, in a timelier manner. Each Right to Information application is unique and assessed individually. Due to the individual

complexities of each Right to Information application, an accurate timeframe to bring processing times back to the desired level is challenging to predict.

With the allocation of additional resources, it is my expectation that the department will increase the number of resolved backlog matters by the end of 2026 and continue to monitor progress accordingly. I will be seeking regular updates from the department on this matter.

- (2) It is my expectation that the department addresses the Right to Information responses within the legislated timeframe of 20 days wherever possible.

I understand the current delays reflect unprecedented demand, with a significant proportion of applications involving complex and highly sensitive historical records of a high volume, often including requests for information over several years.

- (3) I am advised that the Ombudsman Tasmania raised the Right to Information application completion delays with the department directly. I understand the department is liaising with the Office of the Ombudsman in relation to the steps being taken to address the backlog.

It is my expectation that the department continues to engage with the Office of the Ombudsman and implements agreed solutions to improve processes.

- (4) It is my expectation the department continues to actively work with the Office of the Ombudsman on this matter.

- (5) I acknowledge the extended timeframes can be distressing for individuals experiencing Right to Information application response delays, particularly for individuals seeking access to personal records in the context of childhood care experiences, redress, or legal matters.

The department has prioritised the allocation of additional resources to address the outstanding Right to Information applications and improve response times. It is my expectation the department continues to actively monitor the Right to Information response timeframes to support continuous improvement.

As noted in my response to question (1), I will be seeking regular updates from the department on this matter.

No. 35 - Sale of Knives to Children and Young People

[12.59 p.m.]

The following answer to a question on notice was given.

Ms THOMAS question to LEADER for the GOVERNMENT in the LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL, Ms RATTRAY

On 2 December 2025, I asked the government a series of questions in this place regarding its response to youth offending and community safety. Among those questions were matters relating to minimum packaging standards for knives and other sharp objects, and the potential banning of the importation or sale of such items to minors.

In response, the government advised that it was progressing legislation to prohibit the sale of knives to children and young people, and that the proposed legislation would be subject to the usual public consultation process.

- (1) What are the timeframes for developing this proposed legislation?
- (2) When will the draft amendment bill be released for public consultation?
- (3) Will changes to the minimum standards for the packaging of knives and other sharp objects be considered in the legislation?
- (4) Will the proposed legislation include offences or penalties for adults who knowingly purchase knives on behalf of minors?
- (5) What evidence or data will the government reply upon to conclude that legislative reform relating to the sale of knives and sharp objects is necessary or likely to improve community safety outcomes?
- (6) Has the government undertaken consultation with Tasmania Police, retailers, shopping centres, school communities or youth service providers in relation to the proposed reforms, and if so, what feedback has been received?
- (7) Has the government undertaken an analysis of similar legislative provisions in other Australian states and territories?
 - (a) If so, how many other jurisdictions already have such laws in place?
 - (b) If not, will it undertake this analysis?

ANSWER

- (1) A draft bill has been developed and will be released for consultation in the coming months, with the intention to introduce legislation before the end of 2026.

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

QUESTIONS

Comprehensive Palliative Care in Aged Care Program - Funding

Ms LOVELL question to LEADER for the GOVERNMENT in the LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL, Ms RATTRAY

Thank you, Mr President. The Comprehensive Palliative Care in Aged Care program (CPCiAC) has had funding contributions from the state and Commonwealth governments withdrawn and as a result will cease by 1 July. The consequences of this will be felt both by patients and across the broader health system.

The Australian Nursing and Midwifery Federation (ANMF) have proposed a model of care involving the retention of three specialist community palliative care clinical nurse consultants for aged care residents, one in each of the south, north and north-west.

Will the Minister for Health fund these positions to ensure continued access to specialist palliative care for aged care residents?

ANSWER

Mr President, I acknowledge the question from the honourable member. Despite the Tasmanian government's advocacy to the Australian Government, and that of other states and territories, the Australian Government has made the decision to cease the CPCiAC funding measure at the end of the current federation funding agreement on 30 June 2026. The minister wrote to the federal Minister for Health and Ageing, the honourable Mark Butler MP, and the federal Assistant Minister for Health, Rebecca White, on this issue earlier this year and was very disappointed to receive a response essentially wiping their hands of the issue.

The minister recognises that the support provided by CPCiAC teams has been highly valued by residential aged care home (RACH) staff, residents and their families, and shares the disappointment at the Australian Government's decision.

At the time since CPCiAC commenced, the Tasmanian government has increased its overall funding for the Tasmanian Health Service Specialist Palliative Care Services (SPCS) by \$3 million per annum, which provides for increased staffing. In addition, the Tasmanian government is also investing in initiatives that support palliative care patients to remain at home, including in RACHs. These measures include expanding access to emergency care support, through a partnership with the Victorian government to implement a virtual emergency department (virtual ED) in Tasmania, and continued access to after-hours palliative care support through integration of the GP Assist palliative care services into care at home for residents known to SPCS.

The Tasmanian Department of Health has worked through the implications of the Commonwealth's decision to see what can be done at a state level, and I'm advised that the SPCS will continue to support residents with RACHs, with complex palliative care needs.

Access to SPCS will occur through the usual referral and triage processes. SPCS teams in each region will work with RACHs to ensure they are informed about referral pathways and available supports and will continue to strengthen the collaborative relationship developed

throughout the CPCiAC program. This will include continuing to provide specialist palliative care services to residents of RACHs when required. The Department of Health will work closely with staff to support this service transition.

I'm further advised that affected staff members who are the three Comprehensive Palliative Care in Aged Care Clinical Nurse Consultants, one in each region, all have a substantive position within the Tasmanian Health Service which they can return to. All registrars currently employed under CPCiAC will complete their training rotation as planned.

The government will continue to support Tasmanians requiring access to palliative care and welcomes you joining the continued advocacy to the Australian Government to extend the CPCiAC program. There are a lot of acronyms there Mr President, but I trust that is useful.

Ms Lovell - It makes sense to me.

Tasmanian Public Native Forest Logs - Export to Victoria

Ms O'CONNOR question to MINISTER for INFRASTRUCTURE and TRANSPORT, Mr VINCENT

[2.35 p.m.]

Minister, last night's ABC *Four Corners* confirmed what has long been suspected. Whole logs from Tasmania's public native forests are being exported to Victorian sawmills. That's despite millions of Victorian taxpayer dollars being paid out to end native forest logging in Victoria. Apparently, this was a surprise to your colleague, Mr Ellis, who confidently said something completely untrue to a national audience.

In your response to my colleagues' Budget Estimates questions on notice in the other place you have said:

While TT-Line's sole forestry customer, ANC Forestry Group Proprietary Limited, has verbally advised it does not deal with old-growth Tasmanian logs, further information is being sought regarding native logs.

Do you have that further information to share? And TasPorts - this is further to your answer, I quote:

TasPorts does not track the volume of native forest products through TasPorts facilities, instead recording total tonnage across all forestry products. As at 31 March 2026 a total of 2.9 million tonnes of forestry product had transited Tasmanian ports in financial year 2026.

Minister, now that we know whole native forest logs are being shipped from Tasmania to Victoria, do you have an update for the Council following *Four Corners*?

ANSWER

Mr President, I thank the member for the question and yes, I do remember quite well being asked that in Estimates. I did recently travel down to TT-Line and stood in their shipping

or their freight office where it looks straight out onto the yard as all of them come through. I think my response to Mr Bayley was that the added information was that TT-Line certainly believe that the only contractor they have just has the regrowth forest but have seen other logs operating through the port down there on to other companies. I don't have any further information to add to the *Four Corners* report last night, but we are working through that. Obviously, there's a little bit more to it in the terminology of what's been called old growth or not. Happy to keep looking at it further, but I haven't anything more on top of the *Four Corners* report at this stage.

Tasmanian Public Native Forest Logs - TT-Line Transport

Ms O'CONNOR question to MINISTER for INFRASTRUCTURE and TRANSPORT, Mr VINCENT

[2.38 p.m.]

Could you commit, minister, to bringing whatever information comes out of your update back to Council at the earliest opportunity? Given the brand damage that this is causing to Tasmania, will you engage with TT-Line about ceasing transport of public native forest logs, which, it has been established, is happening on TT-Line? As you will surely agree, this is inconsistent with TT-Line's tourism brand and given the clear public interest and how your fellow ministers might need the information - I'm talking about Mr Ellis here, who was clueless and embarrassing on the show last night - will you also direct TasPorts to ensure disaggregated data about timber products is collected, as it used to be and was available through the Australian Bureau of Statistics, for woodchips, sawed timber and whole logs at a minimum?

ANSWER

Mr President, thank you. Just a small point I'd like to seek clarification on before I finish that answer.

I just want to seek clarification, member for Hobart, on the question regarding the type of plantation or logs that were going on because I think I did report that TT-Line, through all of last year, only had seven loads. They are operational matters for TT-Line and TasPorts, but as the shareholder minister, I am more than happy to have those conversations with both on what their policies are, what type of logs and as much information as I can gather as quickly as I can. Happy, when I have that information, to come back to the Chamber with those details.

Ms O'Connor - Okay, thank you.

Historical Forced Adoption Redress Scheme - Update Sought

Ms WEBB question to LEADER for the GOVERNMENT in the LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL, Ms RATTRAY

[2.41 p.m.]

In recognising the formal apology delivered in the parliament on 18 October 2012 to those affected by historical forced adoption practices during the 1950s through to the 1980s, which specifically acknowledged amongst those affected the mothers, the adopted children and

some fathers, and also regarding the state's Historical Forced Adoption Redress Scheme announced on 23 October 2025, can the government please detail:

- (1) Any work undertaken to identify the approximate numbers, and if so, the numbers identified of:
 - (a) Tasmanian mothers affected; and
 - (b) children who were adopted under these historical practices
- (2) Consultation processes undertaken regarding the scope, eligibility requirements, design and implementation of the redress scheme, including:
 - (a) consultation timeframes;
 - (b) whether the consultation was undertaken in person, online or via other methods;
 - (c) whether the consultation was undertaken regionally, and if so, which regions;
 - (d) the number of victim/survivors consulted; and
 - (e) any organisations or formal victim/survivor representatives consulted.
- (3) Whether any consideration was provided to include in the redress scheme children who were adopted under the forced adoption policies, and if not, why not?
- (4) The numbers of expressions of interest, if any, made by victim/survivors to the interim historical forced adoption scheme and the number of applications currently accepted under that interim scheme.

ANSWER

Thank you. I have quite a lengthy response, but I expect that wouldn't be a surprise to the member.

- (1) The number of historical forced adoptions in Tasmania is not known and as such the number of children adopted under these historical practices is also not known.

The department reviewed publicly available information, in particular the 1999 parliamentary inquiry by the Joint Select Committee Adoption and Related Services 1958-1988, into past adoption practices in Tasmania. This inquiry estimated that between 1920 and 1998, there were 11,338 adoption orders made. Of these, 11,074 were made before July 1989. The

department will engage an actuary to undertake an actuarial assessment to update the anticipated cost of the redress scheme.

- (2) Consultation commenced on 22 December 2025 and closed on 15 February 2026. Prior to 22 December, people were able to register their interest in participating in consultation following the government's announcement of the scheme in October 2025. Details of the proposed scheme were made available via Have Your Say - Submissions. Submissions could be made online either as a general response or by completing a tailored survey. Direct feedback was also received from the community, both in person and over the phone. The tailored survey was sent directly to all individuals and organisations who registered interest in participating in the consultation process. A total of 45 letters and surveys were sent by the department to those who registered their interest.

Feedback was provided in the form of survey responses, online submissions, phone calls and emails. The department also met in person with some members of the community to receive their feedback, given the sensitivity with some members of the community to receive their feedback, given the sensitivity of the issues.

The survey sought feedback on the proposed parameters of the full scheme, including the proposed redress amount for affected mothers of \$75,000, which at the time of consultation was proposed as \$65,000 for a redress payment and \$10,000 for counselling and psychological services.

The survey also sought feedback on which circumstances of forced adoption should be considered, including what documents and information could be provided to support that the adoption was forced, how payments should be managed in the event an applicant passes away during the application process, and what supports were required during the application process, whether the eligible mothers would be interested in receiving a direct personal response and by what mechanism, and any other additional feedback the person would like to provide. The survey allowed respondents to provide unstructured feedback and attach any documents they wished to submit.

At the conclusion of the consultation period, a total of 157 individuals and organisations provided feedback. This included 97 mothers, 38 adoptees and 22 other members of the community, the latter being grouped as respondents who did not identify whether they were a mother, forced adoptee or otherwise.

- (3) The scheme has been developed with a specific focus on mothers who were subjected to forced adoption practices in line with the government's announcement of October 2025. It is intended to respond to the experiences of mothers affected by forced adoption, which resulted in profound and lasting harm to mothers through the removal of their babies.

The creation of this redress scheme was a significant decision of government to assist affected mothers. This focus reflects the purpose of the scheme and is not intended to compare experiences or diminish the impact on others affected by adoptions.

- (4) Mothers who contacted the department during the consultation period were notified when the Interim Redress Scheme opened on 15 February 2026. The department wrote and, in some cases, called and met in person with these mothers in order to support them to complete an Interim Redress Scheme application.

Finally, as at 12 June 2026, 20 mothers have applied for the interim scheme: 17 mothers were determined as eligible, while three did not meet the criteria of urgent and exceptional need. All 20 mothers are being contacted by Monday 15 June 2026 to support them to apply for the full scheme.

Southern Outlet Widening - Cost Blowout

Ms O'CONNOR question to MINISTER for INFRASTRUCTURE and TRANSPORT, Mr VINCENT

[2.48 p.m.]

In answers to Estimates questions on notice from you, it's confirmed that there has been yet another massive cost blowout to widening the Southern Outlet, putting this contentious infrastructure project in further doubt. In 2018, the state government pledged a fifth lane at a cost of \$35 million. In 2021, community consultation finished. Three years later, the cost went up to \$62.5 million. Now eight years after the promise, here we are again, going cap in hand to the federal government looking for the funds to meet the blowout cost of \$95 million.

Meanwhile, at significant cost to the public purse, people have been displaced from perfectly liveable homes, some of which have been demolished and some of which remain empty while your government flails around to find a way forward.

Minister, what is the plan? If the federal government denies your request, will you give up on this project? If you get the money, what's the new timeframe for completion? And by the time these questions are answered, what do you estimate the final cost of the fifth lane will be?

ANSWER

Mr President, I don't agree with some of the tone on some of the points put in that, but I will gather more information to accurately address some of those things.

The report is accurate regarding the cost which has changed across the different stages of the project, as has been common with projects over recent years. The federal government has committed heavily to Tolmans Hill to Kingston, and we're asking so the job flows and the correct and proper method for that funding to be reallocated to undertaking the next part of the project to match in with what we've already done at the top of Davey and the top of the highway.

I am happy to re-examine some of those costs and bring back to you the different breakups, stages and timelines associated with the full project and how that might work.

Ms O'Connor - Today?

Mr VINCENT - It won't be today, sorry, but I'll get that for you and bring it back during this week.

University of Tasmania - Land Sale Deed Poll

Ms WEBB question to MINISTER for EDUCATION, Ms PALMER

[2.51 p.m.]

Minister, my question relates to the undertaking provided by the University of Tasmania to execute a deed poll ensuring any revenue from the rezoned Sandy Bay campus land is hypothecated to the proposed STEM precinct at the Sandy Bay campus.

Minister, in light of your previous advice provided to this place on 15 April that the government is confident that the university will deliver on its public commitment, can you now provide an update to the Chamber on the status of any such deed poll? Has it been finalised, and if so, what was the date of its finalisation? Has it been released publicly and if not, can you advise whether the government has made clear to the university that it expects the final deed poll to be made public, and if not, why not?

ANSWER

Mr President, I'm going to take that on notice, but I'll commit to get an answer to you in this sitting.

Mornington Roundabout Upgrade

Mr EDMUNDS question to MINISTER for INFRASTRUCTURE and TRANSPORT, Mr VINCENT

[2.52 p.m.]

Minister, Pulse Tasmania recently reported on repeated delays to construction of the Mornington roundabout upgrade, with the federal member for Franklin, Julie Collins, describing the project as having 'more updates than an iPhone'. In the article you said that these delays were caused by a wait for information from the City of Clarence to inform the design of the first section of the project, the Gordons Hill Road interchange.

However, answers to questions in a council meeting state that the council had not been notified of the delays to the project nor the reason for these delays. Minister, if information was missing, what was it? If the City of Clarence was holding up the project, did you raise concerns with them?

ANSWER

Mr President, there are a few moving parts to this with the Mornington Interchange. It goes back a fair while and I have stood there with the federal member and have explained many times about the moving parts. I will summarise that before going into a bit more detail.

Mornington's roundabout services a lot of traffic. To drive dozers and earth-moving gear in would be almost impossible with the volume of vehicles using the interchange. In order to relieve this pressure, several different other projects are underway: a slip road that comes off before the Mornington Inn to take a lot of the south-eastern traffic up onto the South Arm Highway without having to go through the intersection. This alleviates approximately 15-20 per cent of the traffic. The other part is the Gordon Hill off-ramps that come down near the Clarence City Council offices. Being able to divert that traffic takes a lot of the pressure off the actual roundabout for us to be able to do the work on the roundabout and stage the light developments there.

For many years, the Gordon Hill off-ramps have been part of the discussion, because I can remember that with the previous general management still discussing the airport interchange. That's how long that discussion goes back. We, as the department, were a long way down the track of designing a lot of the things to do with Gordons Hill so it worked. When they went back to the Clarence Council, Clarence certainly put it through their own departments. I'm not au fait with the exact process there, but recently they needed to take it back through council and through workshop, and then they felt it should go to a meeting and the design of the Gordons Hill - and I will read this part out.

The design of the Gordons Hill Road interchange is progressing as a priority project, noting that there have been delays resulting from the provision of information from the City of Clarence and subsequent requests from the council for additional traffic modelling.

While the department continues to await in-principle agreement from the council on the options analysis report, it will progress with the concept designed for the ramps in order to avoid further delays.

It should be noted the Australian Government's funding commitment to enable these works was provided following the government's 2024 budget two years ago.

Our government has conducted a comprehensive planning study for the roundabouts.

I understand that those two ramps have now been through the process with council and is back to finalise anything back with the department at the moment. I personally did not follow up with Clarence because all my briefing said that they were going through a process both through the general manager workshop and then council approving and council staff involved in that. I didn't feel it was necessary for me to make phone calls on that. But I understand that process either has or has just been finalised in the last few weeks.

Mr Edmunds - If I can, so it's that part of the process that has caused the delays, not the wait for the traffic information, or both?

Mr VINCENT - My understanding is it's just the approval from council and the council offices regarding the Gordons Hill ramp. I did ask the question of the department late last week

regarding where we were with the design of the slip road so we could also get that moving and take a bit of pressure off and obviously get the project started. That's in the final design stages and we're expecting that to be able to be started later on this year.

Answer to Question - Greyhound Racing Transition

[2.57 p.m.]

Ms RATTRAY (McIntyre - Leader for the Government in the Legislative Council) - Upon indulgence, I have an answer to the member for Elwick's question relating to the question that Mr Vincent took on notice about the Joint Standing Committee on Greyhound Racing Transition, the committee and the future of the greyhound phasing-out reform.

The answer goes on to say the committee has resolved to pursue a work plan including exploring the following topics: the financial, economic and animal welfare impacts of the proposed phase-out of greyhound racing in Tasmania, and the future of the Tasmanian Racing Funding Deed.

Accordingly, the committee is seeking targeted submissions on the above topics. The committee has resolved that the closing date for the receipt of submissions is Monday 29 June 2026.

The government will consider issues raised through this process and other matters before recommencing the debate on the bill. I trust that is useful information.

Part-time Doctors in Public Hospitals

Ms ARMITAGE question to LEADER for the GOVERNMENT in the LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL, Ms RATTRAY

[2.59 p.m.]

With regards to doctors currently working in Tasmanian public hospitals, could the Leader please advise:

- (1) Were there any doctors who are working part time who have had their employment contracts not renewed?
- (2) If so, how many? Could this advice please be provided indicating which hospitals and how many doctors from each of these hospitals? Obviously, I don't want their names.
- (3) Is it correct that part-time doctors at Tasmanian public hospitals can apply to become permanent staff after 12 months of employment? If yes, are efforts made to ensure that doctors are aware of this?
- (4) How many part-time doctors in Tasmanian public hospitals have applied for and received permanent positions?

ANSWER

Thank you, Mr President, and I acknowledge the questions from the member for Launceston.

- (1) Doctors employed in Tasmanian public hospitals may be engaged on either a permanent or fixed-term basis under the Tasmanian State Service Employment Framework. Both fixed-term and permanent employment arrangements may be on a part-time or full-time basis. Doctors often work multiple part-time jobs up to full-time work, so part time is often undertaken by choice or due to multiple employments.
- (2) As of 31 May 2026, there are 1658 doctors employed within Tasmania's public hospitals. Of these, 1,060 - 64 per cent - were full time; and 598 - 36 per cent - were part time. Of the part-time doctors, 372 - 62 per cent - were permanent and 226 - 38 per cent - were fixed term.

It's important to note that fixed term appointments are for a specific term or specified task. Doctors employed under these arrangements are not permanent employees. Decisions to renew fixed-term contracts are based on an assessment of service need and workforce requirements specific to the circumstances.

There's a table in the answer and it outlines the fixed-term contracts of part-time medical staff that came to an end in line with the contract end date during the 12 months to 30 March 2026 and whereby the same doctor was not employed as of 17 June 2026. It's noted that this data also includes doctors who choose not to accept a new contract of employment. Hospital North, 6; Hospital South, 8; a total of 14.

- (3) Fixed-term employees may become permanent via a recruitment process for a permanent role or via fixed-term to permanent conversion in line with Employment Direction No. 1, Employment in the State Service (ED1). Although ED1 provides a pathway for eligible fixed-term employees to seek permanent employment without taking part in a recruitment process, this is subject to relevant criteria and is not automatic. All applications for conversion from fixed term to permanent employment are considered by the Secretary on a case-by-case basis against these criteria.

When the ability for eligible fixed-term employees to seek conversion to permanent employment was introduced into ED1 in late 2024, this was communicated to all department staff. An application form is available on the department's intranet.

- (4) During the 12 months to 31 May 2026, 44 doctors converted from fixed term contracts to permanent positions. Fifteen were appointed to permanent full-time positions and 29 became permanent part-time employees.

Time expired.

QUESTION ON NOTICE - ANSWER

No. 35 - Sale of Knives to Children and Young People

Continued from above (page 28)

[3.03 p.m.]

Ms RATTRAY (McIntyre - Leader for the Government in the Legislative Council) - Thank you, Mr President. To continue question 35 on the Notice Paper relating to youth offending and community safety.

- (2) The draft amendment bill will be released for a five-week public consultation process in the coming months.
- (3) Yes. The consultation draft considers the need to regulate the manner in which a knife is stored by a business that is selling knives in Tasmania. The consultation draft also considers signage requirements indicating that knives will not be sold to persons under 18 years of age.
- (4) No. The consultation draft does not, at this stage, consider introducing penalties for adults who are not operating a business who may supply a knife to a youth, and we welcome feedback.
- (5) Concerns regarding the regulation of knives, particularly machetes, have been raised at a national level, driven by a series of high-profile violent incidents in other jurisdictions. On 2 November 2025, the Police Ministers Council discussed and agreed:
 - to reduce the supply of knives and machetes as a national priority to maintain public safety and confidence; and
 - that all states and territories consider whether further steps are required to reduce dangerous weapons in the community beyond existing settings.

In 2025, the government delivered Reid's Law, enabling police to use electronic metal detection devices and enhancing search provisions. The proposals in this bill seek to build on Reid's Law and further enhance public safety.

Most Australian jurisdictions already have restrictions on the sale of knives to minors.

- (6) Targeted consultation has occurred with Tasmania Police, retailers and victims of knife crime. Broader consultation is scheduled to occur in the coming months for five weeks. The government will then consider submissions from the community and businesses.

- (7) With the exception of the Northern Territory, all other Australian jurisdictions have laws governing the sale of knives to youths. It is accepted that reducing the unnecessary sale of knives to youths improves public safety. However, government is also being careful not to restrict the otherwise lawful use of knives where appropriate.

The government has considered the laws in other jurisdictions and has relied on legislation in South Australia, Victoria, New South Wales and Queensland to inform the drafting of proposed Tasmanian amendments.

TABLED PAPER

Public Accounts Committee - Establishment of a Parliamentary Budget Office - Report

[3.07 p.m.]

Ms THOMAS (Elwick) - Mr President, I have the honour to present the report of the Parliamentary Standing Committee of Public Accounts, No. 19 of 2026 into the Establishment of a Parliamentary Budget Office.

Mr President, I move -

That the report be received.

Report received.

Ms THOMAS - Mr President, I move -

That the report be printed.

Report printed.

Ms THOMAS - Mr President, I move -

That consideration of the report and its noting be made on the order of the day.

Motion agreed to.

Public Accounts Committee - 18th ACPAC Conference - Report

Ms THOMAS (Elwick) - Mr President, I have the honour to present the report of the Parliamentary Standing Committee of Public Accounts No. 27 of 2026, on the 18th Australasian Council of Public Accounts Committees (ACPAC) Conference.

I move -

That the report be received.

Report received.

Ms THOMAS - I move -

That the report be printed.

Report printed.

Ms THOMAS - Mr President, I move -

That consideration of the report and its noting be made an order of the day.

Motion agreed to.

LEAVE OF ABSENCE

Member for Murchison - Ms Forrest

[3.09 p.m.]

Ms RATTRAY (McIntyre - Leader for the Government in the Legislative Council) (by leave) - Mr President, I move -

That the honourable member for Murchison, Ms Forrest, be granted leave of absence from the service of the Council for this week's sitting dates.

Motion agreed to.

STATEMENT BY PRESIDENT

Correspondence with Premier Regarding Matters Raised on Adjournment

Mr PRESIDENT - Honourable members, before we move on to the business of the day, I have a brief statement to make in relation to our last sitting week. As President, I have a number of duties, including representing and advocating on behalf of the Council and its members.

In that context, following the contributions on the Adjournment from the member for Murchison and the member for Rumney on 27 May 2026, I made a judgment that the matters raised by the honourable members went beyond them as individuals to matters relevant to all members of the Council and, in the case of the member for Murchison, to the staff of the Council. I'm also conscious of our reputation and the need to lift the standards of behaviour and respect for members of this place.

Accordingly, I sent the following letter to the Premier on the morning of 28 May 2026:

Dear Premier,

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I write to raise my serious concerns regarding matters raised on the adjournment last night by two members of the Legislative Council. I attach for your reference the *Hansard* transcript.

These are matters of grave concern to me and demonstrate a significant lack of respect towards members and staff of the Council. I expect the Leader to provide a fulsome response on your behalf regarding the issues raised by both members, ideally prior to the Legislative Council adjourning today.

Yours sincerely

Hon Craig Farrell MLC
President of the Legislative Council

On 9 June 2026 I received the following response:

Dear Mr President

I have received your letter dated 28 May advising of matters raised on the adjournment by two Legislative Council members.

I am quite disappointed in the assertion in your letter and firmly reject your claim of a lack of respect towards members and staff of the Legislative Council.

Further, I do not consider this to be the responsibility of the Leader for Government Business.

I am happy to respond to any concerns a member may wish to raise directly with me.

Yours sincerely

Jeremy Rockliff MP
Premier

I will allow members to form their own opinions on the appropriateness, or otherwise, of this response.

The other reason I raise this with members is that it would appear that the government has chosen to change how it will respond to matters raised by members in the Council on the adjournment, and apparently how the government of the day sees the role of the Leader for Government Business in this place.

As members understand, the practice and convention of this place, and the only reason a member can speak on adjournment, is to bring a pressing or urgent matter to the attention of the government, or to make a complaint, a request or pose a query. These are long-held standards of how we raise items on adjournment and anything that is raised on adjournment must fit within these boundaries.

Members have in the past reasonably expected that by making a speech on the adjournment they have done all that is required to bring a matter to the attention of the government, and receive a response, if not immediately, in due course, from the Leader or the responsible minister.

Given the response of the Premier to the matters raised on adjournment was, in effect, that the members in question should raise matters directly with the Premier if they wanted a response, members may wish to reconsider how they use adjournment to raise matters with the government in the future, or at least ensure they follow up with a letter to the Premier or relevant minister attaching the *Hansard* of their adjournment contribution.

With that said, we'll move on to special interest matters.

SPECIAL INTEREST MATTERS

125-Year Anniversary of the Winkleigh Hall

[3.13 p.m.]

Ms PALMER (Rosevears - Minister for Education) - Mr President, I rise today to reflect on a wonderful event I had the pleasure of attending, the Winkleigh Hall 125th anniversary celebration. It was a memorable evening filled with rich history, warm community spirit and a hearty country-style meal: cauliflower, broccoli, potatoes, carrots, two types of meat, all dripping with gravy and spilling over the edges of our plates.

The Winkleigh Hall is owned by the West Tamar Council, but it is managed and cared for by an amazing group of local volunteers and community members who make up the Winkleigh Hall Committee. For 125 years, Winkleigh Hall has stood as the social heart of the rural Winkleigh and Flowery Gully communities. It has hosted every event you could imagine: weddings, birthdays, fundraisers for multiple organisations, community gatherings, and to this day it continues to play a vital role in bringing the community together.

In December of 1899, funds were secured to build a community hall at Winkleigh with £50 provided by the Westbury Municipal Council. On 3 June 1901, the Winkleigh Hall was officially opened by Mr TH Waldock MHA. The occasion was marked by a generous repast prepared by the ladies of the district. Following the meal, celebrations continued in Mr Kerrison's paddock, where a variety of sports were enjoyed. I don't know the details of what sorts of sports, but no doubt they were robust.

Noting the importance of the hall and its constant use, it was decided it needed a supper room. So, in 1931, the old schoolroom, originally located across the road, was literally picked up and relocated to sit beside the hall. For a while, in fact, for 16 years I'm told, it had no internal access; but in 1947, the locals had had enough, and the supper room was extended and connected internally to the hall. Electricity was installed in 1950, along with the construction of outdoor septic toilets; prior to this the hall was lit by 300-candlepower oil or kerosene lamps. No electricity also meant no hot meals were served prior to 1950; it was suppers only, again, prepared by the ladies of the community. Things ramped up a bit in the 1960s when there was a change to the no-alcohol policy, although I am reliably informed there were just as many men in the car park during events inside the hall.

We often need to reflect on history to see how far we've actually come. Women were only invited or allowed to attend meetings of the hall committee if they were required to discuss food preparation. That was up until the late 1960s, when the unstoppable Betty Tasker shook things up at one of the local AGMs. The men reluctantly allowed her to join the committee where she quickly became a driving force for change. In the early 1970s, Betty proposed holding a Christmas party for local children to raise funds for the hall. The men of the committee did not agree and they voted no. So, Betty hired the hall herself, paid for everything out of her own pocket, and then donated the funds raised to St. Giles. The Christmas party became an annual tradition, later run by the hall committee, continuing into the 1990s and welcoming hundreds of children each year. In 2021, Betty was awarded life membership of the Winkleigh Hall Committee in recognition of her contribution.

Over the decades, the Winkleigh Hall has been the heart of the community. Many good times were had by all. It's where many people met their partner, lifelong partner, first partner; where many learnt to dance, where they had their first kiss and, for some, their first drink. It has seen balls, pig roasts, Christmas celebrations, birthdays, dress-ups and farewells. Members of my community were indeed in tears at the 125th celebration as they reminisced over its history. Local halls are not just walls and ceilings; they hold treasured memories that continue to shape who we are. My congratulations to community stalwart Janet Beams and her family, and the Winkleigh Hall Committee, for a wonderful event.

George Town - Solstice in the Square

[3.18 p.m.]

Mr DUIGAN (Windermere - Minister for Parks and Heritage) - Mr President, I rise today to speak on a recent local event I attended on Friday night, which was George Town's Solstice in the Square. For anybody who was out and about on Friday, certainly in the north of the state, I can report that the weather was somewhat changeable, potentially, and it did provide some challenges; but as is usually the case in George Town, and of course across the north, people turned out despite the weather and made a great night of it.

Solstice in the Square is still a relatively new event, having started back in 2024, but already a bit of a standout on the local calendar with around 1000 people turning up in year one, and this year, despite the challenges around the weather, almost 2000 people coming through the gate. This is, of course, not by accident. It reflects a community that backs its events and turns out for each other.

The setting, of course, helps too: Regent Square at the town's centre has been a part of George Town since it was set out, I think, in 1811 by then-governor Macquarie. The council has invested substantially in Regent Square, which acts as a vibrant community hub, and does what town squares are designed to do, and that is to bring people together.

On Friday night there were fires, lights, music, food, and obviously everybody in attendance was pretty well rugged up. The scene was set and the community gathered around fire pits, with dark, moody red lights as you walked through the square and adjacent buildings, and you can think of it as a mini Dark Mofo, if you like. If you find that all a bit confronting and too much, by all means, head up to George Town: indoor and outdoor stages for music, and plenty of delicious local food and beverage options, including local wines. It was great to have a chat with Alex Russell and Lara Suitor, of Russell & Suitor Wines, and while their

wines aren't new, I was pleased to hear about a new cellar door opening up and how they will host the launch of this year's scallop festival for Bridport, which is happening in the days ahead.

Indoor displays of art and roaming performances, fire displays, light installations and very imaginative costumes were on display everywhere. Events like this, and the opportunity to enjoy them, don't just happen themselves; there is a great deal of work that happens behind the scenes. I would like to single out the George Town Youth Advisory Council, who were heavily involved in terms of setup, helping things run on the night, and it was great to see the team getting about the event, not just attending but obviously helping to deliver this one. They set up all the fencing around the square; they were on the wheelbarrows getting the wood into the fire pits, which were then getting rained on and going out and had to be restarted; they even had to rescue a tent, one of the marquees, which ended up in the Woolies car park across the way. It is how communities build strength, and I think that having all demographics in the community represented is really positive. As one of the locals said to me, 'This is what we do.' I think it's hard to argue with that.

The General Manager of George Town Council, Shane Power, described the night as an outstanding success, bringing together almost 2000 people in Regent Square despite the threat of poor weather. As I mentioned, people of all ages enjoyed the wonderful night filled with entertainment, fire, food, live music, and good vibes and plenty of fun. He also went on to thank Events Tasmania for its support. Of course, I think among the key points here: success isn't just about the number. It's about participation, effort and, of course, a bit of resilience and not letting the elements win. In Tasmania, that's a familiar trait; on a cold, wet Friday night, you can see it on full display, and I think it is a night that will live long in people's memory - certainly mine as I was absolutely drenched on the way to the car. Anyway, I take this opportunity to thank the organisers, the volunteers, the George Town Council, the Youth Advisory Council, and all those people who came together to bring the event to life. I highly recommend it for members who may be in George Town next year.

Volunteer Marine Rescue Services

[3.23 p.m.]

Mr GAFFNEY (Mersey) - Mr President, I rise to speak about the dedication and passion of our voluntary marine rescue services and the community of volunteers that support them. Our seven volunteer marine rescue, or VMR, units are spread across Tasmania as St Helens Marine Rescue; Freycinet VMR; Tamar Sea Rescue; VMR Kingborough; Ulverstone VMR; Wynyard VMR; and Sea Rescue Dodges Ferry. The seven units are split into two affiliations with Volunteer Marine Rescue Tasmania, or VMRT Inc., as their peak body to provide 24/7 on-water support and resources to assist Tasmania Police. VMRT includes Sea Rescue Dodges Ferry, Freycinet VMR, Ulverstone VMR, and St Helens Marine Rescue. There's also a strong correlation with Surf Life Saving Tasmania, with the remaining three of our VMR units being directly affiliated with SLST. They are VMR Kingborough, Tamar Sea Rescue, and Wynyard VMR.

Between them all, they are community-based sea rescue units providing critical marine safety services in coastal waters for vessels in distress, routine tows and emergency communications. They also provide an invaluable source of advice and local information for visiting boaters: local hazards and compliance with safety regulations, and on the use and disposal of flares, and EPIRB devices.

Whilst the government did recognise the value of voluntary marine rescue services in its 2024 election commitments, with \$1 million in 2024-25 to be allocated equally amongst the seven volunteer marine rescue units in the state - that is \$142,857 each - there is no ongoing funding for this purpose. Late last year there was a further commitment with a three-year funding agreement with VMRT providing a total of \$240,000 - that's \$80,000 per annum - to support the operations of VMRT's affiliated units. The \$20,000 in annual funding provided to each of the four VMRT units was expected to contribute towards operational costs. It was also anticipated that would be used to fund appropriate training and development opportunities for its members.

Despite the best of intentions, it still leaves a gap that has to be filled with a variety of fundraising initiatives such as sausage sizzles, container collection refunds and the like, and that's just to raise enough money for operational expenses such as fuel for the boat, let alone pay for insurance, uniforms and equipment. Half the problem is the status of VMOs, that it's not included under the definition of a statutory service under the *Emergency Management Act 2006* and therefore not formally recognised by the Tasmanian state government in the same way as SES volunteers, volunteer firefighters, or volunteer ambulance officers. Therein lies the crux of the problem. The bureaucratic conundrum in legislation sees VMR as an offshoot of SLST and more aligned with sport and recreation. In reality, VMR is an essential statutory service and led by volunteers with expectation that it operates under police direction.

As an example, I'd like to include a comment from Al Hort, who is a volunteer trainer with Marine Rescue Ulverstone, where he brings 15 years of experience as a deckhand, engineer and master on all manner of craft. He says:

We operate across five councils: Wynyard, Burnie, Devonport, Ulverstone and Latrobe. Only Ulverstone seems to know that we exist. It would be great to have the profile of VMR raised across the councils and to get support from these councils as we fulfil an important emergency service in their communities.

It's not just money we need but help to run the organisation and recruiting new members, et cetera. We've been struggling to get things done, for example, like the child protection policy. We are not bureaucrats.

Al also gave me a keen insight into his motivation for trying to make a difference. He says:

In light of the accident in Ballina with the death of two volunteer marine rescue members, I've decided to grab the bull by the horns and rattle cages to get the best result for VMR.

Training and resources are critical to safety. Talking with Mr Hort, he said sometimes they have to weigh up where they're going to do a practice run or a training run because they can't afford the fuel to be able to go out there. But they do it so that when they are needed in crucial times, they have the right training. I believe that's something that we need to address.

VMR across Tasmania has lots of people like Al who are trying their very best and doing their damndest to make a difference to reduce the number of preventable drownings and better protect the volunteers who work so hard to save them. VMR is our answer to the UK's National

Lifeboat Service but runs on the smell of an oily rag, and without the millions of dollars, it fully supports the UK equivalent.

I call on the government to look again at support for the VMR units across Tasmania and also to raise the awareness with my fellow colleagues in this place to assist wherever they can that's possible.

Teen Challenge Tasmania

[3.29 p.m.]

Ms ARMITAGE (Launceston) - Mr President, today I speak about an organisation which is working hard in the northern community to support individuals and families affected by alcohol and other drug addiction through a variety of prevention, mentoring, education, and family support and recovering pathways. Teen Challenge Tasmania is a Launceston-based charity that has been making a difference in the lives of Tasmanians since 2015.

Operating from its community hub in St John Street, Launceston, Teen Challenge Tasmania works with some of the most vulnerable members of our community, often stepping into spaces where support is needed most.

One initiative making a remarkable impact is the Our Place program, a safe after-school space established in response to concerns about the challenges many young people face in the Launceston CBD while waiting for buses and transport home.

Teen Challenge Tasmania recognised that many students were being exposed to bullying, intimidation, violence, drug use and other antisocial behaviour during this time.

In response, it opened its doors to create a safe, supervised and welcoming environment where young people can enjoy a snack, play games, complete homework, and connect with caring adults.

Supported by 18 volunteers, Our Place now operates every Monday, Tuesday and Thursday afternoon and welcomes an average of 23 students each session.

Importantly, the program is about much more than providing a safe space. As trust develops, volunteers often discover practical needs that might otherwise go unnoticed.

Recently, a volunteer noticed a student's shoes were held together with tape and riddled with holes. Through Teen Challenge Tasmania's Hope Costumes & Thrift Store, replacement shoes were discreetly provided, reminding us that sometimes small acts of kindness can have a profound impact.

These relationships often become pathways into the organisation's Connections Mentoring program. For more than a decade, trained volunteer mentors have been meeting with vulnerable young people in schools, providing encouragement and positive role modelling. Mentors often work with the same student for their entire high school journey, building strong, consistent relationships. Teen Challenge Tasmania is currently working towards eight new mentoring matches with at-risk students across Tasmanian schools.

The organisation is also helping students overcome barriers to learning through Brain School Tasmania, which incorporates the internationally recognised Arrowsmith Program. By strengthening cognitive functions associated with learning difficulties, the program assists young people to rebuild confidence, re-engage with education and create new opportunities for their future.

Teen Challenge Tasmania's influence also extends well beyond our state through the #NotEvenOnce Projects, an alcohol, drug and vaping prevention initiative developed in Tasmania in 2015. Since then, the program has reached more than 200,000 students nationally, helping young people better understand addiction, peer pressure and the importance of making healthy decisions.

The organisation has further expanded its support to its Responding Well workshops, equipping school staff and family members with practical tools to respond to alcohol and other drug issues affecting young people and loved ones.

At the same time, Team Challenge Tasmania continues its core work supporting people seeking freedom from addiction. Currently, the organisation is assisting seven Tasmanians as they navigate pathways into rehabilitation programs, including individuals transitioning from the prison system, while three more are expected to graduate from residential rehabilitation in the coming months.

The challenges facing young people, families and individuals struggling with addiction are significant. However, organisations such as Teen Challenge Tasmania demonstrate what can be achieved when communities respond with compassion, practical support and hope.

Ulverstone - Big Freeze for MND

[3.33 p.m.]

Mr HISCUTT (Montgomery) - Mr President, another year and another slide. This year, on 8 June, the fourth annual Big Freeze event was held in Ulverstone to raise funds for motor neurone disease (MND) research and support.

The Big Freeze movement was inspired by Neale Daniher, a former AFL player and coach who was diagnosed with motor neurone disease in 2013. Instead of allowing his diagnosis to define him, Neale chose to use his voice to raise awareness and support research into this devastating disease. Through his determination, courage and positive attitude, he inspired Australians across the country to join the fight against MND.

Motor neurone disease is a progressive neurological condition that attacks the nerves controlling movement. Over time, people living with MND gradually lose the ability to walk, talk, eat and eventually breathe independently. There is currently no cure, which is why ongoing research and support are so important.

The Big Freeze began as a creative way to capture public attention and encourage people to donate to the cause. What started with a few brave people sliding into the icy pool has grown into a nationwide movement that raises millions of dollars for MND research and care each year. The sight of people willingly plunging into the freezing water might seem like a bit of

fun, and it is, but behind the laughter is a serious purpose, helping to find better treatments and ultimately a cure.

The annual Big Freeze at the Melbourne Cricket Ground (MCG) has become the centrepiece of this campaign, held before the traditional King's Birthday AFL match. Celebrities and sporting personalities dress in costumes and slide into an icy pool to raise funds and awareness. The event transforms the MCG into a sea of blue beanies and has grown into one of Australia's most significant charity sporting events.

The 2026 Big Freeze was especially emotional as it was the first held after Daniher's death, with tens of thousands of supporters honouring his legacy and continuing the fight he began.

In Ulverstone each year, local businesses and sporting representatives and individuals dress up in costumes and take a plunge down the Ulverstone water slide into the freezing pool to commemorate the Big Freeze in their own way. I myself am partial, Mr President, to representing parliament by taking the slide in a suit and tie. There are an assortment of meats, cows, chickens and steaks that were represented by Leven Gourmet Meats, the ladies in pink from Priceline, and we must not forget Joel Bellchambers in his mankini - it will be hard to forget that image - and many others who took the plunge. The event was co-sponsored by Harcourts Ulverstone and Penguin, the Ulverstone Football Club and the Central Coast Council. In the end there were upwards of 30 locals who braved the icy waters where, I'm told, close to two tonnes of ice was introduced. I'm not sure if that was the truth or an exaggeration, but I can tell you for sure that it was cold.

The event raised nearly \$15,000 this year and now over \$50,000 since its inception. I congratulate the organisations for a wonderful event and look forward to participating in the future.

The last slide of the day before the general public could take a plunge came from a very special family, that of the Johnstones. They are a local family who is well known in the community with a plastering business and just in general, recognised as good people. This plunge was an emotional one, as dad Andrew was diagnosed with MND in 2024. The diagnosis of MND was not new to the family, with Andrew's dad and cousin being diagnosed with MND and unfortunately passing away from this insidious disease after five and eight months respectively. Andrew is now two years after diagnosis and continuing to fight. He has lost the ability to communicate clearly, so his family took to the mic to explain their family situation that day. But a little something like MND wasn't going to stop his family from participating. Dressed as Smurfs, Andrew, his daughter Denna, his son Sam and his son-in-law Chet all braved their way up the long stairs to the top of the slide and a few moments later, to the roar of the crowd, down they came. I'd say that the wet faces on the viewers were from the large splash they made in the pool, but I'd say most of it was from the large splash that they made in our hearts. Thank you.

STATEMENT BY THE LEADER

Ministerial Portfolio Changes

[3.57 p.m.]

Ms RATTRAY (McIntyre - Leader for the Government in the Legislative Council) - Mr President, I have a ministerial statement on behalf of the Premier. I wish to advise the Council of ministerial appointments:

- The Honourable Jeremy Rockliff MP: Premier
- The Honourable Guy Barnett MP: Deputy Premier, Attorney-General, Minister for Environment and Climate Change, Minister for Justice, Corrections and Rehabilitation, Minister for Small Business, Trade and Consumer Affairs.
- The Honourable Eric Abetz MP: Leader of the House, Treasurer and Minister for Macquarie Point Urban Renewal.
- The Honourable Bridget Archer MP: Minister for Health, Mental Health and Wellbeing, Minister for Ageing and Minister for Aboriginal Affairs.
- The Honourable Nick Duigan MLC: Minister for Energy and Renewables, Minister for Parks and Heritage and Minister for Sport.
- The Honourable Felix Ellis MP: Minister for Business, Industry and Resources, Minister for Innovation, Science and the Digital Economy, Minister for Police, Fire and Emergency Management, and Minister for Skills and Jobs.
- The Honourable Roger Jaensch MP: Minister for Arts, Minister for Community and Multicultural Affairs, Minister for Racing and Minister for Tourism, Hospitality and Events.
- The Honourable Jo Palmer MLC: Minister for Education, Minister for Children and Youth, Minister for Disability Services, and Minister for Women and the Prevention of Family and Sexual Violence.
- The Honourable Gavin Pearce MP: Minister for Primary Industries and Water and Minister for Veterans Affairs.
- The Honourable Kerry Vincent MLC: Minister for Infrastructure and Transport, Minister for Local Government, Minister for Housing and Planning, and Deputy Leader of the Government in the Legislative Council.
- The Honourable Tania Rattray MLC will continue as Leader for the Government in the Legislative Council.

Thank you, Mr President.

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APPROPRIATION BILL (No. 1) 2026 (No. 18)

APPROPRIATION BILL (No. 2) 2026 (No. 19)

Permissive Instruction

Ms ARMITAGE (Launceston) (by leave) - Mr President, I seek leave to move a motion without notice relating to the usual permissive instruction to the Committee of the Whole Council concerning the budget bills. I move -

That with regard to the Appropriation Bills (Nos. 1 and 2) 2026 (Nos. 18 and 19) that the Committee of the Whole Council be empowered to consider Output and other expenditure detail contained in the documents Agency Information Supporting Appropriation Bill (No. 1)(Budget Paper No. 2) and Agency Information Supporting Appropriation Bill (No. 2)(Budget Paper No. 2).

And further -

That the Committee be empowered to exercise a vote on each proposed output as part of the process of approving appropriations contained within the Appropriation Bills (Nos. 1 and 2) of 2026 under the two-line Operating Services and Capital Services appropriation;

And further -

That the Committee of the Whole Council be empowered to consider the outputs as recommended in the Reports of Estimates Committees A and B, and that the outputs recommended in those reports be not subject to debate, and only those outputs recommended and listed as being subject to further consideration be open to debate in Committee;

Provided -

That should any member require further consideration of any output then the procedural mechanism of recommitment is to be used.

Motion agreed to.

APPROPRIATION BILL (No. 1) 2026 (No. 18)

Second Reading

Bill read the second time.

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APPROPRIATION BILL (No. 1) 2026 (No. 18)

In Committee

[3.43 p.m.]

Madam DEPUTY CHAIR - Members, I'd like to make a brief statement in regard to the way that the Committee is to be run.

The stages of the bill are intended to achieve two primary objects: first, to enable full discussion of both the substance and form of the legislation; second, to ensure that decisions already made at one stage are not reopened for discussion at a subsequent stage and do not, as a result, prolong a bill's passage unnecessarily.

In the context of debate on the appropriation bills, members are reminded that the purpose of the consideration and in the Committee of the Whole Council is to report to the House as to whether the bills should pass and whether clauses and items in the schedule to the bills should be, first, agreed to; second, subject to a request; or third, amended where the item is not for the ordinary annual services of the government.

The consideration of the budget papers during the Estimates process is intended to assist the efficient consideration of the appropriation bills by resolving issues prior to the debate of the bills in the Committee of the Whole. This facilitates the efficient consideration of the bills as in accordance with the permissive instruction only those outputs that are recommended for further debate may be addressed in detail during the Committee stage, unless the output is recommitted. I've directed that a list of the outputs recommended for further debate on each of the Estimates Committee's reports be provided to members. You will note that the list specifies the matters that gave rise to the recommendation for further debate. In addressing these outputs, members should confine their questioning to those particular matters.

The permissive instruction to enable the Committee of the Whole to consider and vote on the items under output groups in the budget papers is to facilitate debate on the proposed appropriation of public money contained in the appropriation bills. The instruction does not broaden the scope for debate which may take place in the Committee of the Whole. It's not an invitation to make statements unrelated to the proposed appropriation or to introduce issues unrelated to the proposed appropriation. I remind members that debate in Committee of the Whole is not a grievance-type debate. I therefore ask members to be succinct and to keep these comments in mind when speaking to the items in the budget papers.

Clauses 1 to 3 agreed to.

Clause 4 -

Issue, application and appropriation of \$9 104 688 000

Ms RATTRAY - Madam Chair, I move -

That clause 4 be postponed.

Clause 4 postponed.

Clause 5 -

Purposes of Appropriation

Ms RATTRAY - Madam Chair, I move -

That clause 5 be postponed.

Clause 5 postponed.

Clause 6 agreed to.

Schedule 1

Division 1 - Brand Tasmania

Premier

Operating Services

Output Group 1 - Brand Tasmania

Output 1.1 Brand Tasmania

Item agreed to.

Division agreed to without request and without amendment.

Division 2 - Department for Education, Children and Young People

Minister for Education

Operating Services

Output Group 1 - Education

Output 1.1 In School Education

Output 1.2 Early Learning

Output Group 2 - Libraries Tasmania

Output 2.1 Libraries Tasmania

Output Group 3 - Education Regulation

Output 3.1 Education Regulation

Items agreed to.

Ms O'CONNOR - I'll seek some guidance from the Leader here. I had some conversations with your adviser yesterday about a number of questions on notice we put in in this output and even though it's in the other committee, it was suggested to me maybe no, we can't raise them here?

To be clear, I'm quite happy for these to wait until after the break. A proposition was put to me that we could cover some of these off here because they relate to the other.

Madam DEPUTY CHAIR - My understanding is we can actually only discuss items that have been left open.

Ms O'CONNOR - Okay, that's fine. Thanks, Madam Deputy Chair, but we are asked in the process if we've got the matters we want to raise, so maybe that's something we want to have a look at.

Ms Webb - The preamble seemed to suggest that.

Ms O'CONNOR - It does. It suggests that you can ask questions in the outputs.

Madam DEPUTY CHAIR - My understanding is that it would need to be recommitted after we get through Committee.

Ms O'CONNOR - That's fine. I'm not fussy.

Grants and Subsidies

Item agreed to.

Capital Services

Capital Investment Program

Item agreed to.

Minister for Children and Youth

Output Group 4 - Children Services

Output 4.1 Services for Children and Families

Output 4.2 Services for Youth Justice

Items agreed to.

Output Group 5 - Independent Children's and Young Persons' Review Service

Output 5.1 Office of the Commissioner for Children and Young People

Items agreed to.

Capital Services

Capital Investment Program

Item as read agreed to.

Division agreed to without request and without amendment.

Division 3 - Environment Protection Authority

Minister for Environment

Operating Services

Output Group 1 - Environment Protection Authority

Output 1.1 Environmental Regulation

[3.50 p.m.]

Ms O'CONNOR - I left this one open because this was a question about the treatment methods for contaminated materials on the Macquarie Point site that pose a risk to human health. I was trying to understand how the soil will be excavated, treated and stored on site. For material that needs to be removed on site, I wanted to understand what the process for this was and how the risk to public health was being mitigated.

I was really disappointed in the answers that were presented by, I gather, the Environment Protection Authority and provided to the Minister for the Environment's office. What we had here was what's described as a summary from the current auditor-approved Site Environmental Management Plan (SEMP). That summary was extremely thin and provided no details. The question asked for detail on remediation and removal of contaminated soils. I refer honourable members to the answers to questions that were provided to Committee A by the Treasurer, who was then the acting Minister for the Environment, and they are not reassuring at all.

My question to government is: is it possible to understand who summarised the current auditor-approved Site Environmental Management Plan for this answer? Was it undertaken by artificial intelligence, because it certainly reads that way? Can Council please have a copy of the current auditor-approved Site Environmental Management Plan so that we can all better understand how the remediation on this site will be undertaken in a way that does not pose a risk to human health.

Ms RATTRAY - Thank you. I'm taking some advice because some information was provided to the committee, so we're looking for that additional information as requested.

Firstly, no, the summarisation wasn't AI. I actually had the person sitting at the table who summarised it; it doesn't look like he's AI.

It was a summarisation of a 235-page document received on 15 June. The document will be published and publicly available under the State Policies and Projects (Macquarie Point Precinct) Order of 2025.

Ms O'CONNOR - Thank you, Madam Chair. Well, when will the Site Environmental Management Plan be made publicly available? Because it's not enough to simply tell us that it will be available. Can your advisers from the Environment Protection Authority (EPA) at the table explain to Council: is this auditor-approved Site Environmental Management Plan for the site simply an update on the original, sent for the original master-planned project at Macquarie Point that was widely consulted and supported within the community, unlike the projects we're dealing with now? So, when will the auditor-approved SEMP be made available? Is it a new SEMP specific for the stadium, given that we've had confirmed estimates that the piles for the stadium will be driven at least 22 metres into the contaminated soils of Macquarie Point? My third question on this issue is: can the EPA confirm what we were told at the table by the Macquarie Point Development Corporation (MPDC) and that is, that preliminary works, excavation works, on the site will be undertaken beginning in July?

Ms RATTRAY - Again, Madam Chair, I'm seeking some advice and a new pen. The SEMP is currently being reviewed by the EPA, and as I've said, the document will be publicly available before the preparatory works begin. Secondly, it has been comprehensively reviewed. The document is being reviewed and updated for the change in the development at the site.

Thirdly, the MPDC want to start in July but is unable to commence works until the SEMP is approved.

Ms O'CONNOR - Thank you, Madam Chair. If we could just check back on the estimated volume of contaminated soils. At three different Estimates hearings from November last year to the two this year, one with MPDC, and one with the EPA, three different volume numbers - in fact, four because we had a different one from MPDC and a different one from EPA last November, and then two different numbers at the table this year. What is the EPA's understanding of the volume of all levels of contaminated soil under the *Environmental Management and Pollution Control Act*, from level 1 to level 4, and, perhaps, what is the source of that data?

Sitting suspended from 4.00 p.m. to 4.30 p.m.

APPROPRIATION BILL (No. 1) 2026 (No. 18)

In Committee

Resumed from above.

Output Group 1 - Environment Protection Authority

Output 1.1 Environmental Regulation

Ms RATTRAY - Thank you, Madam Chair. The response to the question that was asked by the honourable member prior to the afternoon break is: as at 22 June 2026, figures provided to the EPA by MPDC outline that 141,459 cubic metres of material will be excavated as part of the works.

Item agreed to.

Output 1.2. Environmental Assessment

Item agreed to.

Division agreed to without request and without amendment.

Division 4 - Finance-General

Treasurer

Operating Services

Output Group 1 - Debt Servicing and Management

Output 1.1 Debt Servicing

Output 1.2 Interest on Sundry Deposits

Items agreed to.

Output Group 2 - Employee Related Costs

Output 2.1 Superannuation and Pensions

Item agreed to.

Output Group 3 - Government Businesses

Output 3.1 Sustainable Timber Tasmania

Output 3.2 State Fire Commission

Output 3.4 Government Businesses

Items agreed to.

Output Group 4 - Miscellaneous

Output 4.2 Treasurers Reserve

Output 4.3 Miscellaneous

Output 4.4 Payment to Australian Tax Office: GST Administration

Output 4.7 Property Management Services

Output 4.8 Infrastructure Investment Project Planning

Output 4.9 Ex-Gratia Assistance

Output 4.12 Home Warranty Insurance Scheme

Items agreed to.

Grants and Subsidies

Item agreed to.

Capital Services

Capital Investment Program

Item agreed to.

Division agreed to without request and without amendment.

Division 5 - Department of Health

Minister for Health, Mental Health and Wellbeing

Operating Services

Output Group 1 - System Management

1.1 System Management - Health

Ms LOVELL - Thank you, Madam Deputy Chair. I had a question in relation to some information that was provided for a question on notice; I asked for a copy of measures identified to meet operational efficiencies, including the amount to be saved by year. We're provided with the table which gave that breakdown by year, which was helpful, but the table still had headline descriptions of what the measures are. Some of them we did speak about in the hearing, so there are some of them that we do have a bit more information on, but I was in particular wondering, and appreciate - I don't know if the Leader can take these on notice from here - whether the information will be available at the table or not.

I was particularly interested in the legislation review, fees and charges, which, according to this table, will be increasing revenue by \$2 million in this financial year, \$4 million, then \$6 million, then \$8 million, so an explanation of those fees and charges and how that revenue will increase. In relation to the expenditure reductions, there was a clinical workforce review, so savings expected in a reduction of expenditure there from the clinical workforce review, so if the Leader could provide more information on what that review will be encompassing, that would be helpful.

Ms RATTRAY - Thank you. I will take some advice to provide the appropriate response. In response to the member's questions: there were full cost recovery for externally funded patients, and the dot points on that, the cost of treating patients covered by external sources such as MAIB, DVA -

Ms Lovell - Sorry, through you, Madam Chair, because I do only have three speaks and two questions on this line: it was the legislation review, fees and charges. The cost recovery we did speak about at the hearings. I'm not needing more information on that one; it was the legislation review, fees and charges that was the line I was asking about in particular.

Ms RATTRAY - Thank you. It's really relevant information, but I will take that on board.

Ms Lovell - We've heard it already.

Ms RATTRAY - In regard to the legislation review, fees and charges, the Department of Health administers 25 acts, many of which have fees that are outdated, not indexed or no longer aligned with current policy settings. A comprehensive review of all Health-related legislative fees and charges will be conducted to ensure they are still required and cover appropriate costs. Where appropriate, fees will be aligned to the *Fee Units Act 1997*, so they will automatically increase each year, maintaining consistency and transparency over time.

Ms LOVELL - Thank you, Madam Deputy Chair. I will put all of this into this one question, because I do have a further question on notice to follow up on as well. Thank you for that answer. Just to clarify: the legislation review hasn't yet been done, and so, these amounts that are revenue increases forecast in the budget are estimates. If you haven't done the work to identify or to review those fees and charges, then they're not confirmed that that is what you will definitely be receiving?

The other question that I did ask earlier as well is on the clinical workforce review, which was an expenditure reduction measure, what that clinical workforce review will encompass; if there's more information that can be provided on that.

Ms RATTRAY - If I got to finish my first answer, we would have that second question, but thank you for bringing it again to the attention. In regard to those legislative reviews, yes, you are correct. It hasn't happened yet, and with 25 acts, obviously it is going to take some time, but yes, there is a focus on that.

In regard to the clinical workforce review, the Tasmanian health system delivers services across a range of clinical settings, operating within three regional executive teams. This structure has resulted in variation over time in how workforce methodologies have been applied across disciplines and services. The clinical workforce requirements are guided by a range of professional standards and benchmarking approaches which consider service demand, models

of care, and appropriate skill mix across disciplines. This includes medical, nursing, allied health and other clinical roles required to safely and effectively deliver care.

In the context of increasing service demand and clearer role expectations established through the Tasmanian role delineation framework, a comprehensive clinical workforce review will be undertaken, and this review will benchmark current workforce profiles across clinical settings against relevant standards and contemporary best practice. The review will identify appropriate full-time equivalent workforce levels and skill mix requirements and establish a consistent, evidence-based methodology to support future workforce planning aligned to service demand and activity.

Ms THOMAS - Thank you, Madam Deputy Chair. My question is in relation to the Bluegum project. The response to the question on notice reveals that of the \$118 million spent on the Bluegum Digital Health Transformation project to date, \$36.5 million has been spent on labour hire. My first question is: how many individual contracts were awarded? How many contractors were awarded contracts? How many contracts did each individual contractor receive?

Ms RATTRAY - Some of that information is just coming through that you've asked for. We do have an explanation on why the labour hire is required for this project, if the honourable member would like to hear that or is comfortable to wait until the question comes on the numbers that you've asked for.

Ms THOMAS - I'm happy to hear that while we wait, if you'd like.

Ms RATTRAY - The department's expenditure of approximately \$36 million on contract labour for the Bluegum project reflects the scale and urgency of delivering critical digital health initiatives aligned with the government's priorities. Contractors have been engaged to provide highly specialised skills including program delivery, architecture, integration and cybersecurity that are either not readily available in the labour market or cannot be secured through salaried roles due to remuneration constraints. This is compounded by significant pipeline of concurrent ICT initiatives requiring immediate access to experienced capability. The use of contractors ensures rapid mobilisation of expertise, maintains delivery momentum and reduces implementation risk across complex programs, including those supporting the Digital Health Transformation Strategy and EMR. In summary, contractor engagement for Bluegum is a targeted and necessary response to deliver priority digital initiatives rather than business-as-usual resourcing. I trust that I'll have the remainder of that answer.

DEPUTY CHAIR - In the meantime, any requests?

Ms THOMAS - I think they're still going to answer the question.

Ms RATTRAY - I'm still waiting for it to come through.

Deputy Chair, that level of detail is not readily available right now, but I'm happy to take that question on notice and it will be provided. Also, the offer is extended to yourself or anybody, any member who would like a briefing around that as well. So, if I give that undertaking, will that suffice at this point in time?

Ms THOMAS - Thank you, Leader. I have a question on notice prepared to table tomorrow so I'll ask it that way.

My other question on this matter is: what assessment was undertaken before deciding to spend \$36.5 million on what is effectively labour hire rather than recruiting directly employed fixed-term staff? I heard you already provided some of this information in that overview you gave, but was there a business case or cost-benefit analysis or value-for-money assessment done to support that decision? What would the estimated cost have been had those positions been filled directly by employed fixed-term staff on equivalent salary and employment conditions? Is this labour-hire model still being employed and how much is budgeted to spend on labour hire for this project in 2026-27 and over the forward Estimates?

Ms RATTRAY - To the honourable member's detailed question, I don't have a fulsome response for the honourable member; but, again, there is an undertaking that some of that information will be provided, but as I've already outlined and you've referred to that I've already mentioned, it talked about the contractors who have been engaged and have highly specialised skills. They needed to be recruited as a matter of urgency, if you like, and those skills weren't necessarily something that was within the department itself. But obviously there's a more detailed response required, and again I will undertake to provide that.

Ms THOMAS - Thank you, Leader. It's disappointing that the government can't even tell the parliament whether there was a business case associated with spending \$36.5 million on labour hire for a significant digital transformation project. That seems like a pretty straightforward yes-or-no answer in fact, when we're spending significant public money and also that there's no answer as to how much is proposed to be spent on this. That's exactly the reason we're scrutinising this budget: to get answers on how much the government is planning to spend on significant projects like this. That's the point of budget scrutiny and to come here and not be able to get answers is extremely disappointing.

My final question on this matter is: what was the remaining \$81.5 million spent on in the spend on Horizon 1 of the Bluegum project to date, and what has been delivered through that expenditure?

Ms RATTRAY - Just to follow up on the question around the business case. The department does not undertake individual business cases in relation to labour hire. However, the spend on such hire forms part of the overall budget considerations, including assessment by the Health executive regarding the budget sought for this project.

I have some detail on the funding of the Digital Transformation Program overall, if the honourable member wants me to read that out as well, because the \$118 million that has been spent so far on the program to date, between 1 July 2022 and 31 March 2026, so that makes up the \$118 million.

Ms O'CONNOR - The question I asked, which has an incomplete answer in the answers to questions on notice, was whether or not the Department of Health had any contracts or advisory arrangements with a company called Palantir Technologies or associated companies. Just for people who don't know, Palantir has contracts with the Israel Defense Forces, Immigration and Customs Enforcement in the US and the National Health Service in the UK, where there are huge data protection issues. The company has been banned from Switzerland and France, and its founder said 'Democracy and freedom are incompatible'. The answer from

the government was that the Department of Health had no contracts with Palantir Technologies and the part of the question that was ignored was associated companies. Palantir is connected to or owns many, many companies that are in various data spaces. So the question is, and would Health know if it was the case, does the Health department have any contracts or advisory arrangements with any Palantir-associated company? That would of course include Palantir, but there are many companies that are under the umbrella of Palantir who are working across government.

Ms RATTRAY - Thank you, Madam Deputy Chair, the answer is no, it does not.

Ms O'CONNOR - Thank you, Leader. Just to follow that up, how does the Health department know? Is there some kind of ethics lens that they run across companies to whom they award tenders that have access to vast volumes of the private and biometric data of Tasmanians? How would the Health department know?

Ms RATTRAY - To the best of the Health department's knowledge, they do not have any contracts with Palantir Technologies Inc or associated companies.

Ms O'CONNOR - Last question. Is it possible for the advisers here today from Health to tell the Council which companies have access to the private and biometric health data of Tasmanians, particularly data, for example, that's held in our public hospital systems?

Ms RATTRAY - Regrettably, that information is not available. But, again, there has been an offer of briefings for members who want to source additional information and the department will look at what they can find and brief members.

Ms O'CONNOR - Okay, I'll take you up on that offer and hope that other members join us.

Ms Thomas - Only a briefing is not on the public record.

Ms LOVELL - Thank you, Madam Deputy Chair. This is my third call. I do have a couple of questions that I'd like to ask and I will need to ask now because I don't have another opportunity to speak.

One of them is on behalf of the member for Elwick because she also used up her three calls not being able to get the answers that she was after. I do want to say, we have a Budget Estimates process for a reason - and, please, I really hope the Leader takes this as it's intended and certainly not as a criticism of you, Leader, or of the advisers at the table. I know everyone is doing the best they can with the information they've got available to them.

Ms Ratray - I appreciate that from the honourable member.

Ms LOVELL - But we have Budget Estimates for a reason. We only get one chance to do this each year. These questions that we're following up on today are questions that couldn't be answered at the table. When we had the minister and the secretary there to answer those questions, they weren't able to answer those questions, and to be fair, some of them are questions we ask every year and they still weren't prepared to answer those questions.

We then get answers on notice, which is what we're talking about here today. We let the department know. We let the minister's office know which questions we want to follow up on in this process, so it's really difficult to be here today without answers being readily available, without the secretary here even to answer the questions that are being asked, without even the minister, who might have liked to be here. She's not. That's fine. But it puts us all in a position where we're not able to get the answers that we're after. We don't get another opportunity.

Sure, there are other mechanisms to follow up on questions, and I appreciate the offer of a briefing from the Leader on a couple of matters, but briefings are not on the public record. This is a public scrutiny process for a reason. We've talked about scrutiny and transparency already today, so it is important. Thank you for that latitude, Madam Deputy Chair.

Madam DEPUTY CHAIR - I thought it was important.

Ms LOVELL - I do have two further questions. What I would like to suggest, because this is our only opportunity, something perhaps for the Leader to consider: if these questions are not able to be answered now, that we report progress and come back when we can get the answers. We know what happens at the end of this week. We go on our winter break; the minister goes on her winter break. Parliament is not sitting now until August; we don't have another opportunity until August to raise these issues in a public forum, through a public mechanism through the parliament. I will put it out there that that is something I certainly would be willing to support; it might extend our day, but this is important. We get one chance to do this every year and it is frustrating that we seem to have this same issue every year.

Ms Thomas - It informs whether we support the Budget or not.

Ms LOVELL - Well, it does. A follow-up question from the member for Elwick, which was the question that she asked and I heard her ask it myself and we didn't get an answer. With the fundings, or the expenditure to date on horizon one of the Bluegum project, the question the member asked was: what was the remaining \$81.5 million spent on and what has been delivered through that expenditure?

My question, which is on a separate matter altogether, because this is my last call, was in relation to presumptive post-traumatic stress injury workers compensation for first responders. I asked the question in the hearing, and I was surprised the minister couldn't answer this on the spot because it's a question to the minister and I know she's not here to answer it, so I don't know that we're going to get much more information from this question. The question I asked was: what will you do, as minister, to protect the entitlement to presumptive post-traumatic stress disorder or injury workers compensation for first responders? Is this a policy you remain committed to?

I ask that question specifically because post-traumatic stress disorder was a specific item that the Treasurer mentioned in his budget speech. When he handed down the Budget, he talked about the increase in premiums that were as a result of an increase in claims for post-traumatic stress injury. While the answer we have here is regarding avoiding injury in the first place - I absolutely could not agree more - that's not happening because we're seeing an increase in these types of claims. Clearly, that work is not being done. The question was quite clear: what will the minister do to protect that entitlement and is this a policy she remains committed to? The minister didn't answer that question in the question on notice, so I do want to put it on record and seek an answer today.

There were two questions there. The question for the member for Elwick around the \$81.5 million spent in horizon one: what was that spent on and what has been delivered? And my question around post-traumatic stress injury presumption for workers compensation, and is that a policy that the minister and the government remain committed to?

Ms RATTRAY - I'm just seeking some advice.

In response to your first question or your something of a statement, certainly it's noted, and I can assure you that if there was an answer available, I would present it right now. Unfortunately, that's not the case. There are two people at the table, and there are more people listening and searching for responses.

In regard to your question around the minister being able to commit to your question, that's also being put immediately. I've given an undertaking that we will provide those answers as soon as they are available, but it's not desirable to actually report progress right now. As soon as they are available, then we'll come back with those answers.

Ms Lovell - Will they be available before the end of the week while we're still here in parliament?

Ms RATTRAY - I was hopeful that some of them would be available by the end of this day.

Ms Thomas - Can we postpone the clause or the division?

Ms RATTRAY - I do have some information in regard to some of the outcomes of the Bluegum program; I can provide that. More specific to the honourable member for Rumney's questions and certainly responding to the statement that you made around that these questions are here because they weren't answered previously, and there's still a lack of information that's available at this table, but there are people who are working on them now.

In response to the honourable member for Elwick and the Bluegum program: some of the initiatives that have been funded under that \$118 million since - I remember it was 22 July 2022 up to 31 March 2026 - is the Patient Alerts Management Solution (PAMS), which ensures medical professionals can access up-to-date medical records including medications, existing conditions and allergies, while also enabling them to enter and update patient alerts electronically in real time. The system instantly logs the referral with the specialist service or clinic and notifies GPs of receipt ensuring patients get health care sooner.

It's also funded free public wi-fi, which is now available in all Tasmania's main hospitals and 65 regional sites across the state, including Flinders Island, King Island, St Helens, St Marys, Scottsdale, Queenstown, Smithton and Campbell Town.

It has also funded discharge summary optimisations. It helps patients go home sooner and ensure that they have everything they need for the best possible recovery. The best possible medication history enhancement has been delivered across the four major hospitals, reducing the average wait time by 35 minutes for patients receiving medications.

Also, the Going Home Plan provides an individualised plan to help stroke patients transition from hospital to home, ensuring that they have everything they need for the best possible recovery.

There's also the rapid-access tap-on tap-off technology, which is now live in major hospital pharmacies and will shortly be rolled out to emergency departments, saving time by removing the need to manually enter credentials.

Also, the Did Not Attend Campaign, an awareness campaign, commenced in 2024 and continues now in response to 55,000 missed outpatient appointments in 2023 and 42,000 missed outpatient appointments in 2024. The campaign is underlining that need to attend appointments or let the department know so they can reallocate it to the next person if you can't make it and let someone else take it.

A project soon to be delivered includes an electronic meal management system ensuring patients receive the correct meals for their dietary restrictions and allergies, eliminating the risk of errors that can occur with handwritten orders. Infrastructure upgrades to allow the use of the enhanced mobile duress service continue to be carried out. The upgraded sites monitor staff movements in real time and instantly send alerts during duress events, improving staff safety. I'll just check and see if there is anything else to add to that.

A response in regard to the workers compensation review: the minister did answer this question on notice, where she said she will consider the outcomes of the WorkCover review once it is completed and if needed, and potentially won't be pre-empting the work of the WorkCover's review board.

Ms Lovell - I'll take that as a no, she's not committed to it then.

Item agreed to.

1.2 System Management - Mental Health and Wellbeing

Item agreed to.

Output Group 2 - Health Services

Output 2.1 Admitted Services

Ms LOVELL - This was in relation to a question that wasn't answered fully. The question on notice was: please provide a list and outline of all programs that will be included in the new intermediary care portfolio. We do have a list now. On this one, I will flag from the outset I'm not here to waste anyone's time. There's a list of programs that's quite lengthy, so I am happy for the Leader to take this on notice, but what I asked for was a list and an outline of the program, so an outline of what services the programs provide. The conversation we had at the table was regarding pulling together a map of these services so that people know how to navigate them and which service would be appropriate and where they might be able to go. What we got in response to the question on notice was just a list of the names of those programs, not really any information about what any of them do. A follow-up question was to ask for that outline of what these programs provide so that people know where to go for which services.

Ms RATTRAY - There is an extensive list and unfortunately that didn't seem to get attached to your original question, and you will never waste anyone's time in this place.

Ms Lovell - To be clear, I have a list of the names of -

Ms RATTRAY - So do I.

Ms Lovell - But not what they actually are, an outline of each of the services.

Ms RATTRAY - I have them all. It's about three pages. So you're happy for me to read those out?

Ms Lovell - Could you table them, is that -

Madam DEPUTY CHAIR - Are you happy to table them, Leader?

Ms Lovell - I am happy for you to table them, Leader, if that saves time?

Ms RATTRAY - Not in the format that I have in my hand, Madam Chair, but certainly in a format that would, I trust, satisfy the honourable member for Rumney. I'll certainly have that reformatted ASAP and bring it back.

Madam DEPUTY CHAIR - Can I clarify that you need to do that before we get to the end of the schedule.

Ms RATTRAY - I think we're some way off the end of the schedule. So I'd suggest that that should be possible.

Item agreed to.

Output 2.2 Non-Admitted services

Ms LOVELL - I had a question on notice around the processing time for reporting of X-rays statewide. We did have some conversation at the table around processing times at the Royal Hobart Hospital, so just in the south, but we couldn't get any information for other parts of the state. The question was regarding the current processing time for reporting of X-rays statewide, both for in-house and contracted services: that is, targets, and are they being met? The answer was that there is no nationally mandated reporting timeframe for routine X-rays in Australian public hospitals. Reporting is prioritised according to clinical urgency, with emergency critical care, trauma, paediatric and suspected cancer cases prioritised ahead of routine imaging. There was also an answer about regularly outsourcing non-urgent X-rays to private providers, which is standard practice. The answer then went on to talk about emergency department imaging being prioritised with the target turnaround of reporting of less than 24 hours, which is achieved on most occasions, but it didn't really answer my question. The answer was given that there was no nationally mandated reporting timeframe. Does that mean there is no target timeframe for reporting of X-rays within the THS across the state?

In particular, where there are external providers being used, private providers, what requirements are put into those contracts to outline KPIs or targets in terms of them delivering that service that they're being funded to deliver, and do we have information on the current - we

don't have targets, but do we have the current turnaround times? This has been an issue in recent months and certainly was something we explored at the last Estimates hearings in November last year. We were able to get that information in relation to the Royal Hobart Hospital, but not in relation to the rest of the state. So, turnaround times for reporting on X-rays statewide, given that there are no targets, so therefore we don't know whether targets are being met.

Ms RATTRAY - As you've already indicated, there is no nationally mandated reporting timeframe for routine plain-film X-rays in Australian public hospitals. Reporting is generally prioritised according to clinical urgency, with emergency critical care, trauma, paediatric and suspected cancer cases reported ahead of routine imaging. The department of Medical Imaging in Hospitals (South) monitors reporting performance from study completion to final report, and the emergency department imaging is prioritised with a target turnaround time of less than 24 hours from image acquisition to formal radiologist report. This target is being achieved. This is across the state. In addition to formal radiology reporting, ED imaging is reviewed contemporaneously by senior ED medical staff, including emergency medicine consultants, as part of the patient's clinical assessment and management, and this provides an additional layer of clinical oversight while awaiting the formal radiologist report.

The service continues to prioritise urgent and critical findings through established escalation and communication processes, ensuring clinically significant results are communicated promptly to the treating team. The average time for study completion to final report for imaging performed at the Royal Hobart Hospital was approximately three days and the timeframes that I'm going to read out now are statewide timeframes: critical is real time; semi-urgent, seven days; and non-urgent/routine, inside 28 days.

Ms LOVELL - I do note, though, that most of that answer was almost word for word the answer I already had to the question on notice. The figures that you gave at the end there you said were statewide figures. Are they targets, are they current averages? What were they exactly? Also, there was no answer to my question that I did ask on the private providers and whether there are KPIs or requirements in their contracts regarding the delivery of services within particular timeframes.

Ms RATTRAY - I think one answer is coming through ASAP and the other one is coming not far behind.

Madam Chair, I'm still checking on the private providers; that's on its way, but those statewide timeframes that I read out are the targets and they're being met and they're monitored weekly. The department is also progressing a statewide tender for radiology. As part of that, the department will be establishing targets which align with those of the Tasmanian Health Service. There will be a new, statewide tender. There will be a statewide approach.

Madam DEPUTY CHAIR - The Leader is just seeking advice.

Ms RATTRAY - In regard to the private providers, they are prioritised based on clinical need. X-rays are reported in-house unless outsourced with additional modality. All plain films as single modality reported in-house, that is plain film targets, are met in-house.

Ms LOVELL - Thank you, Madam Deputy Chair, and, yes, it is my third call. On the private providers, that doesn't really answer the question. The question I've asked, and this will

be the third time I've asked it, is: are there KPIs or targets included in their contracts, and are they being met? I don't think that's quite the answer that I got there, whether that's the case or not.

My other question is in relation to the statewide tender that the Leader has advised is being prepared for radiology: is that to outsource all radiology to a private provider across the state? What's the scope of that tender and the intention around that?

Ms RATTRAY - With regard to the medical imaging: the Tasmanian Health Service is progressing, as I've said, a statewide tender for radiology services, which includes imaging, reporting and outsourcing arrangements tailored to the needs of each region of the Tasmanian Health Service. The department has an existing contract for radiography and radiology services in north and north-west Tasmania, which expires in July 2026. In southern Tasmania, the Tasmanian Health Service provides the radiography and radiology, and currently partners with a number of private providers to manage demand, including I-MED Radiology, Radiology Tasmania and Aus Scan, so they're going to have one provider.

Ms Lovell - Outsourced?

Ms RATTRAY - Some of it will be outsourced but some of it already is, as I've already indicated.

Ms THOMAS - Further to that, just to clarify, you said some of it will be outsourced. So, the Tasmanian Health Service radiology services will still exist? Can you just clarify that, Leader, that it's not being completely outsourced; people aren't going to lose their jobs because of the outsourcing?

Ms RATTRAY - That's correct.

Item agreed to.

Output 2.3 Emergency Department Services

Ms O'CONNOR - These were questions that relate to infection prevention and control in our public hospital emergency department, and I asked quite specific questions which are there on the Estimates A and B summary of items for further debate. I feel, honestly, quite insulted by the Health department's answers to these questions: dismissive, glib, 'take us on trust', 'there are relevant departmental policies'. It is unclear from the answers provided by government that any sustained measures are put in place to prevent nosocomial infections, both for staff and patients inside emergency departments.

My questions to the government are: We're told here that deployment of HEPA filtration units and other environmental controls in emergency departments is in accordance with the infection prevention and control unit advice and departmental guidelines. Is that advice available? Is there a standing document that's accessible for staff who work in the emergency department? What are the departmental guidelines around how air-cleaning technology is used inside emergency departments where a lot of really sick people and clinically vulnerable people go and are left for hours at a time?

Ms RATTRAY - It's quite difficult with your back to one or the other.

Ms O'Connor - I don't mind, whatever's comfortable to you, Leader.

Ms RATTRAY - Thank you. Well, I'll look at the Chair.

Under the Australian Health Facility Guidelines, AusHFG, there is no requirement to use HEPA filters in emergency department waiting rooms. The AusHFG sets the architectural and airflow requirements for health facilities, and the current ED waiting room and future waiting rooms are compliant with these design specifications.

Portable air purifiers are not used in waiting rooms for two reasons. The waiting room is not a sealed environment, hence the number of air purifiers required for meaningfully reduced infectious risks is not achievable, noting that in aeroplanes where the entire cabin volume is HEPA filtered every two or three minutes, people will still become unwell if seated in proximity to a traveller who is infectious. Air purifiers could not be used as weapons in ED, putting staff and other patients at risk. The Royal Hobart Hospital ED rebuild is designed to be compliant with the following requirements from heating, ventilation, air conditioning and HVAC perspectives, and that's under the Australian Standards AS 1668.1 and AS 1668.2, the Victorian Health and Human Services Building Authority (VHHSBA), the Australasian Health Facility Guidelines (AHFG), and the Australian Institute of Refrigeration, Air Conditioning and Heating (AIRAH). I feel like I've been reading out a lot of acronyms today.

The Royal Hobart Hospital Emergency Short-Stay Unit, the SSU and the EMU, is currently being used as a short-stay ward, but will be the interim ED acute area between August 2026 and September 2027. The airflow in this unit exceeds requirements listed above, and the location of this unit allows airflow in this area to be negative airflow from corridor to cubicle to outside. In addition to exceeding the current requirements, the individualised airflows in this unit and the ability to vent externally as well as single rooms makes the unit ideally suited to looking after people with infectious disease outbreaks, for example, COVID and influenza. The Royal Hobart Hospital ED is being rebuilt and upon completion approximately mid-2028, there will be six dedicated negative-pressure rooms including a dedicated paediatric isolation room and a dedicated resus isolation room with external air-lock entry, ideally suited for more infectious diseases, for example respiratory tuberculosis, measles, et cetera. The number of dedicated negative pressure rooms is more than compliant with AusHFG.

The emergency departments utilise a risk-based ETEC approach to infection prevention and control that incorporates building ventilation systems, patient screening processes, environmental cleaning and IPCU guidance. Air-quality management is supported through compliance with relevant building ventilation and healthcare facility standards. Additional mitigation measures, including portable HEPA filtration units, may be implemented where indicated following infection prevention and control assessment.

Ms O'CONNOR - Thank you, Madam Chair. I feel today, because we only have three speaks each on a question, that the answers are not only insufficient, but they're sort of being dragged out. It's like pulling teeth here. What we've just established is that no air filtration systems are used in our public hospital emergency departments. We've just established that through the Leader's answer. We've been told that there's no requirement under national guidelines for public hospitals to use HEPA filters, air-cleaning filters, inside emergency departments. Then we went off on a diversion about special units with negative-pressure flow in them. That's when people are really sick, Leader. I'm talking about emergency departments

where clinically vulnerable and often very sick people are going in, and there is high risk of cross-infection of staff and other people in the emergency departments.

It's very concerning, but my question to you, the first question that I asked, which I will ask again now is: is there any available advice from the Infection Prevention and Control Unit, publicly available advice, about how to prevent nosocomial infections in our emergency departments? That's the first part of the first question I asked that wasn't answered.

The second part of the first question I asked, which wasn't answered, is, we are told here that the deployment of HEPA filtration units and other environmental controls is in accordance with IPCU advice and departmental guidelines, and so I asked: are those guidelines publicly available, and if so, where can we find them?

Ms RATTRAY - Statewide advice is available through the Tasmanian Infection Prevention and Control Unit (TIPCU), and it's on the Department of Health website.

Ms O'CONNOR - Where are the departmental guidelines? Can I just point out that in the answers to this question that was put on notice, the answer is misleading because we are not told. We're told in the answer that HEPA filtration units are available and deployed when clinically appropriate; that is not what we heard in the Leader's answer. My last question relates to the last part of this misleading answer. It says in addition, healthcare-associated (nosocomial) infections are routinely monitored through IPCU-led surveillance activities.

Can the Leader confirm that the monitoring by the IPCU is ongoing? What are the latest results of that monitoring, and is there any public record of that monitoring? Noting that there are national standards for infection prevention control, and Tasmania has, from time to time in the past, slipped down those standards and had a black mark against its name for imperfect infection prevention and control measures. I would like a little bit more information, on my third and final speak, on the monitoring of nosocomial infections, whether it's ongoing, what's the latest data, and whether there's any public reporting of infection surveillance.

Ms RATTRAY - The monitoring is ongoing. The Health department reports through hospital-based departmental and accountability meetings. They also have dashboards and surveillance reports available through the TIPCU and there are links specifically for patients and health professionals in regard to that question.

Item agreed to.

Output 2.4 Community Health Services

Ms LOVELL - My question is in relation to the number of breast screens that were performed. It's a question on notice around the number of breast screens that were performed in the last financial year that both mobile units were operating, compared to how many were performed in the most recent period available. I appreciate the most recent period available is not a full financial year, so it was July 2025 to March 2026. I appreciate this is a basic mathematical projection based on those numbers performed in those nine months and extended out to a 12-month period. We would end up with around 3000 breast screens fewer than 2024-25 and 2023-24 when the mobile units were operating. My question is whether there's any action being taken to lift those numbers in the last little bit of this financial year, or whether that is looking at around the projection that would get to in the couple of weeks that we've got

left of the financial year. What's being done to address the shortfall in the number of breast screens that have been performed, particularly for women in regional areas who don't have access to those mobile units?

Ms RATTRAY - The Department of Health has implemented a suite of interventions to ensure there is continued access to free breast screening while a replacement unit is being constructed. These include:

- a temporary travel subsidy scheme for breast screen clients living in affected communities - this will be available until the new mobile breast screen unit is operational;
- work within community organisations in impacted communities to arrange community transport for group screening bookings; several group bookings have been facilitated through this process to date; and
- the establishment of an interim breast screen site at Devonport at the Devonport Community Health Centre.

The new centre became operational in June 2026, this month, and will enable *Ida*, the BreastScreen Tasmania Mobile Screening Unit, to be redeployed from the Devonport region to provide services to other communities.

Just as an aside, *Ida* is scheduled to visit Smithton and Queenstown, as well as selected locations on the east coast, in the latter part of 2026.

Ms LOVELL - I'll ask my question again because part of it wasn't answered. My question is: has the department done its own projections around the number of breast screens that would be expected to be completed in this full financial year? Is it at around 3000 short of the last couple of years, like the calculation that I've done, which I accept is very basic? What is the full number of breast screens we're expecting to have completed in this financial year that's almost about to end?

I also note that this data provided via the question on notice response is data from the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, so it's statewide data. Does the THS or the department collect its own data, particularly regional data, given the situation we're in in Tasmania at the moment, where we don't have access to a mobile unit that we ordinarily do have access to? This would enable the department to assess whether any of those measures are actually successful and achieving the results that we want it to achieve, being increased access to breast screening for women in Tasmania.

Ms RATTRAY - The department is awaiting finalisation of the final dataset to be able to ascertain potentially the number that you've -

Ms LOVELL - So, there hasn't been a projection, an estimated -

Ms RATTRAY - There hasn't been a projection because they're waiting for that finalisation of the final dataset. In relation to regional data, yes, there can be a breakdown of that data per site, but it's not available right now - but again, an undertaking to provide that to the member.

Ms THOMAS - To follow up on the member for Rumney's questions, and I will phrase it a different way, that the data suggests numbers are down in 2025-26, falling from around 2900 screenings per month in the previous two years to 2647 per month to date this financial year; does the government have records on how many appointments are available per month, as well as how many screenings occur? How does the department analyse whether less women are choosing to screen or whether the service is unable to keep up with the demand?

Ms RATTRAY - The department does have the information regarding availability per month and whether a screening has occurred, which can be provided, but not right now. I doubt that I'm going to be able to provide that before the end of this particular area, but it can be made available and will be made available as soon as possible.

Ms LOVELL - Thank you, Madam Deputy Chair. I will ask a question that is not data-related, so I hope that this can be provided now. Well, I should say I would have hoped all of these could have been provided now, but anyway, this question is not in relation to data, it's in relation to actions taken by the department. I appreciate that the Leader has said that regional breakdown of data can be provided at another time, and I will pursue that through another mechanism, but it doesn't really answer my question that I, again, asked earlier and I will ask it again now: does the department, or has the department undertaken - without having to name up the data here and now - any assessment of that data, particularly from the regions, so that we can know, and also the department can know, whether the measures that they're implementing to increase access to breast screening services are successful, and whether or not women, particularly in regions, are able to access breast screening in the same way or at the same frequency that they would if those mobile units were both active? I'm not asking for data; I'm just asking a question on what action the government, or the department, has taken to ensure or assess whether those measures have been successful or not.

Ms RATTRAY - The department does assess the data as it informs where the buses travel to, along with where permanent sites should be located. So, it does undertake that work, otherwise they wouldn't have the know-how or know-where to go to provide those services in each of those areas; so that's what we have.

Ms THOMAS - Thank you. It's pleasing to hear that the government does assess data, but as we've heard repeatedly today, just the government telling us that it does assess data and does do things isn't cutting it, when we've got a government who continuously tells us things that then we find out we couldn't actually believe. Leader, it's no reflection on you, but we are asking these specific questions and expecting specific answers because we are doing our very best to scrutinise the Budget on behalf of taxpayers, on behalf of the people we represent, because there is so much lack of trust in this government. To not be able to come here and get the answers is incredibly disappointing and I'm so tempted to move that we report progress and come back tomorrow when perhaps the government has had the chance to brainstorm all of the questions that members might have, when clearly this is the topic. I would expect that in the last week or so when they've known what items we've left open, they would actually do that and actually consider, what possibly could they further want to know on this? Ask us in advance if you're not sure. You've had time to do this and are sitting here clock-watching while we spend five minutes getting an answer. It's not a good use of anyone's time and we're still not getting the answers - so incredibly frustrating. I don't know if there'd be the mood of the House to report progress and come back tomorrow when perhaps we will get some more answers, but I guess I do have to ask a question.

We heard in the response to the question on notice, that the budgeted amount for BreastScreen services is barely increasing over the forward Estimates; but we've also heard the government say new services are coming online in Devonport, Glenorchy, Kingston and Triabunna - which is fantastic, we need those services - but what the forward Estimates shows is there's no increased budget to provide for those four new services. If the budgeted amount for BreastScreen services is barely increasing over the forward Estimates, how will the government fund those new services coming online? How are we expected to approve a budget for this line item where there's four new services coming online, but it appears there's not sufficient budget to actually service them?

Ms RATTRAY - In regard to the additional services and the funding for those, there is some additional detail around the appropriation prior to 2026-27, and that has been an additional \$7 million for 2024-25 and also 2025-26 year to date. There's also some expenditure of \$6.603 million to cover those services. The increase is from 2024-25 and 2025-26, but it's not shown in the table that was in the Budget Estimates at 2026-27. That's what I've been advised.

Ms THOMAS - That doesn't answer my question, because if increased services are coming online over those forward years, there's not a need for a budget for them now, they're not online yet. I'm not satisfied with that answer. I'm not satisfied to support a budget where that's what's proposed, when there's clearly not sufficient funding. The answer hasn't demonstrated that there's sufficient funding to fund those services the government has promised.

Chair, I'm not satisfied with the answer, and I move -

That the Committee report progress and seek leave to sit again.

Ms RATTRAY - It's perhaps the way that the honourable Leader provided that answer that wasn't terribly helpful and possibly should have had a more fulsome explanation.

Ms Thomas - You put the question.

Ms RATTRAY - I'm just asking that you give me an opportunity to re-put that information on the public record and then you may be comfortable.

Motion negatived.

Ms RATTRAY - I will try again, Deputy Chair. So, the figures that I read out for 2024-25 was the BreastScreen budget and expenditure. So, in 2024-25, the expenditure was \$7 million and in 2025-26, year to date, as of 23 June 2026, the expenditure is \$6.603 million. Going forward, the BreastScreen funding appropriation for 2026-27, which will include those four areas that the member identified, is \$14.147 million. So, there's effectively an increase of around \$7 million, and that continues to go in the forward Estimates 2026; 2027-28 forward Estimate: \$14.308 million; 2028-29: \$14.473 million; and 2029-30 year: \$14.642 million. I do apologise that the answer may well have been somewhat discombobulated, and I trust that that's a clearer response from the Leader.

Madam DEPUTY CHAIR - Actually, you've had your three calls.

Ms THOMAS - I was moving that the debate report progress on that call. It still counts as my third call.

Madam DEPUTY CHAIR - Sorry about that.

Mr HISCUTT - Continuing on that, was any further enquiry made into why breast screening numbers were not included in the gender budget statement? If so, what was the reason, and has a process been put in place to ensure that they are in the future?

Ms RATTRAY - You're absolutely correct, the information wasn't included as the department relies on the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW) data, which hadn't been reported at the time. The department is putting in place measures to ensure that doesn't happen in the future and if there are any further enquiries, we can certainly make that through the Treasurer's office.

Item agreed to.

Output 2.5 Statewide and Mental Health Services

Item agreed to.

Output 2.6 Ambulance Services

Ms LOVELL - This is, again, in relation to a question that was taken on notice and not answered. The question was around the number of times that Ambulance Tasmania resources have been used to attend private events on a contract basis to provide first aid support. The question was very specific: on how many occasions have resources been diverted from Ambulance Tasmania to private contracted events and left Ambulance Tasmania short? The answer was:

All additional shifts to support private events are offered as overtime shifts to Ambulance Tasmania paramedic staff as surplus to standard rostered crews. There have been some minimal and very infrequent occasions where Ambulance Tasmania has diverted resources from a shift to cover a contracted private event.

So, I will ask the question again: how many occasions? I don't want to hear 'minimal and very infrequent'. I'd like to hear the number of occasions, which is what I meant by how many. This, again, wasn't able to be answered at the table, was taken on notice, sent through on notice, and not answered, which is why we're here in this position in the Chamber where we're putting these questions. Hopefully we will get an answer this time.

Ms RATTRAY - Ambulance Tasmania has reviewed available shift documentation, however, is unable to provide a definitive or comprehensive count of occasions where resources were diverted from rostered shifts to contracted events in 2025-26. This is due to system limitations and a reliance on paper-based records, with some instances also involving partial shifts arising from operational requirements or unplanned leave. It goes on to say that any occasion where a resource was diverted from a rostered shift to a contracted event has been done in consultation with the regional leadership team to mitigate and avoid impact on availability and community response. Ambulance Tasmania are in the early stages of scoping

rostering programs. The function to capture this specific information in an automated manner is something they're committed to investigating.

Ms LOVELL - I find it really hard to believe that Ambulance Tasmania doesn't collect this information, or isn't interested in it, or has no record of it, or what have you, and is not able to provide it. My question - and you can answer this with a yes or no - given that they're so minimal and infrequent, can nobody remember how many times?

Ms RATTRAY - Just checking if we can find this. It appears that the answer is no, from the best that I can source; but I just want to put on the record, again, that there are systems being put in place to ensure that this data and this information is collected in the future, especially if I'm going to sit here.

Item agreed to.

Output 2.7 Public Health Services

Ms O'CONNOR - The question I asked in Public Health Services was: has there been any increase in diabetes 1 or 2 in children under the age of 18 since 1 January 2020?

Ms Thomas - Hepatitis. You said diabetes; hepatitis. Oh, sorry.

Ms O'CONNOR - The hepatitis one was answered, you're right. I did ask both of them. What data is available on childhood diabetes rates and/or prevalence in Tasmania? It is logical, you would have thought, for the department to acknowledge that what I was seeking there was some data. Instead, I got an explanation that there is some data available. What I got here, in the letter from the Minister for Health, Mental Health and Wellbeing, is that Tasmanian-specific data on childhood diabetes is available, but it's not published as a single consolidated report - irrelevant. It doesn't go anywhere near the question, of course. I didn't ask if it's a single source of data but what data is available:

Available evidence indicates an increase in type 2 diabetes among children and adolescents in Tasmania since 2020.

The answer goes on:

This is consistent with national and international trends.

Yes, of course it is, because we've allowed children's immune systems to be damaged by COVID. That's what's happening, and you can see it in the data all over the world. It says:

Type 1 diabetes remains the most common form of diabetes in children, with overall incidence relatively stable.

The question is: what's the data? Could we please have the data which I tried to get at the table -

Madam DEPUTY CHAIR - Sorry, member, could you just stand closer to your microphone, if you could?

Ms O'CONNOR - Sorry. Long day. The question is: what's the data? It's the same question I asked at the table: what data is available to give us an epidemiological picture of what's happening in childhood diabetes? We have had a glib and dismissive answer from the department that says, yeah, there's data, but we're not giving it to you. Oh, yes, there has been an increase in type 2 diabetes, but we're not giving you the data to show you that, and overall, it's relatively stable for type 1 diabetes. I want the answer to the question that I asked at the table and then that I put on notice and that is: where is the data? Can we see the data on childhood diabetes since 1 January 2020 because if it is in line with national and international trends, it will tell us something that should concern us.

Madam DEPUTY CHAIR - I'm sure the Leader is seeking advice.

Ms RATTRAY - Thank you.

Madam Chair, I have some information and I'm still seeking further information. I trust that I'll have it before I need to sit down.

Tasmania has consistently recorded the highest rate of paediatric type 1 diabetes in Australia, as reported by the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW). Data from the Royal Hobart Hospital Paediatric Diabetes Clinic shows a 10 per cent increase in children under 18 years living with type 1 diabetes between 2020 and 2026 and new diagnoses increasing by 30 per cent between 2020 and 2025. Tasmanian children are at increased risk of youth onset type 2 diabetes due to high rates of overweight and obesity, socioeconomic disadvantage, and a higher representation of Indigenous Australians, who are disproportionately affected by type 2 diabetes.

Data from the Royal Hobart Hospital Paediatric Diabetes Clinic indicates a fivefold increase in diagnosis between 2020 and 2025, noting that this is likely underestimated due to underdiagnosis in young people.

The Royal Hobart Hospital's is the only dataset that is available across the state. I have asked if that's something that's going to be rolled out with other hospitals, the north-west and northern hospitals, and at this stage I don't have a response, but I endeavour to provide that to the honourable member outside of this process.

Ms O'CONNOR - I just point out that the answer we were given on paper, signed off by the minister, is completely misleading. We're told in the last part of the answer type 1 diabetes remains the most common form of diabetes in children with overall incidence relatively stable. No, it's not. We were just told there's been a 10 per cent increase in children under 18 being diagnosed with type 1 diabetes since 1 January 2020.

We've been told now, and I don't know which type of diabetes it is - and perhaps the Leader could detail that - but there's a fivefold increase in diagnosis from 2020 to 2025.

Ms Ratray - Type 2.

Ms O'CONNOR - That's type 2. Can we confirm that the dataset that's at the Royal Hobart Hospital is a statewide dataset, or is data only being gathered through Royal Hobart Hospital? I think that would be good to know. Is it, in fact, the government or the Department of Health's contention that this significant jump in incidence of childhood diabetes since

1 January 2021 is all down to our relative disadvantage and higher proportion of First Nations children?

Ms RATTRAY - I can confirm that the data is only from the Royal Hobart Hospital Paediatric Diabetes Clinic and in regard to type 2 diabetes; it indicates a fivefold increase in diagnosis between 2020 and 2025. It's not available from the two northern hospitals, this information, and I can't confirm -

Ms O'Connor - I'm happy to not have a third speak if I can seek clarification, by interjection.

Ms RATTRAY - I need to say that that Royal Hobart Hospital Paediatric Diabetes Clinic is statewide.

Ms O'Connor - Thank you.

Ms RATTRAY - Regarding the question around the minister: I'm not able to answer that.

Ms O'Connor - Anyway, it's a totally misleading answer.

Ms THOMAS - Deputy Chair, on the same topic - and thank you to the member for Hobart for raising this issue - my question is: this data is clearly to hand here, Leader, to provide, so why on earth wasn't it provided in response to answering the question on notice? Why do we have to ask and then ask and get drip-fed little bits of information to be able to get the answers to the questions that we're asking on this Budget? The minister has signed off on this. The minister has read the answers to these questions. Surely, the minister would have seen the question had not been specifically answered.

Leader, I'm seeking an explanation. We've heard now what specifically the increase is. We haven't heard the full evidence that appears to be available. It says Tasmania's specific data on childhood diabetes is available. We're not going to provide it to you. It's not published - available evidence indicates an increase. We're not going to tell you what it is. Why should we have to continually ask and re-ask questions to get specific information on behalf of Tasmanians?

It's not good enough and it's a common theme. Leader, I just seek an explanation as to why this -

Ms Webb - It's almost like the government is playing political games with this Chamber.

Ms RATTRAY - Certainly, the points that have been made by the honourable member are well and truly noted in response to some aspects of what's been presented. The information does not form part of a consolidated report, which is why it's not routinely reported. The increase in rates is consistent with trends seen nationally and internationally.

Ms O'Connor - That's why I asked the questions.

Ms RATTRAY - So, that may well -

Ms O'Connor - So, we've had it confirmed. Tasmania is on trend and our kids are paying.

Ms RATTRAY - That's why the answer was provided. As for responding to a question about the minister signing off on something: I'm not able to provide a response to that, unfortunately, but I can assure the honourable member and all honourable members in this place that I will follow up on what's perhaps not being presented here and why some of the questions weren't fully answered, acknowledging that people don't always know what members are going to ask. They don't. This is the process that we have, and we are attempting to provide as much information as absolutely possible. I can assure you that no-one's hiding from anything.

Ms O'Connor - It's not your fault.

Ms THOMAS - Leader, I appreciate the information you've provided in response and absolutely it's no reflection on you. Please don't take it personally. It's a reflection perhaps on the process and the system here, and that is what I'm expressing frustration at, and this pattern of behaviour by this government where it just drip-feeds little bits of information instead of answering the question fully and accurately. It's not about trying to guess what the member was going to ask in response to this, because the answer hadn't been provided to the question that was asked in the first place. It's just asking for a specific answer, and that was not provided.

The question wasn't why the data isn't published as a single consolidated report. That wasn't my question. My question was: why was the data requested not provided when clearly the answer says it is available and 'we know what the answer is, but we're not going to tell you'. It's not just that it's not published as a single consolidated report. That's fine. But the government knows what the answer is but chose not to provide that data until we asked again. That's the frustration here. That's what I'm seeking a response to. Why won't the government be open and transparent in answering questions that are very specific questions?

Ms RATTRAY - I would argue that the people here at the Table have done their utmost to answer the questions that have been put forward, and the fact that honourable members are dissatisfied with that is entirely within their right, if that's the case, and it appears that it is the case for some. I won't say that I'm not disappointed in some of the answers as well, but we're absolutely doing our best to do that and I feel sure that there's a process available. I know there's a process available to continue to ask questions. I've given an undertaking that I'll provide as many answers as I possibly can outside of this process.

No, I'm not taking it personally. I'm just doing what I can to assure the honourable members that whatever answers can be provided will be provided. In saying that, I do have a document that I'd like to table at the request of the honourable member for Rumney. It was in relation to Output Group 2 - Health Services and it was admitted services. I gave an undertaking to provide that, so I seek leave to table that document.

Leave granted; document tabled.

Item agreed to.

Capital Investment Program

Item agreed to.

Division agreed to without request and without amendment.

Division 6 - Department of Justice

Attorney-General and Minister for Justice, Corrections and Rehabilitation

Operating Services

Output Group 1 - Administration of Justice

Output 1.1 Supreme Court Services

Ms WEBB - Madam Deputy Chair, I appreciate that. Thank you to the staff who've been waiting for a while to come in for this section, which should be really quick, I think.

We just kept one item open here and put it into this line item, which was my question around providing the implementation plan for the Justice Connect project, including what had been spent each year to date since the commencement of the project and what's budgeted to be spent in each year going forward through to completion.

I also asked for detail to be provided on what has caused delays to the project to date. To be honest, on this question, we got a pretty good hit rate because we received the draft implementation plan summary; I received another attachment that has the year-by-year breakdown of project expenditures, so I appreciate those being provided. Thank you.

The part of the question that wasn't answered, I don't believe, in what we've received yet was regarding the detail on what has caused delays to the project to date. That's the bit I'm looking for some more commentary on, because there was some discussion, I believe, at the Estimates table around some delays. I just was wanting a more detailed explanation around what had constituted those delays and to understand what they were in more detail.

Ms RATTRAY - I'll just get some advice on that. But it's good to hear that a fulsome answer was almost received.

The Justice Connect program has experienced delays as a result of the complexity associated with the work, both from a technical perspective and in terms of organisational change required to implement the system and associated legislative reforms. In a number of areas this has also increased the cost of delivering the program. From a software perspective, the rollout of the corrections module required the vendor to adapt from an on-premises solution to a cloud-based product, which required significant additional work and, in turn, delayed going live.

The interconnected nature of the legislative reform and software streams of implementation in the Magistrates Court has also added further complexity. While the adoption of the South Australian system will assist in overcoming this to an extent, there are a number of aspects of the Tasmanian operating environment which are different and therefore require additional software development to be undertaken to ensure the product is fit for purpose.

Given the number of stakeholders involved and the numerous interactions of Astria with other systems, it's important to work collaboratively and methodically through these issues. In addition, the implementation plan also missed a large number of dependencies which the project relies on to achieve completion. I trust that that's a comprehensive addition to the answer that the honourable member or the committee received.

Output 1.2 Magisterial Court Services
Output 1.3 Births, Deaths and Marriages
Output 1.4 Tasmanian Civil and Administrative Tribunal
Output 1.5 Tasmania Legal Aid
Output 1.6 Legal Assistance
Output 1.7 Office of the Anti-Discrimination Commissioner
Output 1.8 Elections and Referendums
Output 1.9 Tasmanian Industrial Commission
Output 1.10 Office of the Independent Regulator
Output 1.11 Office of the Implementation Monitor
Output 1.15 Commission for Children and Young People

Items agreed to.

Output Group 2 - Legal Services

Output 2.1 Crown Law
Output 2.2 Legislation Development and Review

Items agreed to.

Output Group 3 - Corrections, Rehabilitation and Enforcement

Output 3.1 Prison Services
Output 3.2 Community Corrective Services
Output 3.3 Enforcement of Monetary Penalties

Items agreed to.

Output Group 5 - Justice Support Services

Output 5.1 Victims Support
Output 5.2 Victims of Crime Assistance and Redress
Output 5.3 Office of the Public Guardian
Output 5.4 Safe at Home

Items agreed to.

Capital Investment Program

Operating Services
Capital Services

Items, as read, agreed to.

Minister for Housing and Planning

Operating Services

Output Group 4 - Regulatory and Other Services

Output 4.2 Tasmanian Planning Commission

Item agreed to.

Minister for Small Business, Trade and Consumer Affairs Operating Services

Output Group 4 - Regulatory and Other Services

Output 4.1 WorkSafe Tasmania

Mr HISCUTT - In relation to WorkSafe and the question asked on notice, the figures presented in the answer to the question taken on notice for the total workplace inspections raised interesting proportions. The north-west inspections seem to be underrepresented as a proportion of the total population. Do you have inspectors based in the north-west, or are they required to travel? How are you dealing with this discrepancy?

Ms RATTRAY - WorkSafe Tasmania has general inspectorates based in Burnie, Launceston and Hobart, and there are eight FTE inspector positions based in Burnie. The north-west region typically has a lower proportion of notifiable incidents than other regions - well done there - which correlates with a lower number of inspections.

There may be more questions.

Mr HISCUTT - Can I clarify that the answer seemed to imply that they have fewer inspections and therefore fewer notifiable works? Is that not because they get fewer inspections? It's not necessarily that they have fewer notifications, it's just that they're inspected less, therefore there's fewer. Is that how I've interpreted the data? Or per inspection they have fewer notifications?

Ms RATTRAY - There are actually fewer notifiable incidents, which leads to fewer inspections. Good work.

Item agreed to.

Output 4.3 Consumer, Building and Occupational Services

Item agreed to.

Division agreed to without request and without amendment.

Division 7 - Ministerial and Parliamentary Support

Premier

Operating Services

Output Group 1 - Support for Members of Parliament

Output 1.1 Support for Ministers and certain Parliamentary Office Holders

Ms WEBB - Thank you, Madam Deputy Chair. This one is a fairly straightforward one, I think; just a clarification on an answer that we received. I asked for a detailed breakdown to account for the difference in the 2025-26 Budget and the 2025-26 estimated outcome, which was provided with some narrative in the answer. I also asked for a breakdown by position for any employment separations as part of that increase. The table that was provided in the answers we received presents a table that has the position title and then the total amount in terms of those separations. The thing I wanted to clarify about that table was, in each instance: was this

one person we are speaking about who holds this position title and then was paid out that total amount, or might there have been numerous people involved under that position title?

The reason I'm asking for clarification on that was because what jumped out at me was the position title Electorate Officer and the amount of \$236,000, which I presume wasn't a separation payment to one electorate officer. I'm just trying to clarify how many people are involved in this table against each position title. I'm obviously not asking for personal details or identifying information.

Ms RATTRAY - A fairly brief answer to the question. Yes, it could be one or more, and if the honourable member would like to know exactly how many are in each of those, then we'll certainly give an undertaking to provide that information if that is required by the honourable member.

Ms Webb - Thank you, I would like that but I don't need it today.

Mr HISCUTT - This question on notice is relating to the Complaints Commissioner question asked on notice. The answer to the question in relation to the Complaints Commissioner also asked how much was initially requested in appropriation for this position to be filled. Could this part of the question please be answered?

Ms RATTRAY - In response to the honourable member's question: it's a matter for the presiding officers and they certainly do that in conjunction, I understand, with the Clerks of both Houses, so that's not available from here.

Mr HISCUTT - Sorry to clarify, but the request had been made to Treasury, which formulated the Budget. Could I clarify that and, given it's my second standing, as a second part of that question, how can the government explain the difference between the original \$150,000 per year in the 2025-26 Budget down to the \$50,000 that is in the 2026-27 Budget?

Ms RATTRAY - In response to the honourable member's question: the response to that question is part of the budget committee deliberations and that's not information that's provided from the table here. It would have to be part of a request to the Treasurer in regard to that, is my advice.

Mr HISCUTT - If I may, Deputy Chair, have the answer to the second part of the question, explaining the difference.

Ms RATTRAY - Would the honourable member, while I'm on my feet, repeat that then?

Mr HISCUTT - Sorry, explaining the difference in what was changed between \$150,000 that was in the 2025-26 Budget to the \$50,000 that was in the 2026-27 Budget. What was allocated that will no longer be there because of that change?

Ms RATTRAY - Again, in response, it was part of the budget deliberations and that information isn't available.

Ms THOMAS - What I think I'm hearing, because I had a question along similar lines, was the government provided with a request for funding to deliver the recommendations of the Motion for Respect report, including induction, other training and change management for the

Independent Complaints Commissioner? If so, how much was requested? Who was it requested by and why did the Cabinet choose not to include the full amount in the Budget?

What I think I'm hearing is, you can't tell me that. That's a matter for Cabinet deliberations. And, again, no transparency, no accountability around why it wasn't fulfilled. We just simply can't be informed of why it's dropped from what was suggested would be provided in the 2025-26 Budget. In the forward Estimates it showed that \$150,000 would be provided for this purpose. Now what we're seeing is \$50,000 provided for this independent complaints commissioner. Just to be very clear, what you're telling me is the government can't tell the parliament why that amount has dropped by \$100,000, whether there was a request for funding from the presiding officers or the parliament or someone else to deliver those recommendations that was greater than that \$50,000, and if so, why it wasn't provided?

Ms RATTRAY - Again, I reiterate that that was part of the budget submission by the presiding officers and they may be able to provide that, but it's not able to be provided here because it was part of the budget deliberations.

Ms THOMAS - Well, we're not here to question the presiding officers. We're here to question the government on why they've decided to allocate that amount in the Budget and how they expect to be able to deliver the function that's proposed with that amount. What I'm hearing is the government won't tell us if they've provided less than what was requested. What we do know is that it would appear pretty clear that \$50,000 is not going to be enough to establish an office of an independent complaints commissioner. Does the government think that that's a reasonable amount to establish a position of an independent complaints commissioner because the Premier just recently suggested that the member for Murchison's complaint be referred to the independent complaints commissioner, a role that doesn't exist yet and hasn't been established and there appears not to be enough funding in this Budget to establish it. How does the government suggest that this position will be established, and all the functions that were recommended in the Motion for Respect report that this government and this Premier has said is so important - and is in fact so important that he suggested the member for Murchison refer a complaint to it even though it doesn't exist? How does the government suggest \$50,000 is going to be enough to establish that position and to perform the functions and to implement all the recommendations that the government has committed to in the Motion for Respect report?

Ms RATTRAY - Thank you. In response, again, this is not an MPS budget submission or a DPAC budget submission. If the amount is insufficient, the presiding officers can make a request for additional funding.

Ms Thomas - That worked well for the Auditor-General, didn't it?

Mr HISCUTT - In relation to that answer, they did make a request, presumably, and we don't know the answer to whether that was denied or not. If they make another request, just answering to that statement that they can make a request provides little comfort that that request will be answered.

When we ask these questions during the Estimates period and here in this place, we often get answers to our questions that this will go towards this, this and this function, and the reduction from last year to this year means this will change and that will change. Why can't the government answer this specific question when lots of other questions get answered?

Ms O'Connor - Well, 'lots' is a stretch.

Mr HISCUTT - Well, some.

Ms Thomas - The most transparent government ever.

Ms O'Connor - We can see straight through them.

Madam DEPUTY CHAIR - Order, please.

Ms RATTRAY - I take on board the honourable members' comments prior to the question. I don't believe I have anything further to what I've already provided, but to reiterate that there can be a request for additional funding. That's what has been advised. That's as much as I have for the honourable member.

Ms THOMAS - Well, it's very disappointing and I have very little faith that we'll be able to refer complaints to an independent complaints commissioner when a very limited amount of funding is being provided to establish it. It makes me turn my mind to amendment requests -

Madam DEPUTY CHAIR - I know you have a question.

Ms THOMAS - Should this House request an amendment to the Budget to adequately fund the independent complaints commissioner, would the government support this amendment request? If not, why not?

Ms RATTRAY - This is a question for the Treasurer, but also understand that an appropriation bill can be amended, so -

I do not believe that the appropriation bill can be amended. I think, a long time ago, somebody tried to amend one for a dollar and that was way back.

Ms THOMAS - I don't know about that; I think you can make an amendment request. That's my advice.

Ms RATTRAY - Well, I'll certainly be advised.

Madam DEPUTY CHAIR - You can actually amend the item. You can request.

Ms RATTRAY - Yes, you can request. I do recall that was something that happened a very long time ago in this place. I come back to the fact that it's a question for the Treasurer and I'm certainly not in a position to make any comment or any suggestions on behalf of the Treasurer.

Item agreed to.

Output 1.2 Support for Members of the House of Assembly

Mr HISCUTT - A question was asked on notice regarding the staff allocation for members of different areas of government and parliament. The answer to the question regarding staff allocation reveals that there is a total budget for the different members of the House of

Assembly, but not a headcount entitlement. Could we please be provided with what the allocation for the office budget is for each group of parliament, including the Liberals, Labor, Greens, one-member parties and Independents?

Ms RATTRAY - In response to the question: funding is provided to Labor, the Greens and each Independent member as a global amount and they have autonomy to manage their budgets themselves. For the 2025-26 financial year, Labor is provided with a total budget of \$3.8 million for the opposition leader's office and elected office staff; the Tasmanian Greens were provided with a budget for 2025-26 of \$1.835 million to manage the Tasmanian Greens Leader's office and electorate staff for the - I suppose it was then five Greens. That figure has since been reduced pro rata following the decision by the member for Clark, Ms Burnet, to become an Independent, with the funding provided to the member for Clark. Each Independent is provided with \$370,000 as a global budget. The Shooters, Fishers and Farmers Party is provided with \$370,000 as a global budget.

Mr HISCUTT - Could I receive an understanding of what happens if these budgets for staff salaries are not spent? For example, does that money return to Consolidated Revenue?

Ms O'Connor - Can't roll it over.

Ms RATTRAY - Yes, that's correct.

Ms WEBB - I want to follow up a little bit on the member for Montgomery's question there before I move on to my question that's on this one as well.

I was interested to see in the answers provided to the committee on notice specifying Legislative Council electorate office funding. It says here that the government provides money for 1.5 FTEs per member, which includes one full-time band for an employee and an additional recent allocation of \$50,000 per member to spend on electorate office staffing at their individual discretion, bringing the total funding allocation to 1.5 FTE electorate officers per member, which is not true. It's patently untrue. The extra \$50,000 which we have now just been allocated for the second year in a row does not equal 0.5 of a band 4 employee at that staffing level.

Madam DEPUTY CHAIR - Your question is?

Ms WEBB - I'm just asking the government to clarify the accuracy of that statement. On what basis are they claiming that we have 1.5 FTE allocated to us? They might like to think that it is, but I literally can't employ somebody at a 0.5 FTE at the same level as my electorate officer for that \$50,000, so it's wrong. Would the government like to correct the record and make it clear that we are not provided with 1.5 FTE? By the way, it's a lot less than a \$370,000 global budget for an Independent in the lower House, just to put that on the record yet again.

Ms Thomas - Less than half.

Ms WEBB - While I leave the Leader's advisers to start answering that one, I do actually also have an open question here on this line which I'll put as well on my first speak, and it may be we can't get an answer to this one. For context, there was a little bit of confusion at the Estimates table. I did ask this next question, which is to please provide a breakdown of all ministerial electorate officers and other MP electoral officers and whether they're disability

compliant. Particularly, I was interested because of some new or moving electorate offices in recent years. I asked for details of any instances of a fit-out of electorate offices in the past two years that were a change of use and were required to be made disability compliant as a result of that. At the table, it was agreed to take that on notice. The committee then didn't include that question in our correspondence, but we sent it through later. If there's an answer to that question here today, that would be excellent. If there isn't, I'd understand it because we sort of fumbled it at our committee end and I'll follow it up later. But, hopefully, because we did send it through, even if it was a bit late, there might be an answer to that question, too. Thank you.

Ms RATTRAY - I've asked for specific details on the question about the Legislative Council 1.5 FTEs, so that's coming, but in the meantime, yes, the disability access information is available and also there's a definition of disability compliance. There's also a full list of each electorate office accessibility, which is a number of pages which can also be tabled, and it says the member, accessible amenities, level access, fit-out undertaken in the past two years. Then for some, there are notes as well, which may well be quite useful to the member. So, Deputy Chair, I seek leave to table that information.

Leave granted; document tabled.

Ms Webb - We're still waiting for the other answer.

Ms RATTRAY - I can indicate to the House that the electorate officer for the House of Assembly is typically on a band 4, and the base of a band 4 is \$86,000 per annum for -

Ms Webb - With oncosts? The \$50,000 has to cover oncosts.

Ms RATTRAY - I will confirm that question. So \$86,000 per annum for one FTE and the top of the band 4 is \$99,000, so that's where -

Ms Webb - So, \$50,000 is not 0.5 of an FTE.

Ms RATTRAY - Not half of \$99,000?

Ms Webb - No, because oncosts have to be added to that. Give us the full amount with oncosts.

Ms O'Connor - Like the allocation for the -

Ms Thomas - Or just give us equity.

Ms RATTRAY - I'm still waiting for -

Madam DEPUTY CHAIR - The honourable Leader is waiting for information.

Ms RATTRAY - the oncosts component to be - and it has been pointed out as well that Legislative Council employees is not something that's privy to this area, because that's a separate arrangement, so their band and their salary is separate. That's where the \$50,000 came from, but I will get some further information.

Ms WEBB - Let's be really clear here: it's the same for the Legislative Council, that's right, a band 4 is a typical electorate officer band, and the amounts that you read out are the salary they take home. It's not with all the oncosts added to it as well. The \$50,000 is not a 0.5 FTE of that because the \$50,000 would also have to include oncosts for the additional staff member and we can't get that for that amount. I'd like to put on the record: \$370,000 global budget for an Independent in the lower House, even with the additional \$50,000, doesn't even get us to half of an equivalent staffing resource.

Madam DEPUTY CHAIR - Can you phrase that in a question, honourable member?

Ms WEBB - Why is that? To be clear, this is an issue that has been raised consistently for years with the Premier. This is the Premier's department we're asking questions of here. Why has this not been progressed properly to address the issue of equity between the two Chambers for the MPs who are doing the same job, essentially, if not more, I'd argue actually, for an Independent in the upper House? I'd like an explanation as to that. What is being done now to address the equity issue between the two Chambers beyond the band-aid solution of the \$50,000 last year and this year? It's a band-aid solution. It's not even as described on paper. What's being done to address the equity issue?

Ms RATTRAY - The member for Nelson is correct. The oncosts are \$17,000 for an electorate officer under the House of Assembly arrangements. It's not 1.5 -

Ms Webb - It's not 1.5, is it? No.

Ms RATTRAY - It's not 1.5; that's correct. There is an electoral amendment bill coming in that should address part of that, but I haven't seen that and I don't know that that's available for us here to be able to table. I agree, the member is right and we're saying that's correct. So to absolutely clarify: for a band 4, which does exclude oncosts, you add an extra \$17,000 - so, that would be \$103,000 for a band 4 with oncosts.

Ms THOMAS - I thank the member for Montgomery and the member for Nelson for their contributions on this. I don't know that the answers provided yet explain the inequity and why we have to keep raising this every year. I did hear the Leader say there is a draft electoral amendment bill and I have seen that bill, but haven't had time, with everything else, to properly process. What I don't understand from that bill is how it addresses the equity issue. From my quick glance at it, it doesn't appear to address the equity in MP resourcing issue. Can the Leader explain how the government proposes, through that bill, to address the equity in MP resourcing issue? Not electoral funding, but resourcing to help us to do our job properly:

- (1) Can the Leader explain, does the bill definitely do that, and if so, how?
- (2) What is the consultation process for that bill and when is it expected to be finalised?

Importantly, will the consultation process involve the Clerks? What, if any, consultation has occurred with the Clerks to date on this? They are impacted by the administration of funding, certainly in the Legislative Council, they administer our funding. I have questions about that bill and how it will address the equity issue given that it has been named as being the process or the pathway by which to do that. The fundamental question that wasn't answered is: why does this inequity exist when we do exactly the same job, if not having a higher level

of scrutiny expectation here in the Legislative Council? Yet we don't have the same level of resourcing to assist us to do our job properly.

Ms RATTRAY - This matter is certainly one for the Treasurer. In regard to this, we don't have any further advice from what we have at the Table, and we'll certainly undertake to seek further advice on this. The bill is also a Treasurer's bill that has been put out. As for the consultation, if it's a draft bill and it has been sent around, obviously there will be consultation. That'll be part of the draft bill process. I don't have any further information and I'm sort of not mindful to try to do anything on the run because I'm certainly not the Treasurer and I'm not the Premier.

Ms THOMAS - Once again, this is extremely frustrating and extremely disappointing. Just in November last year, when we were doing Budget Estimates scrutiny, these exact same questions were asked in this place, in this line item. To come here and not be prepared to answer those questions - and in fact the government made a commitment in response to these questions in November last year to address this matter and be able to answer questions on this. Let me be clear, as well, I'm not saying I think we should all have \$370,000 worth of allocation. I believe the commitment last year that was taken was to actually look at what does an MP need, what resources does an MP need, to do their job effectively, and have some sort of independent analysis of that. We shouldn't be determining the resources that we get. Yes, we should be consulted on it, but it should be determined through an independent process. It should be considered like others - there must be a way of doing it in other states. The commitment that I thought that was given by the government just in November was to do some sort of analysis on what a Tasmanian MP needs to effectively perform their role. I shouldn't be making that decision.

Madam DEPUTY CHAIR - That's your question?

Ms THOMAS - The Premier certainly shouldn't be making decisions on the amount an MP gets in the lower House and that's how it's done at the moment. That's how it's determined for lower House MPs: the Premier decides, it appears. Is that right, Leader, that the Premier decides? That's my question. Is it right that the Premier decides how much is allocated to MPs and parties in the lower House? If not, how is it determined and why would it be different for lower House MPs to upper House MPs, and why isn't best practice for it to be determined by an independent entity?

Ms RATTRAY - Seeking further advice. Thank you.

In relation to the draft bill, it includes a policy and research component for Legislative Council members. It's out for consultation and feedback, which can be provided and advice can be sought from the Treasurer. Again, there will be an opportunity for consultation through that process and feedback as well.

Mr HISCUTT - Having been through that bill, the equity change between lower House and upper House is only about \$10,000. I think they receive \$10,000 that will all be included, but it's not a change to any sort of scale that we're talking about here.

The honourable member for Elwick also asked the question of who decides what budget is allocated as part of her question. I would reiterate: can it be asked who decides the budget that was revealed previously regarding what members receive? Last year, I asked basically this

same question, and the answer I received contained all staff allocated to each of the requested groups. This year, the same question was asked and I received the information on electorate officers. Can you please answer the question and hopefully table it in a similar manner to how it was answered last year and explain the inconsistency?

Ms RATTRAY - It's the Premier and the Budget Committee that decide what is allocated for House of Assembly, so that's what it is.

Mr Hiscutt - You've answered the question. Thank you.

Ms RATTRAY - There was a letter provided to members in regard to the bill, and I can read some of that, if honourable members feel the mind to hear that. It talks about:

... providing for a one-off funding entitlement for administrative expenditure incurred during the lead-up and commencement period of the *Electoral Disclosure and Funding Act 2023* - 1 July 2024 to 30 September 2025. Independent members of both Houses and registered parties with members in either House are eligible for this payment.

... increase the rate of regular quarterly funding, including advance payments from the Administrative Fund for support costs associated with policy development, office administration and parliamentary functions.

It goes on to say:

... and extends eligibility for quarterly funding from the Administrative Fund to independent members of the Legislative Council. Registered parties will be entitled to funding in amounts depending on their total members from both House of Assembly and Legislative Council and, importantly, this framework is intended to provide members, particularly independent members, with greater autonomy and flexibility to tailor resourcing to their individual needs. It also establishes a consistent funding approach across both Houses, recognising the evolving and increasingly complex demands placed on all members of parliament.

That was a letter that was provided to the honourable Bec Thomas MLC, the honourable Mike Gaffney MLC, and the honourable Meg Webb MLC. Forgive me for not having the date, it's probably at the end of it - 1 June 2026.

Mr HISCUTT - Deputy Chair, there was a second part of that question, if I may, regarding the change in the answer from last year to this year. It was answered completely differently. I'm happy to provide the question and seek it outside of this forum.

Ms RATTRAY - If the honourable member would like to send that to the Leader's office and then I'll provide a commitment here and now that a response will be provided to you.

Ms THOMAS - So, Leader, does the government commit that the intention of the government, through this bill, is to achieve comity between Houses and equity in MP resourcing? Is that what the government is intending to achieve through this bill? Comity

between Houses and equity in MP resourcing, so that the same resourcing is provided to members in the lower House as it is in the upper House, in both Houses?

How will that amount be determined? Is the bill informed by independent assessment of what an MP needs to perform their role, and who will administer the funding?

Ms RATTRAY - First of all, I want to say on behalf of the government and where I stand here on behalf of myself, these are really important questions. There is no doubt about that, Deputy Chair, no doubt at all. They certainly are questions that need to be progressed, but they're not able to be progressed here.

That's the unfortunate situation that we have. We can't provide answers that possibly members are looking for right here. Again, I reiterate they are important questions and there will be opportunity to progress these questions.

Ms WEBB - Thank you, Madam Deputy Chair. I appreciate that the Leader is trying to provide some answers to us and, since the draft bill has been raised, in those answers being provided, I think it's probably just important to get some factual information on the record here about that. So, I have a couple of questions about that.

- (1) Who was consulted in drafting that bill?
- (2) Were the accountable authorities here in parliament - i.e., the Legislative Council accountable authorities - consulted in the drafting of that bill? MLCs, as far as I'm aware, were not consulted at all.
- (3) Is it the intention that that bill is put out for public consultation before MLCs or the accountable authority here - the Legislative Council administration - have had a chance to provide input and thoughts on it in a more private way?

I think that's pretty crucial - putting something up for public consultation, expecting us to participate in that public consultation process without even the courtesy of consulting with us prior to that.

- (4) What has been done to ensure that what's proposed in that bill is even possible within the constraints of how the employment of staff happens within the upper House?

Policy and research staff were mentioned in an answer to a question just a moment ago by the Leader. Now, my understanding is the Legislative Council can't employ anybody who's a political adviser or in a position that has political overtones on it. We're all very clear on that. That's why our electorate staff are admin positions. So, is the suggestion that any additional staff that might be provided for via this bill going to be employed directly by the member? Does the member suddenly become an employer for political staff or are we shifting the whole thing to a different arrangement altogether? These are just lots of questions, I guess. The key ones that I'm very interested in are factual: Who was consulted? Was the Legislative Council consulted? As far as I'm aware, MLCs weren't, but perhaps that can be confirmed. And is it even clear at this point in time that that bill is compliant with the constraints that are there on the employment of staff in the Legislative Council, or is it proposing a way to get around those constraints?

Ms RATTRAY - Firstly, I'm interested to have some understanding if members would like the Electoral Disclosure and Funding Amendment Bill working draft tabled. Or is that not necessary?

Ms Thomas - Not necessary.

Ms RATTRAY - I'm just asking. Thank you. As I've said, it is a working draft. The draft will be updated with feedback from members, and their consultation draft will then be put out for public consultation in the coming weeks and certainly I welcome any questions regarding that. In regard to who was consulted in the first instance, the Tasmanian Electoral Commission was consulted in the first instance and then members are being consulted, as we said, at the moment, and it certainly hasn't been tabled yet.

Ms Thomas - By sending us an email?

Madam DEPUTY CHAIR - Order please.

Mr Duigan - This is a bill - it's not the budget.

Ms Thomas - We're talking about the budget's resourcing for MPs, if you were listening.

Ms Webb - The Leader brought the bill up. We're following up on an answer provided, thank you.

Madam DEPUTY CHAIR - Order. If anyone wants to make a point of order, please stand up.

Ms RATTRAY - I will just reiterate that members are being consulted at the moment and -

Ms Webb - We're not, actually. We asked for a briefing. It was refused, actually.

Madam DEPUTY CHAIR - The Leader has the Floor.

Mr DUIGAN - Point of order, Madam Deputy Chair: we're talking about a bill and consultation on a bill. That is not the Budget. We're here to deal with the Budget. This is way off in the weeds.

Ms Thomas - Not a point of order.

Madam DEPUTY CHAIR - Just a comment, member. The bill was raised by the Leader as part of the answer, so in fairness, let's just let the Leader finish her answer and then we will move on.

Ms RATTRAY - Thank you. The information that I've been provided says that it has been provided to all members. The government is trying to provide members with more money through this bill and welcomes the feedback, and continuing conversations with the Clerks to try to get the money distributed.

Ms Webb - Continuing? Continuing or starting conversations?

Item agreed to.

Division agreed to without request and without amendment.

Division 8 - Department of Natural Resources and Environment Tasmania
Minister for Primary Industries and Water
Operating Services

Output Group 2 - Primary Industries and Water

Output 2.1 Primary Industries
Output 2.2 Supervision of Poppy and Hemp Crops
Output 2.3 Water Resources Management
Output 2.4 Marine Resources

Items agreed to.

Output Group 3 - Biosecurity

Output 3.1 Biosecurity and Product Integrity

Item agreed to.

Output Group 7 - Environment

Output 7.3 Natural Values Management

Item agreed to.

Grants and Subsidies

Item agreed to.

Capital Services

Capital Investment Program

Items, as read, agreed to.

Minister for Arts and Heritage

Operating Services

Output Group 6 - Heritage

Output 6.1 Historic Heritage

Ms THOMAS - In response to the question on notice during Estimates regarding the timelines and scope of the information required to complete a heritage assessment in relation to Halls Hut, we asked for a copy of the correspondence sent to Mr Hackett regarding the timelines and scope of the information required. We did receive a copy of that, so I'm grateful for that. I'm just interested to know: have there been any requests made by Mr Hackett to access the site? If so, have these been granted? If not, why not? How can he be expected to fulfil those responsibilities under the lease if he cannot access the site, if he hasn't been able to access the site because he hasn't been granted permission?

Mr DUIGAN - Mr Hackett, as I understand it, has been given permission to go to the site.

Ms O'Connor - Has he done anything there?

Madam DEPUTY CHAIR - You need to stand to give the answers, minister.

Mr DUIGAN - Okay. Good, thank you. The answer to your question is no, he hasn't been denied access to the site, he has been given permission, as you would, a landing authority to go to the site.

Ms THOMAS - To be clear, he has made a request to the government to access the site. He has been granted permission to access the site. Has he accessed the site, minister, as far as you're aware, and has he now complied with his responsibilities under the lease?

Mr DUIGAN - I believe Mr Hackett has accessed the site. He has provided preliminary information to Heritage Tasmania and engagement is ongoing to receive a final consolidated condition report by the end of June 2026. I understand the Heritage Council is aware of the matter and will consider it further at its full August meeting, by which time it is expected the scope of the works will be finalised.

Item agreed to.

Grants and Subsidies

Item agreed to.

Minister for Aboriginal Affairs
Operating Services

Output Group 6 - Heritage
Output 6.2 Aboriginal Heritage

Item agreed to.

Minister for Environment
Operating Services

Output Group 7 - Environment
Output 7.1 Environmental Management
Output 7.2 Analytical Services
Output 7.4 Threatened Species

Items agreed to.

Minister for Parks
Operating Services

Output Group 1 - Land Tasmania

Output 1.1 Land Titles, Survey and Mapping Services

Output 1.2 Valuation Services

Items agreed to.

Output Group 4 - Parks

Output 4.1 Parks

Output 4.2 Crown Land Services

Items agreed to.

Grants and Subsidies

Item agreed to.

Capital Services

Capital Investment Program

Item, as read, agreed to.

Minister for Racing

Operating Services

Output Group 5 - Racing Regulation and Policy

Output 5.1 Racing Regulation and Policy

Item agreed to.

Grants and Subsidies

Item agreed to.

Division agreed to without request and without amendment.

Progress reported; Committee to sit again.

Mr PRESIDENT - The honourable Deputy Chair reports progress and seeks to sit again tomorrow.

Motion agreed to.

ADJOURNMENT

[7.55 p.m.]

Ms RATTRAY (McIntyre - Leader for the Government in the Legislative Council) - Mr President, I move -

That at its rising the Council adjourn until 11.00 a.m. Wednesday
24 June 2026.

Motion agreed to.

Ms RATTRAY (McIntyre - Leader for the Government in the Legislative Council) - Mr President, before I move that the Council do now adjourn, I would like to thank all honourable members for their cooperation in a slightly extended time than what was previously advertised earlier in the week. I move -

That the Council do now adjourn.

Non-Renewal of Dr Herman's Contract

[7.56 p.m.]

Ms ARMITAGE (Launceston) - Thank you, Mr President, and obviously it is a little late hour, but I believe this adjournment speech is necessary. Members may recall my presenting a special interest speech recently on interventional cardiologist Associate Professor Brian Herman in recent weeks.

There's now a bewildering matter that has struck a deep chord across northern Tasmania, which is the Tasmanian Health Service's non-renewal of Dr Herman's contract at the Launceston General Hospital. This has not been treated by the community as a minor internal staffing matter. It's been felt very deeply by the many people who have come into contact with Dr Herman, with the patient or family member. Professor Brian Herman is not simply one cardiologist among many; he's an internationally respected interventional cardiologist who spent more than two decades serving the people of northern Tasmania and is now travelling from Hobart to Launceston to provide an extremely specialised service. He has also treated patients in the north-west.

Interventional cardiology is not routine medicine. It's technically demanding, high-risk work carried out in life-and-death situations where the clinician's judgement, experience and steady hands can mean the difference between a family celebrating another Christmas together or enduring the grief of an empty chair at the table.

That's why the community reaction has been so strong. When word spread that Associate Professor Herman had been told his approximately 0.1 FTE or two-day-a-month contract at the Launceston General Hospital would not be renewed, people did not respond as though this were a normal workplace change. Hundreds of comments flooded social media. Former patients and family spoke publicly, many in deeply emotional terms, about what this man has meant to them. Many others reflected that Dr Herman had once saved their life or that of a loved one, and most questioned how it could possibly make sense to lose a doctor whose reputation and expertise is not easily replaced. That kind of outpouring does not happen unless

a community feels something precious is being put at risk. When we look at the stories behind that public response, it's impossible not to feel the weight of what's at stake.

From *The Examiner* newspaper article of 17 June 2026, one woman, Mardy Powell, spoke of her husband suffering a heart attack and urgently needing stents inserted. Melbourne specialists decided not to operate because the risk was too high. They were sent back to Launceston and Dr Herman agreed to take a chance. He successfully inserted three stents and told them that without that intervention, her husband had only days left before another devastating heart attack. Mrs Powell said she was forever thankful because his work gave them another 14 months together, time they otherwise would not have had. Not a statistic, not a line item - 14 extra months of conversations, meals, birthdays, and ordinary moments that become priceless when you know they might have been lost.

From the same article, Kim Brundle-Lawrence told of watching her husband Peter flatline during an ultrasound. She thought the monitor had frozen. In an instant, the room became an emergency. Dr Herman happened to be there. He helped bring Peter back. Then later, after Peter passed away, Mrs Brundle-Lawrence herself suffered a major angina attack. Dr Herman inserted two stents and she says she's doing fine today. That's not abstract policy. That's a doctor standing at the junction between fear and hope, between crisis and survival.

What makes this even harder for me to understand is that the explanation offered has sounded bureaucratic at a time when people were crying out for clinical common sense. Dr Herman was told his contract would not be renewed as part of a process to clean up part-time roles and move toward a full-time position. We're told an additional full-time cardiologist position has been created across both clinical and head of department roles at the Launceston General Hospital. That's good news, but why would you force out a highly specialised interventional cardiologist before the role has been filled? Wouldn't it be more sensible to wait until the new head of the cardiology department is employed and commences to allow him or her to determine the best staffing setup for the department, rather than a decision made by bureaucrats? Interventional cardiology is one of the most technically demanding areas of medicine. It requires years, often decades, of training and experience. In regional Tasmania, people with those skills do not simply appear because the position is advertised. They are rare and they are valuable. When you have one, I don't believe you push them aside lightly.

There's also broader concern here. Dr Herman's role has not only been about treating patients one by one, though that alone would be enough to merit serious respect. Public material about his work notes that he has helped build cardiac capability in the north and has supported advanced training, with the Launceston General Hospital's cardiology program recognised as the only fully accredited three-year cardiology training program in a regional hospital in Australia. At the same time, the government is promoting the future northern heart centre, a major expansion of cardiac services at the Launceston General Hospital, including a new inpatient unit and cardiac catheterisation labs. If that's the future we're building, then existing specialist expertise should be treasured.

You do not talk about strengthening cardiac care in one breath and undermine proven specialist capacity in the next. At its heart, this issue is about more than one doctor, though one doctor has become the symbol of it. It's about ensuring that there are no gaps in care and that we value the contributions of our medical teams to excel in both patient care and medical teaching, inspiring and training the next generation of doctors. Northern Tasmanians deserve

confidence that critical cardiac care will remain available close to home. They deserve decision-making that's careful, considered and clinically informed.

It's my sincere hope that this matter can be resolved quickly, with Dr Herman doing what he does best, saving lives, at least until the new cardiology department staffing decision can be made by the new permanent full-time Head of Cardiology and that the Launceston General Hospital will continue to be a centre of excellence for northern Tasmania.

Attitude of the Government to the Legislative Council

[8.02 p.m.]

Ms WEBB (Nelson) - Mr President, I rise on Adjournment to make a short contribution. I wish to raise deep concerns regarding the increasingly disrespectful attitude of the executive towards this parliament and particularly this Chamber. I'm specifically wishing to raise as a pressing matter and draw to the attention of the government as a matter of urgency my deep concern regarding what I consider to be an inappropriate and disrespectful tone of the Premier in his correspondence on 9 June in response to a letter sent by the President on behalf of this Chamber, dated 28 May. In that May correspondence, the President makes it clear he is not only conveying serious concerns formally raised in this place by two members, but seeking responses to the questions formally placed on the *Hansard* on 27 May.

It is my understanding that this is perfectly appropriate of the President, as the presiding officer of this Chamber, to take this course of action. As stated in the Legislative Council annual reports: the President is the representative of the Council in all matters.

It beggars belief that in response to these very serious matters raised by two parliamentary colleagues and the correspondence of the President as representative of this Chamber, the Premier of this state made a conscious choice to belittle and dismiss when he decided to state:

I am quite disappointed in the assertion in your letter and firmly reject your claim of a lack of respect towards members and the staff of the Legislative Council.

That sentence - which, by the way, is the longest in that particular correspondence - demonstrates exactly that lack of respect for this place which has been raised with him by quite an appropriate parliamentary mechanism. He has actually condemned himself by these dismissive words. The Premier deliberately chose to gaslight this Chamber's presiding officer rather than address the substance of the issues raised. This is utterly extraordinary and shocking and is counter to anything remotely resembling leadership. As we know, each Chamber is a master of its own destiny. By that, it is acknowledged that we can determine the standards and privileges we consider acceptable within the broader parliamentary conventions and practices.

It is hard to consider the low standard, as reflected in the Premier's correspondence, as indicative of any intention to work in good faith with members of this place. This latest demonstration of such disrespect and lack of good faith is not isolated, sadly.

Continually, members in this place raised the lack of informative answers provided when requesting information. We've seen that just today, including in Estimates committees and here

in this Chamber. We also hear of independent statutory officers who also have a responsibility to report to this parliament being denied information. This lack of good faith and professional courtesy, and deliberate disrespect of established operating parliamentary conventions and protocols, continues to add up and continues to undermine trust and confidence in this government.

I urge the Premier to immediately demonstrate genuine good faith by providing an updated response to the President's letter which was issued on behalf of this Chamber as a matter of urgency and to provide the information and clarification requested. If the Premier, as he stated in his dismissive four lines of 9 June, does not consider providing this clarification to be the responsibility for government business, then he needs to step up and provide the requested responses, comprehensively and directly, to the Chamber either via correspondence or in a statement that the Leader could provide to us on his behalf.

It is not up to this Chamber to keep accepting this bad faith and dismissive attitudes and to keep finding ways to accommodate unacceptable behaviour. I'm deeply concerned that we are witnessing an unnecessary erosion of good and respectful parliamentary practice between the executive and this Chamber.

I urge the Premier to urgently reconsider this unacceptable piece of correspondence, revisit it and respond in good faith at the earliest opportunity.

Ms Thomas - Hear, hear.

The Council adjourned at 8.07 p.m.