



PARLIAMENT OF TASMANIA

LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL

REPORT OF DEBATES

Tuesday 23 August 2022

REVISED EDITION

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Tuesday 23 August 2022

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

LEAVE OF ABSENCE

Member for Windermere - Mr Duigan

[11.06 p.m.]

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

That the honourable member for Windermere, Mr Duigan, be granted leave of absence from the service of the Council for this week's sitting.

Leave granted.

Member for Rumney - Ms Lovell

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

That the honourable member for Rumney, Ms Lovell, be granted leave of absence from the service of the Council for this day's sitting.

Leave granted.

STATEMENT BY PRESIDENT

Welcome to New Staff of the Legislative Council - Lisa Patterson, Tahnee Byas and Megan Graham

[11.06 a.m.]

Mr PRESIDENT - Honourable members, I welcome and introduce some new members of staff of the Legislative Council, Lisa Patterson, Tahnee Byas and Megan Graham. Lisa commenced in the role of electorate officer to the member for Rosevears on 11 July 2022. Lisa has extensive experience in supporting members of parliament having previously been engaged as an electorate officer for the member for Bass since 2019, serving former member of parliament and minister, Sarah Courtney, and recently Lara Alexander MP. She is now part of the electorate office of Rosevears, so we welcome her to the Legislative Council.

We also welcome Tahnee who commenced her duties in the office of the member for Rumney on 18 July 2022. Tahnee has extensive experience and expertise having worked in executive assistant roles for the past 11 years.

Megan commenced her role as electorate officer to the member for Huon on 15 August 2022. Megan was previously employed with the Huon Valley Council and has extensive

professional experience in the Huon electorate including involvement in a variety of community organisations. Megan also has electorate officer experience having worked in the offices of Nic Street MP, and we may remember Paul Harriss, the former member for Huon.

Lisa, Tahnee and Megan will be observing the proceedings in the Legislative Council today as part of their orientation to the Council and I am sure all members of the Council will join me in welcoming them here today.

Members - Hear, hear.

RECOGNITION OF VISITORS

[11.08 a.m.]

Mr PRESIDENT - Honourable members, I also welcome Jo Flanagan from Women's Health Tasmania, Jocelyn McConnell and women whose role will become more obvious once we get into the special interest matters. Women's Health Tasmania has facilitated the Knit Your Bits initiative. That is the subject of the member for Nelson's special interest topic. Also, Amy-Rose Rees, Amy Reid, and Anna Ritchie who are the artists involved in the program.

I am sure members will join me in welcoming them to the Legislative Council and we are looking forward to the special interest matter from them.

Members - Hear, hear.

SPECIAL INTEREST MATTERS

Women's Health Tasmania Initiative - Knit Your Bits

[11.09 a.m.]

Ms WEBB (Nelson) - Mr President, today I rise to celebrate an incredible, unique art project and exhibition undertaken by Women's Health Tasmania, known as Knit Your Bits. As many members here may know, Women's Health Tasmania is a statewide health promotion service which is run by women for women with a focus on empowering women to be informed and active decision-makers in their own health and wellbeing.

I could speak at length about the diverse programs, skilled staff and valuable work of Women's Health Tasmania, but my focus today is something they have undertaken which is a little bit out of the ordinary, and a somewhat provocatively titled project, Knit Your Bits.

Earlier this month, I had the pleasure of attending the opening of the Knit Your Bits Hobart exhibition. This was the sixth and final iteration of the art exhibition. It was first launched in Ross on International Women's Day in March and has since travelled to exhibit in six locations across our state from King Island in the north to Cygnet in the south.

The origin story of this initiative is amusing, and I offer it here for others to see whether it might tickle their fancy as well. Apparently, after discovering that the notable MONA artwork, the Wall of Vulvas, was in fact made by men, the staff at Women's Health Tasmania

asked themselves, 'If a woman had made this, would she have made it like that?' They answered, 'No. She would have knitted her bits!'

This comical exchange led the Women's Health Tasmania crew to consider how the diversity of the female body could be creatively expressed by women through art and craft. From there, Women's Health Tasmania put out the call for women to knit their bits and to kick things off they held a series of craft workshops around the state working with local artists, crafters and community services. What came next was nothing short of inspiring.

The women gathered not just to make craft objects with their knitting, crocheting, felting, sewing, and embroidery - they made art that literally embodied the stories of their lives. They were creating bits that told the stories of their fears, their triumphs, their strengths, their sadness, their complexity and their joy. In doing so, they also shared a space where they could talk openly and safely about their experiences as women, including their health and wellbeing.

The powerful nature of this creative effort was clear, not only in the resulting display of over 80 pieces of art, but in the way that the artists and the staff involved spoke about their experience participating in the program.

Participants shared touching remarks, such as:

Women are very good at ignoring the things that are challenging and just ploughing on, and so, having something like this makes you sit down and talk about it.

Another one:

We chose as a group to knit a big mouth to speak up and be loud. Sharing our stories gave us an anchor to better understand what is happening to us.

A final one:

Just like our external bits, we all look different internally too.

Mr President, I give special acknowledgement to everybody who worked tirelessly to bring about the success of this initiative. I particularly congratulate those who joined us here today: Jo Flanagan, the CEO of Women's Health Tasmania; Jocelyn; and Amy-Rose, Amy and Anna, who participated in the art projects.

Beyond those with us today, there are large groups of other fantastic artists, volunteers and staff from Women's Health Tasmania who helped make it a success. You would be happy to hear, Mr President, that the Knit Your Bits initiative was also supported by many of our female parliamentarians, both from this place and the other place. They collectively donated \$1000 to make up the People's Prize. This prize will be awarded to the artwork from Knit Your Bits voted as most favourite by those who visited the exhibitions around the state; although I must say, I found it virtually impossible to choose my favourite artwork from amongst the myriad breasts, uteruses, mouths, brains, vulvas, ears, hearts and many more.

Mr President, everybody should feel comfortable, proud, and indeed celebratory of their body. Everybody should be able to find support and connection when they need it. It is

amazing to see how Knit Your Bits progressed from a shared joke to an ambitious idea, and culminated in a joyous endeavour that has been able to connect and empower women across Tasmania. I look forward to future iterations of Knit Your Bits - or whatever new creative project might spring forth from another shared joke from the Women's Health Tasmania team.

Mr President, let me conclude by mentioning that Knit Your Bits is showing until 27 August at the Moonah Arts Centre. If you have not visited, there is still time to pop in and cast your vote for the People's Prize. I highly recommend getting along to see this thought-provoking, humorous, and highly moving exhibition.

Wynyard Tulip Festival 30 Year Anniversary

[11.15 a.m.]

Ms FORREST (Murchison) - Mr President, Wynyard's annual Tulip Festival is making a return this year after a pandemic pause, and it looks like it will be bigger and better than ever. The aptly named 'Iconic As' Wynyard Tulip Festival explodes with colour and fun at Gutteridge Gardens, on the banks of the beautiful Inglis River, on Saturday 8 October after its official launch on the Main Street at the gardens at 11.00 a.m. The festival will conclude with a spectacular fireworks display at 9 p.m.

The last tulip festival was held in 2019, pre-COVID-19, and was the biggest ever, attracting an estimated 20 000 visitors in one day - and that is a lot of people to come to Wynyard in one day. Indeed, the festival has been dubbed 'Wynyard's Dark MOFO' by one ABC reporter, in that it has become an iconic must-see and must-attend event, attracting people from across the state. This has not always been the case. The first festival was held in 1991 and came from much more humble beginnings. Local farmer, Paul Roberts-Thomson began importing tulip bulbs from Holland in 1984. After examining the natural advantages of his farmland at Table Cape just outside of Wynyard, so began what is now known as the Table Cape Tulip Farm. The farm comes alive with colour in spring and opens to visitors at this time.

Paul describes the process of planting, managing, harvesting and spraying the 250 to 300 different varieties of bulbs at his farm as an exercise in data management, explaining that great care and attention is needed to avoid getting them mixed up. 'Sometimes the result might be pretty, but it is not pretty for us,' he said. Over 20 000 hectares are planted each year and he estimated that this year about 8.5 hectares are tulips, with the remainder other bulb varieties. Planting takes place in mid to late May and amazingly, flowering only varies by a few days each year. It now lines up with the festival, which celebrates the farm's breathtaking beauty, as evidenced by the thousands of social media posts showcasing Wynyard and the tulip farm splendour.

In 1991, the Wynyard Tourism and Promotion Association ran the first tulip festival, offering a weekend of entertainment, stalls and attractions to promote the area and attract visitors to the town and to the north-west coast. Wynyard soon became known as the Tulip Town. Longtime Wynyard resident, Fay Reeve, was an attendant with St John Ambulance and soon became involved in the festival's organising committee and served as chair for five years. Fay is now in her 90s and she was recently interviewed by ABC Radio's Kim Napier, sharing memories of the many big fundraising events that took place in the community to support the festival. She also fondly remembered some of the big names that the event has attracted over the years, including Ernie Dingo and Dorothy the Dinosaur.

In 1997, the Wynyard Tulip Festival formed a committee of its own right and took on an incorporated status, and in 2005 became a special committee of the Waratah-Wynyard Council. The festival is now coordinated by the council but also receives support from the Tasmanian Government through Events Tasmania, which is very welcome.

In 2020, like so many other events, the Tulip Festival was postponed due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The Waratah-Wynyard Council adapted to the changing times, however, and created the Spring Loaded Program, which enabled the community to still enjoy a month of fun activities through a number of smaller events that complied with gathering restrictions and physical distancing requirements. This program proved to be very successful for the next two years, and rather than scrap it altogether, and with the return of the Tulip Festival, council has decided to run both events in October, now incorporating the Tulip Festival into its jam-packed schedule of events across the municipality.

The Tulip Festival features great live music throughout the day, Slipstream Circus and side show alley, featuring extreme rides. There will be plenty of children's entertainment as well, with popular roving characters, face painters and glitter tattoo artists scattered throughout the festival site. There are many food and beverage stalls, a wet area to enjoy a brew and helicopter rides over Table Cape - weather permitting. A visit to the tulip farm is a must, and free shuttle buses will be operating on the day to take the guests to and from the farm.

The Wynyard Tulip Festival has brought a significant economic benefit to the town, with accommodation venues and businesses reporting an increase in spending. It has created a real vibrancy and pride in our beautiful town. The festival falls within school holidays, and I invite our northern and southern neighbours to join us for these special anniversary celebrations - but you had better book your accommodation soon. It will be an extraordinary weekend in Wynyard. The 2022 Tasmanian Youth Sailing Championships will also be held at the Wynyard Yacht Club, and Wynyard will also host the 2022 Australian Off-Road Motorcycle Championships on the same weekend, 8 and 9 October.

I sincerely thank all those involved in the planning, preparation and production of this event, especially the committee and the Waratah-Wynyard Council. A special thanks to the Roberts-Thomson family for the ongoing contribution that they make to the festival, doing something that is not really part of the core business of growing bulbs. They contribute to the local economy in many ways.

Wynyard will be the place to be and we look forward to showing our town, our tulips, and our tulip festival really is as 'iconic as'.

Launceston Rambling Club

[11.21 a.m.]

Ms ARMITAGE (Launceston) - Mr President, rambling is a hobby that many people of all ages take part in, and owing to the spectacular scenery we have in Tasmania, it is especially popular here. In July of this year, the Launceston Ramblers Club celebrated their 50th anniversary. The genesis of the ramblers club has actually been chronicled in the Launceston *Examiner*.

According to an *Examiner* article written by Nikita McGuire on 5 July this year, in May 1972, Gordon Goward, the head of Adult Education in Launceston, placed an advertisement in *The Examiner* to convene a meeting to establish a bushwalking club with a family-friendly environment.

At this meeting, a number of people attended and Geoff Gill was elected as the inaugural president. On 3 July 1972, the first walk took place at Liffey Falls and 50 years later, the club retraced the footsteps that had been taken by the founding members of the club, along with a sausage sizzle and cake celebration.

The Launceston Ramblers Club works with a set of seven rules, all about leaving no trace, plan ahead and prepare, travel and camp on durable surfaces, dispose of waste properly, leave what you find - meaning no removal of plants or objects - minimise camp fire impacts, respect wildlife and be respectful of others. This reminds me of the old adage, leave only footprints, take only photographs, and this is very much what the Launceston Ramblers Club strives to do: respect and enjoy Tasmania's spectacular wildlife and scenery and preserve it for the environment and for future generations.

One of the best things about the ramblers club is not just the opportunity it provides to people to improve their physical wellbeing, but also their social engagement and mental health. Over the past 50 years, so many friendships have formed and memories made, things that members of the club take with them for the rest of their lives. Right now, the club has a strong contingency of members and they range in ages from 38 to 88. The club's longest serving member, John, has been part of the club for 46 years, almost as long as the club has existed.

During this time, the ramblers club has taken its members to incredible locations all across the state, including tracks in Railton, Kings Meadows, Campania, and Bridal Veil Falls, Westmorland Falls, Blackstone, Dalrymple Hill, Quamby Bluff, Ben Lomond and countless more locations that are truly the heart and soul of Tasmania.

All one has to do is visit the ramblers club Facebook page to see just what magnificent scenery club members see on their regular walks. However, nothing does it justice better than doing these walks yourself. For anyone who is interested, the club always welcomes new members and offers not just the opportunity to get out and about, but also to enjoy the social connections and all the benefits that come along with it. So, for anyone who is interested, head along to their Facebook page and send them a message.

A very warm congratulations to the Launceston Ramblers Club on their 50th birthday and here is to the next 50.

Kentish and Central Coast Councils - July Storm

[11.24 a.m.]

Mrs HISCUTT (Montgomery) - Mr President, I would like to say that it is was my pleasure to do a tour of the Kentish municipality with Mr Wally Creswell last week, but it was not. I had an email from Mr Michael Meaney, who is the secretary of the Lions Club of Kentish incorporated, inviting me to come and look at the devastation caused by the howling storms which passed through Kentish and Central Coast municipalities on 11 June this year.

There have been many politicians, and this includes the member for McIntyre -

Ms Rattray - I was the first one to arrive.

Mrs HISCUTT - Thank you, and the minister, Mr Guy Barnett who did a tour shortly after the storms hit. The stories relayed, including all the news we heard on TV and radio, were absolutely heartbreaking and devastating to all those involved.

In Gunns Plains on the Central Coast hinterland, you can see where the storm came over the hill as it carved a path down to the plains. The trees were snapped like toothpicks. When the wind hit the floor of the plains, it had nowhere to go except around and around. Hardly a shed was left standing. The storms in the Kentish municipality resulted in the loss of one life, a 54-year-old lady who was struck by a fallen tree on her property and another man in hospital with non-life-threatening injuries.

Mr Wally Creswell, also a Lions Club member, took me on a journey around the back of Sheffield to see the recovery progress. If I was pressured to say one kind of good thing, all I could say is that those folk will have firewood for the next gazillion years. Mr Creswell told me that the council immediately provided \$20 000 which was distributed by the Lions Club to those in most need. Mr Meaney, the secretary, said the Kentish Council was quick to provide this emergency assistance to the affected residents. The Lions Club went from house to house, talking to residents, examining the damage and offering food and fuel vouchers where needed.

Farmers struggled to contain their livestock. Many residents are elderly and the repairs were beyond them. Mr Creswell took me to Lockwoods Road and showed me places where the roofs had been totally lifted from houses. He explained how the State Emergency Service rendered immediate assistance and how one family had their insurance claim paid in only two days.

It was like pick-up sticks in the bush on the sides of the road. The fencing was still a mess, but you could see where new fencing had been done. Cattle had been roaming around the place and roads closed with not only saplings but huge trees having fallen. A lady at the Kentish Garden Club showed me a picture of her husband tackling a fallen tree. He would have been about 5-foot 10 inches, 5-foot 11 inches, and the girth of the tree was still above up his head. It was a huge tree. He estimated that the girth of this tree was about 3 metres.

We then ventured up Claude Road, where half of the mature trees on some properties had been bowled over. Some residents had been without power for eight days. The clearing of the roads was a mammoth task, which had to be done before repairs to the powerlines could start. They started by clearing one side of the road first. This at least enabled access for assessment of the damage before the roads and the fencing and the electricity repairs could begin.

He then showed me the airstrip at The Vale. This is where they headquartered the drones. The drones were very successful in spotting those who needed the most help and to initially evaluate the worst of the damage. Some of the larger logs had been sent for milling and the rest was cut for firewood or just pushed by excavators into huge piles to be attended to at a later date. I also noted the numerous bonfires ready to go.

Eleven days after the initial storm shock, areas of Kentish and the Central Coast municipalities were assessed as being able to access disaster recovery assistance. Disaster

recovery funding assistance helps with the cost of counter-disaster operations and restoration of a central public asset or infrastructure damaged by severe storms.

Also, Operation Sheean was launched. Disaster Relief Australia provided a team of more than 20 volunteers. Disaster Relief Australia was founded in 2016 and deploys veterans and emergency service specialists to assist communities with both resilience and recovery. These volunteers have been on the ground in impacted areas and assisted in many different activities, particularly safe access to people's homes. They were originally scheduled to be there for a three-week visit but this was extended. They were being comfortably housed in the Claude Road hall.

I attended a community meeting held by the Kentish Council on 9 August 2022. It was diligently hosted by the mayor, Mr Tim Wilson, where some of the disaster recovery team attended. One of the fellows was saying how well they were being looked after and even joked about putting on weight as the food provided to them was excellent. Well done to the community for this.

Last Friday, the community expressed their gratitude to the disaster recovery team by having a farewell barbecue for these wonderful people. It was a disaster for two municipalities, but with the assistance of many people and many groups the locals will rebuild their lives again. I thank those who helped out, but particularly all the Lions Club members. I also thank Mr Wally Creswell for showing me around.

Members: Hear, hear.

MOTION

Little Athletics Tasmania

[11.31 a.m.]

Ms PALMER (Rosevears) - Mr President, I move -

That the Legislative Council -

- (1) Notes the importance Little Athletics and similar organisations play in the social, physical and mental wellbeing of Tasmanian children.
- (2) Notes the grounding Little Athletics has given to Tasmanian athletes who have gone on to represent Tasmania and Australia on the national and international stage.
- (3) Acknowledges the significant role volunteers play within such organisations.
- (4) Notes the overall positive contribution such organisations make to the fabric of the Tasmanian society.

It is a Saturday morning 'must' for hundreds of families across Tasmania. By sunrise, kids who will not get out of bed on any given school morning are up and dressed, sunscreen

applied, spikes packed and hats on. Little Athletics parents know exactly what I am talking about. Most of us arrive at the track just after 8.00 a.m., congratulating ourselves that we have managed to get there before the first event. Greeting us are dozens of volunteers who are at the track at 6.30 a.m. setting up equipment, especially when it is hurdles round.

Sport is such an important part of many young Tasmanian lives and indeed, the lives of their parents and carers. The benefits are far-reaching, not only physical health and fitness, but also inclusion - what happens when you are part of a team and feel that you belong. These social aspects also play a big part in helping our young athletes to manage their mental health and their social wellbeing. It is also the wonderful examples of goodness that we often see played out on sporting fields that can have such lasting impacts on both young and old.

Many of us will not forget the reaction of Tasmanian sprinting star, Jack Hale, after a devastating fall in the final of the 4 x 400m men's relay at the Commonwealth Games. His teammate tripped and it ended their race, but Jack, without hesitation, reached out and put his arm around his teammate and together they walked to the finish line. Such a beautiful moment. It did not involve a gold medal, and yet it taught us so much.

Or Madison De Rozario, the first Australian para-athlete to win four Commonwealth Games gold medals. Her wheelchair was damaged in transit as she made her way to Birmingham. She had to rely on cable ties for a quick fix, but nothing was going to get in her way and she went on to win gold and secure her place in history.

We recognise the power of sport, and while the television and the newspapers often show us the end result of an athlete's journey, it nearly always begins in a local club. Our Government is working hard to get more young Tasmanians moving and into grassroots and community-based sport. Our communities are built on local clubs and organisations that have strong and welcoming environments, coming together to look out for the people who call these communities their home.

Sport is the lifeblood of communities across Tasmania, and the Tasmanian Government's continued investment will provide more opportunities for all Tasmanians to participate in sport and lead active and healthy lifestyles. One way we are doing this is through our Ticket to Play vouchers program. This vital program reduces the cost of participation in sport by providing eligible children, aged from five to 18 years, with two \$100 vouchers to use for registration costs. These vouchers provide assistance for families on fixed incomes who may struggle with the cost associated with joining a sporting club. More than 14 000 vouchers have now been issued under the 2021-22 program. That means thousands of young Tasmanians, who may not have had the opportunity to take up sport due to financial barriers have been able to do so.

In 2021, our Government doubled funding for the program, with an additional \$3 million committed, and this allowed each eligible participant to receive those two \$100 vouchers. Importantly, these two vouchers can be used at two different activity providers, meaning that young Tasmanians have the opportunity to try different sports and in doing so experience the social and community benefits that come with being connected to a sporting club.

The 2022-23 Ticket to Play program has also acknowledged that not every child wants to run, swim, kick or throw a ball, and from August 2022 we have seen the program expanded to include dance. This will include dance schools, studios and clubs.

The response to Ticket to Play from the community and activity providers has been overwhelmingly positive. Tracy Canham from Little Athletics Tasmania said:

The Tasmanian Government's Ticket to Play Program has assisted hundreds of children to participate in Little Athletics this past season.

Despite the challenges COVID-19 had presented us over the past two seasons, membership in Little Athletic Centres across Tasmania has increased, thanks largely to the Ticket to Play program which supports families who would otherwise struggle with registration fees.

Processing the vouchers is an easy process, with our organisation reimbursed for vouchers claimed in a weekend on a weekly basis. The staff at Communities, Sport and Recreation are incredibly helpful to both us as a sporting body and to our members who contact them with inquiries.

Getting our children connected through sport is a priority, but then we turn to our army of volunteers who create those special moments. I know from my family's local athletics club, South Launceston, it is the kindness of the canteen workers, the officials, the set up and pull down teams who make it all worthwhile. However, it is also the volunteers who push the wheelchair athletes around the track, help them throw a discus or indeed, get over the high jump bar. We honour them, and we thank them.

Finally, I acknowledge the Little Athletics Tasmania outgoing President, Brett Johnstone, who has served the maximum term of nine years. Brett's journey with Little Athletics commenced in 2005 at the Hobart district centre, where Brett took on the role of age group manager in his first season with the centre. In 2006, Brett joined the committee as treasurer, a role he held until 2013. As is often the case, Brett took on various other roles during his time at the Hobart districts committee, including records and rankings, starter, chief timekeeper, announcer, arena manager and championship events coordinator - and they are big jobs. In 2013, Brett joined the board of Little Athletics Tasmania as the development director, moving across to fill a casual vacancy as the competition director in 2015. He continued in that role until taking on the position of president in 2019. Brett's contribution to Little Athletics has been widely recognised, and in 2013 Brett received a state service award from Little Athletics Tasmania, followed by Hobart district life membership in 2016.

In 2021, Brett's name was added to a very short list of Little Athletics Tasmania distinguished service award recipients. He is one of the many hundreds of volunteers who make this amazing organisation such a huge success.

[11.38 a.m.]

Ms WEBB (Nelson) - Mr President, I am pleased to rise to speak in support of the member for Rosevears' motion. Since its first meeting was held in Tasmania in 1973, Little Athletics has played a significant role in the sporting and social landscapes of our state, for children participating and their families.

We are all aware of the overwhelming benefits that come from being physically active and socially engaged from a young age. For nearly 50 years, Little Athletics has offered Tasmanian children an introduction to track and field athletics and the chance to improve their wellbeing through physical activity and social connections. I can attest to this, as someone

who participated in Little Athletics both as a child competing and as a parent assisting. I also note the significant impact Little Athletics has had on our local community within my own electorate of Nelson. The two local centres in Nelson are the Queenborough and the Kingborough centres. Through these two popular centres, thousands of children have been provided with the opportunity to compete and enhance their wellbeing over the decades that they have been operating.

As the second point of this motion calls on us to note, these centres, like others around the state, have a long history of preparing athletes to go on to represent Tasmania and Australia on a national and international stage. It is worth noting that this representation does not only take place in track and field events, as the events offered through Little Athletics set up Tasmanians with a solid foundation of fitness and skills that transfer well to other sports.

I also note the third point of this motion, which calls for us to acknowledge the significant role volunteers play within such organisations. Without the tireless work of volunteers, most community sporting organisations that we know and love would cease to exist. Little Athletics is no exception, being led by volunteers and having created a culture where parents are highly engaged in their children's sporting participation.

In a world where parents can be increasingly busy and often tempted to drop off and pick up kids from sporting events, it is pleasing to see Little Athletics recognise and encourage the very active role that parents can play in supporting their children to participate in sport.

Judging by the sentiments that I hear in the community in support of Little Athletics, it is clear that there is an overwhelmingly positive contribution made to our state through this organisation and through each individual centre within local communities. I wish the Queensborough and Kingsborough centres in the Nelson electorate, and all other centres around the state, the very best for the next Little Athletics season starting in October. Good luck to all kids participating. May they keep racking up those personal bests in every event.

I thank the member for Rosevears for raising the matter for discussion today. I support the motion.

[11.41 a.m.]

Ms ARMITAGE (Launceston) - Mr President, I rise to support the motion from the member for Rosevears. I will keep it very short.

I found it very interesting when I was reading about how Little Athletics evolved. In 1963, three boys turned up at an athletics meeting in Geelong ready to compete. When approaching an official, they were told that they were too young to take part. That official was Trevor Billingham, and the disappointment evident in the boys left a marked impression on his mind. The thought was forgotten, but it came alive again several months later at a coaching clinic designed for secondary school students where it was noted that the majority of children were primary school age. It reminded him of his earlier experience and he had an idea. The answer to the need expressed in the children would be a simple Saturday morning competition. On the first Saturday of October 1964, he met with a small group of children on a Geelong oval and they took part in a short program of running events. From that simple beginning, athletics for under-12 boys and girls developed at a phenomenal rate.

Little Athletics created tremendous interest and competition commenced in Tasmania in Launceston in 1973. It is absolutely wonderful. I also have been involved in Little Athletics. My two boys who were involved are now over 40 years old, so it was a long time ago. The children are always ready and saying, 'Come on, Mum, we are going to be late. Where are you?' Often, Mum and Dad are not quite as keen on a Saturday morning but the children are always keen.

In my role as an Independent Person with police, for example, I see that a lot of those children do not have those opportunities that we give to the children who go to Little Athletics with Mum and Dad. It is a social gathering as well as getting together. They do their personal bests. It does not matter whether they come last or they come first, they think they have done really well. They are in different groups, and they get together with their friends. It is absolutely amazing, as are the volunteers.

Every so often, I go to different meets and you see the volunteers - they are mums and dads. They are people like our member for Rosevears, who volunteers quite regularly, I am sure. They put in the time, they are all there for the children. While the children probably do not think much of it when they are there - they just expect it - as they grow older and do it themselves, it is something that stays with them. As the member for Nelson said, where would we be without our volunteers? Where would these children be without that start that they have had - the comradeship? Some of them go on to wonderful things. I have a couple of friends who have been involved. Sadly, one has now passed away, but his wife is still there. From Little Athletics, they were chosen to work at the Olympics.

It can really move on and it is fabulous to see some of these things we take for granted. We see it happening, but we forget that it takes people to organise it. It takes volunteers and mums and dads to get the children there, and it takes perseverance. I am sure on a Saturday morning, many mums and dads can think of better things they would rather do, but they put their children first and they get there and they volunteer. Even if they are not volunteering, they are turning up and taking the children.

I thank the member for bringing it up and reminding us of some of these things in our community that we do take for granted. It is fabulous and I commend everyone that takes their children along, and the volunteers and the work of all our Little Athletics around the state.

[11.45 a.m.]

Ms RATTRAY (McIntyre) - Mr President, I have enjoyed the contributions so far and I thank the member for Rosevears - as the member for Launceston said - for reminding us parents, in particular, about Little Athletics and its benefits and the sacrifices and contributions that have been made over many years. We have already heard a little about the history, but it was introduced in Tasmania by Les Capes in August 1973. Launceston was the host of the first competition at Invermay Park in October of that year. For those who may not be aware, Invermay Park is the home of the Mowbray Cricket Club and the Old Launcestonians Football Club adjacent to good old York Park, now called UTAS Stadium.

I have had the pleasure of having two of my children who excelled at Little Athletics and had exceptionally good grounding from their involvement in the program. It is not only the children who benefit. The parents who take on those roles are not always involved in any other group or organisation. When you go to the meets on a Saturday morning and then regionals and states, you see an exceptionally high level of parent involvement because someone has to

be recording and all of those things. Those tickets that you used to get - although I believe you no longer get them - were treasured by the children as they competed. I am not sure if the member for Rosevears and the member for Launceston recall sewing on all those badges. For a very successful athlete, those 25, 50, 75, 100 badges that covered their Little Athletics tops took a fair bit of sewing on and getting straight, I can assure you. I was not necessarily one of the parents who had every Saturday morning available through the athletic season, but I did all the sewing. So, you may not have been at the track, but in most families, somebody had to sew those badges on. Things were not good on a Saturday morning if that badge was not on from last week.

We do not often get to talk about our children in this place, but both my daughters, Tia Simmons and Danica Wagner, were members of the Scottsdale centre. That has been a wonderfully supportive centre, as were St Helens, Deloraine and Northern Midlands centres in the McIntyre electorate. I can speak personally about the effort that has gone into those centres over the years. As I said, it is that parent support and carer support as well that is important in those organisations. We also see it with junior footy, week in, week out. You might be the match manager for the day, or you might be in the kiosk. There are so many aspects to junior sport that need to have that volunteer. That was one that my daughters' fathers were heavily involved in. They liked to be at the meets each time and so both Patrick Simmons was a great support to Tia and Shane Wagner was a great support to Danica. Shane is still involved in athletics, even though Danica is no longer an athlete. She is busy at university but it was something that I know they both enjoyed being part of and were dedicated to.

We talked about the opportunity that has come from being involved in Little Athletics and recently I took a little bit of a trip down memory lane. Tia gained an elite scholarship with the Australian Institute of Sport (AIS) through her involvement with Little Athletics back in 2003 and used to go to Canberra and learn some of the techniques that it took to be an elite athlete. Now she a working mum and she is not an elite athlete and did not make it to the Olympics but she competed in a number of national events and she earned two bronze medals in the national steeplechase event when she was about 18 years of age.

Those sort of memories stay with you forever and her coach at the time, Fay Denholm, was an absolutely wonderful coach, a wonderful support. She used to go to the events with Tia, so that is a lifelong friendship formed there between Tia and Fay. I know Fay Denholm supports her athletes 100 per cent and you will still see her at the St Helens carnival with her 'stable', as they are called. Given his interest in that, the member for Mersey will appreciate that and the involvement that the coaches have with their athletes.

For many years, I have seen Morgan Gaffney, who is an exceptionally good athlete. Their coaches are just so invested in their personal bests. It is not necessarily about the wins, they always help. I read an article this morning where Tia participated in the Christmas carnival and won \$150 and she actually talked about that in the media. That was obviously a lot of money to an 18-year-old girl at the time, winning \$150, but it is about their personal best. The focus of Little Athletics is always about a personal best.

Danica was fortunate to have the wonderful support of Frank Knott, who had a strong career in athletics back in 1964 where he won the senior long jump. He won a title there and then went on to coach, particularly in field events. Danica was very interested in the field events, shot-put and javelin, and he was kind enough to give her some of his expertise,

knowledge and understanding of those field events. She grew as an athlete and was successful in those events. As a family, her confidence was something that we noticed.

Shane is still involved in the North Launceston Athletics Club because of his involvement with Danica. We do not always get to talk about our children in this place. I can assure you that the involvement, support and encouragement that the Little Athletics organisation gives to all athletes - when you are starting from five years old, it is just about getting to the end of the line but as you go on, when you are 14 to 15, that PB is something that they strive for.

It is an absolutely wonderful organisation, as are the officials who run it. We know plenty of them in our own patches who just give and give, not only as a parent or carer, but as a community member. I acknowledge those and acknowledge Brett whom you talked about.

We also know that Little Athletics is a huge organisation on a national scale. It is now called Coles Little Athletics Australia with a national CEO, so it has come a long way from that first established organisation when those couple of young people who the member for Launceston talked about were told they were too young to go in an event. Coles donates 10 cents per kilo of every Cavendish banana sold in their supermarket to support Little Athletics in this country. Well done to one of the three majors in our country, it certainly gives support. All of those badges have to get printed somewhere, but as we said, badges and tickets - I am not sure about badges but tickets are not the norm anymore.

Somebody was kind enough to give me information about a few of the people who have become elite athletes through their involvement. From the AFL, Sam and Jesse Lonergan, Mitch Thorp from the north-west, Maverick and Lachie Weller, Brodie Holland from the south, and Jack Riewoldt, all Little Athletics participants.

From basketball, the Opals, everyone knows Hollie Grima. Darren Edmunds from the northern region, a 400-metre champion, World Junior Championship in Sudbury, Canada in 1988. He got a silver medal in the 4 x 400 relay. Huw Peacock from Hobart participated in the javelin in the Olympics, and Daniel Geale from Launceston, boxing, Australian champion, fighting at the world level.

So, it is a powerful message, for the advantages to succeed in many different areas. Apart from the traits as I have mentioned from my own children, it builds confidence, builds a profile, and state and national success, and then, for some of those athletes, onto the world stage. However, also the friendships and those extended relationships through being a member of your athletics centre, wherever that may be, whether it be in our state or others.

It was a delight to take a trip down memory lane, particularly for me as a parent. My granddaughter, Summer, is five years old now and I expect that her mum, Tia, will be taking her along this season, so I might get to start sewing some of those badges back on again if she is successful in the years to come. Then little Daisy is two and a half, so I expect that she will be wanting to emulate her big sister, so we could be well starting Little Athletics all over again. That puts a smile on my face because they absolutely love the opportunity.

Mrs Hiscutt - Does that mean you will have to get your needle out again?

Ms RATTRAY - It will mean that I get the needle out. I still get the needle out for most of the repair work for my children. I have not done a very good job in showing them how you

stitch, so I have a bit more work to do there. It is a terrific organisation and I support the noting of the member's motion 100 per cent. I look forward to talking about Little Athletics again in the future.

[12.00 p.m.]

Mr WILLIE (Elwick) - Mr President, I could not miss an opportunity to speak about sports and it may surprise you, knowing how competitive I am, but I was not cut out for Little Athletics. It is an ongoing joke in my family that when I went to tryouts as a little boy, that I stopped in the middle of the running race to wave to my Pop on the sidelines and came last. That competitive spirit has probably developed over time.

I rise to express my appreciation, particularly to the volunteers and the parents and the people who help make Little Athletics happen. I know that they find a lot of value in giving their time and seeing young people being nurtured and developed. I know a Little Athletics club that I have a bit to do with in your electorate, Mr President, the Claremont Little Athletics club. When you go to those events, the confidence that is built in young people and the sort of people who are being developed is very clear. I have an example of that.

We are all familiar with the scenes from the Commonwealth Games with Jack Hale and Rohan Browning, but Claremont Little Athletics posted a story about it on their Facebook page, so I thought I would read it in as part of this contribution from this House. It starts by saying:

They say a picture paints a thousand words. Last night (AEST) former Claremont Little Athlete Jack Hale took to the track in the 4 x 100m relay. Now let's just pause to acknowledge what an amazing accomplishment this in itself is, the young man who used to be over at the skate park in between his events on a Friday night representing Australia on an International stage. Unfortunately just as Jack was approaching for the baton change his team mate tripped, meaning the chance to progress to the finals of the event had passed. Now this is where the story really takes off. His team mate, Rohan Browning got up and finished the race strong, showing that these things happen, but you still need to pick yourself up and finish the race. Finally, we have this picture ...

which you can access on their Facebook page -

... where you can see Jack with his hand on Rohan's shoulder, consoling his teammate, this shows true character and sportsmanship. You have done your country, state, and everyone proud Jack. Onwards and upwards from here. I'm sure it's only a matter of time until we see that gold around your neck. On behalf of all us at Claremont Little Athletics well done Jack.

That is a great story that epitomises what Little Athletics is all about. I wanted to share that.

[12.03 p.m.]

Mr VALENTINE (Hobart) - Mr President, I rise briefly on this to point out the absolute benefit of Little Athletics when it comes to setting up children for a healthy lifestyle. I do not think we should underestimate the benefit of that. Obesity is a significant issue in our community, there is no question about that. Everyone would agree that each one of us needs

to look at our diets and make sure we are following a healthy diet and keeping up exercise. What better place to start that than in Little Athletics? It really does set kids up for the future, in terms of their focus, their commitment and their fitness. There are all sorts of things we can thank Little Athletics for.

I did not have Little Athletics around when I was a young fellow. I had the Anzac Day Sports at the Bream Creek Showground and I remember as a four-year-old, maybe even three-and-a-half, racing down that track with my parents urging me on. You used to have a sash in those days. I was actually coming first and I remember turning around to look at where my parents were and the sash fell down around my legs and I tripped up and I came an inconsolable last.

It was a terrible experience for me, but, it -

Mr Gaffney - Never competed again.

Mr VALENTINE - Never competed again. No that is not quite - well actually it is true. I did swimming but not running.

Nevertheless, there are great benefits. It is great for parents to be able to go along, to see how their child is participating, to urge them on and to give them some positive reinforcement. That is great.

The overall benefit is that message it sends to a child in their formative years. Thank you to the member for Rosevears for bringing it on. It is a really important organisation. Organisations like that, that engage children in activity, it is so important. In the long term it saves the broader community many dollars in terms of health costs. Congratulations on bringing it forward.

[12.06 p.m.]

Ms PALMER (Rosevears) - Mr President, I thank the members for their contributions. It was lovely to hear that the member for Nelson was a former competitor, and I look forward to finding out what events.

Ms Forrest - You do them all.

Ms PALMER - No, I love that. I thought that was great.

I loved hearing the story of Trevor Billingham from the member for Launceston. Imagine if he knew now what he started, and the organisation that we have today, and the thousands of children and families who have benefited from him having the foresight to fix that problem that he saw.

Ms Armitage - For those three little children.

Ms PALMER - Yes. I love that. That is beautiful.

Member for McIntyre, I have a hot tip for you. You do not have to sew the badges on anymore. You can iron them on. So if your grandchildren go into Little Athletics, I have saved you hours. Get the iron and a bit of the double-sided tape from Spotlight, and iron it on.

It was so true when you talked about the benefits for parents. I loved what you said that in some ways, you are competing against yourself, your personal best, and it is not about winning. Perhaps if you could have a talk to a certain young man in my family about that sense of sportsmanship, that would be great.

Mr Willie - No, it is about winning.

Ms PALMER - As far as he is concerned it is about winning but we are working on that with him.

I loved the story that you shared from the Claremont Little Athletics club, member for Elwick. Thank you for that. It was an amazing moment and it is a moment that we watched back with our kids, to say, you know, that is actually a gold medal performance. All of Tasmania was so proud of what Jack did in that moment. It is so lovely that that pride was also felt by his local club.

Member for Hobart, I am sorry for what happened to you.

Mr Valentine - Just desserts. I got distracted.

Ms PALMER - You need to have a cup of tea to talk more about that later on. I am here for you.

Mr VALENTINE - I needed to unload.

Ms PALMER - I very much appreciated other members' contributions to that motion. Little Athletics Tasmania will be delighted at how people have shared memories and given thanks for what that organisation and its volunteers have done over the years.

I will mention that on 24 June, the board met and announced the appointment of the new president, who is Paul Mommers. Paul first joined the Little Athletics board in 2019 after 14 years of being involved in the Huon Valley centre, and has made a positive contribution to the Little Athletics board during that time. I congratulate Paul on his appointment and we look forward to seeing where he takes the organisation into the future.

Ms Rattray - He has nine years.

Motion agreed to.

MOTION

Consideration and Noting - Report of Auditor-General No. 6 of 2021-22: Accessing Services for the Safety and Wellbeing of Children and Young People - The Strong Families, Safe Kids Advice and Referral Line

[12.09 p.m.]

Ms ARMITAGE - (Launceston) - Mr President, I move -

That the report of the Auditor-General No. 6 of 2021-22, Accessing services for the safety and wellbeing of children and young people - the Strong Families, Safe Kids Advice and Referral Line, be considered and noted.

Mr President, there is nothing more tragic than the wellbeing and safety of the life of a child being put in jeopardy. In a developed country such as ours, we rightly have the expectation that we have the means, resources, motivation and ability to put a system in place that intervenes early in situations where the safety or wellbeing of a child is put at risk.

To this end, the Tasmanian Government's Strong Families, Safe Kids Implementation Plan 2016-20 and the Next Steps Plan 2021-23 have rolled out advice and referral services which are integral to protecting our children and families.

The report of the Auditor-General released in June this year entitled Accessing Services for the Safety and Wellbeing of Children and Young People, the Strong Families, Safe Kids Advice and Referral Line is an important step in ensuring the policies we put in place to protect our families are having their intended effect.

Early intervention, strong networks of support throughout our communities and the public sector and a multidisciplinary approach to looking after our families such as health, tackling crime, alcohol and drug dependency, education and social connection is the best way to keep our children safe. This is where the Strong Families, Safe Kids Advice and Referral Line helps to bring all of these services together.

The line is for anyone concerned about child safety and protection or mandatory reporting of abuse. It is for anyone who holds a concern about the safety and wellbeing of a child and parents and children can also call to ask for help themselves.

This child-centred intervention support, advice and referral line, in other words, provides an extremely important service for our community. The safety and wellbeing of our children and young people, after all, is everyone's business. The Strong Families, Safe Kids reforms sought to provide a single front door for initial contact for child safety and welfare concerns and to provide a single source of advice and referral services. More specifically, this service is designed to enable anyone who is seeking advice about anything to do with safety or the wellbeing of children, needing assistance to navigate the challenges of parenthood, concerned about the safety or wellbeing of a child or young person, prescribed to notify that a child or young person is at risk of harm or neglect, to contact one central area to receive the information they need or be referred to the most appropriate service for that family's circumstance.

It is not necessarily designed to be a tip-off line or for welfare services to automatically jump in and get involved. At its heart is the philosophy that support, intervention and access to health and education services can set families on a better path that will have better outcomes for them and their kids.

In May 2016, \$20 million was allocated by the Tasmanian Government to implement the advice and referral line. Prior to this, there were essentially eight different entry points for people to raise concerns about the safety or wellbeing of a child, far too many; far too confusing and far too easy for someone to be intimidated and fall through the gaps.

The advice and referral line, or ARL, went live on 3 December 2018 and brought together workers from the intake function within the Department of Communities Tasmania and gateway workers from two non-government organisations, Baptcare and Mission Australia.

The Tasmanian Audit Office sought to examine whether there was an effective planned approach to the design and rollout of the ARL and to this end, looked at the objectives, strategies and plans of the policy, the resources which were allocated and how well these plans were communicated, understood and supported. In short, the Tasmanian Audit Office found that due to a lack of focused resourcing, the push for detailed change management rollout of the ARL did not occur until two years into the reforms being introduced, resulting in truncated time frames for delivery. They also found that overall implementation of the ARL was broadly successful, although due to the speed of operationalisation, some staffing systems and communication issues remained unresolved at the time it went live.

The ARL was based on a universally agreed need for more streamlined access to advice and referral services and was modelled on evidence-based and successful services which have been delivered in other jurisdictions. This meant from the start there was a reasonably solid blueprint which could be worked from. The single front door was initially scheduled for planning and implementation by the first quarter of the 2017-18 year, with ongoing refinement from that time. However, the Tasmanian Audit Office found there was no dedicated ARL project plan developed. On page 22 of the report, it states the ARL was never seen by DHHS as a separate project but rather one of several key deliverables of the Strong Family, Safe Kids policy. There were disconnects between some of the teams and working groups charged with implementation and project management, which made delivering the ARL for the expected standard more difficult.

A further complicating factor was what the Tasmanian Audit Office referred to as an unrealistically difficult time frame for delivery. The resources allocated to the ARL was a four-year budget allocation of \$420.6 million, \$4.3 million of which was allocated in the 2018-19 state budget. Due to not treating the ARL as a separate project - as I mentioned before - the Department of Communities Tasmania did not set a specific budget for delivering the ARL. Consequently, the Tasmanian Audit Office was unable to find evidence of any reports showing the overall implementation costs for the ARL. Critically, a shortened time frame for delivery meant that most, but not all, workers required to run the ARL were in place for the service to go live. The Tasmanian Audit Office did find that the Department of Communities Tasmania did achieve its goal of training all ARL workers prior to going live, which is a reasonable expectation but good to see nonetheless.

There were staffing issues picked up by the media when the report was released. In an article from *The Examiner* on 22 June 2022, it was reported the number of ARL workers within the Department of Communities Tasmania dropped from 45 at the start of 2021 to 35 in 2022, while the call volume continued to increase. The Tasmanian Audit Office found four factors putting additional strain on ARL workers once the service went live. These included duplication of effort during transition; staffing vacancies; separation of duties between government and NGO workforces; and higher than anticipated call numbers.

Moreover, the Tasmanian Audit Office found the Child Safety Service had limited input into the model that the ARL was based upon. To my mind, this limits staff buy-in and enthusiasm and makes establishing change, including the reasons for it, more difficult to imbed in the program and its workforce.

The Tasmanian Audit Office further found that Communities Tasmania did not provide clarity regarding the status of gateway NGO workers until late in the process, resulting in heightened anxiety and uncertainty for these workers. Finally, it was found that while early communication around the ARL model did occur, more work needs to be done to promote and educate other stakeholders about the ARL's role.

Based on the content of the Audit Office's report, these seem to be reasonable findings. I state my utmost support for the team working in this service. It is vital and it makes a difference to many families, children and young people in Tasmania. I essentially believe a project can only be as good as its planning; that if you do not have the right tools and plans in place to implement a project of this scale, getting it right the first time will be virtually impossible.

This is not to say that those who were in charge of implementing this project did not do a good job. They did. However, there are always lessons that can be learned when audits like these take place. Importantly, the Tasmanian Audit Office looked at whether or not the ARL is operating effectively to achieve better access to services for the safety and wellbeing of children.

As stated before, it was found that the ARL is broadly effective and has delivered improvements in connecting families to appropriate interventions. This has been subject to limitations, however. One of these is ARL liaison officers have wide coverage, geographical and otherwise, limited capacity and are not fully resourced to fully deliver all aspects of their role. This is significant because it directly affects the ability of sound and effective support and intervention to take place. Amongst many other duties, community-based liaison officers' duties include: direct contact through family visits; weekly allocation meetings or referrals to integrated family support services; engagement with stakeholders; and broader education and communication.

As of 21 August 2021, 18 liaison officers were deployed across the state. Given the high volume of inquiries made to the ARL, it is unsurprising their capacities are being tested. Given the many hats that liaison officers wear, it is also unsurprising that the Tasmanian Audit Office suggested a review of the impact of increasing the number of liaison officers in the ARL would increase its effectiveness. The report notes the ARL has some concerning human resources indicators that require further exploration by the Department of Communities Tasmania and because the volume of work is expanding, keeping up the expected level of service to its users is more important than ever. Combined with the finding of a relatively high turnover of people at the ARL, this creates quite a problem. To this end, the report notes that the annual turnover rate of 27 per cent in 2019 has increased to 47 per cent in 2021.

I also note the finding of the level of sick leave is, in the words of the report 'of some concern', and warrants some further exploration by ARL management to determine its root causes and implementation strategies to ameliorate frequent, unplanned absences that are disruptive to the ARL's operations.

Ensuring staff who are in very stressful work every day are well supported and feel good about going to work is important in any industry, trade or profession and for our ARL staff who do such important and valuable work, the need for such support is magnified.

I hope to see in the near future what is being done to keep ARL staff happy, well and supported in going to work and contributing so vitally to the wellbeing of our communities. Offsetting these findings, I should note the ARL's rostering practices are effective and there is a consistent core of staff that provides stability to the service. Clearly, the ARL is getting a lot right, and this report does a good job of highlighting areas of improvement, as well as areas of satisfaction.

Finally, I turn to the recommendations of the report. I will not regurgitate them here, but encourage all members, if they have not already, to look at the report and its finding and recommendations. Identified in the Tasmanian Audit Office's recommendations are the allocation of sufficient and appropriate project resources and deployment of more effective management methodology for future significant sub-projects or major reforms. There are always lessons to be learnt in implementing major policy projects like these and as we are all aware, public policy is an art more than it is a science.

Nonetheless, I concur with the report that the implementation of the ARL was overall effectively implemented, thanks in large part to the strength and flexibility of its workforce. Data sharing between the ARL IT system and other child safety services and agencies was also flagged as an issue, which the Tasmanian Audit Office recommends as an issue to resolve. IT systems tend to perpetually have issues and interfacing between programs rarely seems to go smoothly.

We rely on our systems to safely store information we can get when needed. Mostly we need our IT systems to ensure to avoid double handling and deliver more efficient and cost-effective services, so it is disappointing when these things become difficult to obtain. Better quantitative data collection processes were also recommended by the Tasmanian Audit Office as a way to benchmark how effective ARL service delivery has been.

If you do not understand how people are connecting with services, it is almost impossible to make meaningful or effective improvements to them over time. Given the plethora of styles on ways to collect and contextualise quantitative data, I have every confidence this is an issue which can be quickly and effectively resolved.

Awareness raising of the ARL and its role amongst stakeholder agencies was also a recommendation made in the report. A concept as good as the single front door idea that the ARL is based on cannot be as effective as it can be if stakeholders are unaware of it. This perhaps dovetails with recommendation one, as part of a wider project management and adequate resourcing, and the best policies and projects in the world are for nothing if people are not aware of them or if they do not understand how they work. So, I hope that intelligent and meaningful communications programs can be developed to promote this service soon.

Enabling better access to non-government ARL workers to access information systems that are owned by the Department of Police, Fire and Emergency Management, and the Department of Justice is another recommendation in the report. At first glance, that seems like a no-brainer, but I understand sometimes a seemingly simple concept like this can be notoriously difficult to execute in practice. Whatever needs to be done, I hope these barriers to access can be lowered for these workers so that ultimately, the core work of the ARL can be done in the most effective way possible.

Perhaps, the most important recommendation is recommendation 6:

Prioritise the resourcing of liaison officers within the ARL to increase both their capacity to work within communities and with service providers, as well as provide ongoing training and education required to support a more proactive and preventative approach to child safety and wellbeing.

Nothing is more important than keeping our children and young people safe. Right now, the commission of inquiry continues and we are continuing to hear harrowing and distressing details of how some of our most important institutions have failed some of our most vulnerable, young people in ways that they will carry with them for the rest of their lives. Some of these people have even lost their lives. Our institutions are only as good as the people who make them work and if we invest properly in them and their training and support then it follows they are able to provide better services for families and young people to thus provide better outcomes. We cannot allow failings in our education, health or justice systems to harm young, vulnerable people, children or their families. I have no doubt there will be many lessons to be learned and amends to make following the findings and recommendations of the commission of inquiry. However, the pressing point here is that for services like the Strong Families, Safe Kids Advice and Referral Line, investing in staff means we will have better outcomes for children and young people at risk.

For ARL liaison officers, they need to be the best at what they do and the most effective way to ameliorate harm done to our children is to prevent it from happening in the first place. No doubt this will be a challenging recommendation to implement but with the right resourcing and support the organisation is up to the task.

For any members who have not yet had a look at this report, as mentioned, I urge you to take a moment to look through it as it is very enlightening. Getting community safety and wellbeing right, especially for children, young people and their families, is imperative. This report, by the Tasmania Audit Office, helps to understand how effectively the Strong Families, Safe Kids policy is being implemented and will be central to the development of ongoing safety and wellbeing policies in the years to come.

I note the report.

Recognition of Visitors

Mr PRESIDENT - You may remember in special interests, the Leader spoke about the work of the Lions Club in her electorate. I welcome to the public gallery today the president, Kerry Kievit, Lion Margaret Bester and Lion Michael Kievit from the Lions Club of New Norfolk who are here to have a look around parliament.

I think all members will join me in welcoming you to this Chamber and thank you for the work you do in the community.

Members - Hear, hear.

[12.27 p.m.]

Mrs HISCUTT (Montgomery - Leader of the Government in the Legislative Council) - Mr President, the Tasmanian Government is committed to improving the lives of children and young people, particularly those who come into contact with our child safety system. Our most important achievement, since coming to government, has been the implementation of our

\$51 million child safety redesign, Strong Families, Safe Kids. We are now seeing greater and earlier support for families at risk, fewer cases referred to statutory child safety intervention and a decrease in the rate of children and young people entering out-of-home care. These are important achievements.

The Strong Families, Safe Kids Advice and Referral Line has been operational since December 2018 and is a core component of the redesign system. At the heart of the ARL is a more collaborative way of working, a shared responsibility across government and non-government agencies for the safety and wellbeing of every child in Tasmania. The ARL serves as the new front door to Tasmanian family support and child safety services. The main aims of the ARL are:

- to refocus intake services of the Child Safety Service to an advice and referral service that is connected to the broader family support service network;
- to build partnerships between the Child Safety Service and other agencies to improve the response to child safety and wellbeing concerns, and
- to increase information and training for mandatory reporting.

Mr President, a thorough evaluation of the early results from the ARL was completed at the six-month mark and again at the 52-week mark. This evaluation was conducted by Professor David Thorpe, who found the ARL was succeeding in meeting its objectives. The amount of advice and support provided to callers had gradually increased since the service went live in December 2018. Matters referred to other services for help had increased considerably and there was an overall decrease in matters requiring a child safety response during the year following the introduction of the ARL with a reduction in the volume of initiated child safety assessments by 16.5 per cent completed the year before.

Professor Thorpe continues to maintain a relationship with the ARL. He is currently analysing material from the second and third years of operations and has been providing additional training to frontline teams.

The Auditor-General released a performance review into the Strong Families, Safe Kids Advice and Referral Line in June 2022. The Tasmanian Government welcomes the performance review by the Auditor-General, who found that:

The ARL is broadly effective and has delivered improvements in connecting families to appropriate interventions, whether that be early support for wellbeing concerns, or response action for safety concerns.

The review noted that liaison officers were critical to the success of the ARL, and our Government has supplemented these roles in recent years to now include Aboriginal liaison officers and a youth liaison officer. The review also made several recommendations to continue the development of the ARL. This included recommendations regarding information exchange between agencies, awareness raising regarding the role of the ARL and prioritising the ongoing role of the liaison positions.

The Department of Communities will now consider the recommendations in the context of the Strong Families, Safe Kids, Next Steps Action Plan as the next stage of reform. The

formation of the new Department of Education, Children and Young People, to come on line later this year, will also help to address a number of recommendations, particularly as they relate to the siloing of responsibilities for child safety and wellbeing.

The Government thanks the hardworking staff in the Advice and Referral Line and the Department of Communities who have contributed to the successful implementation and ongoing delivery of this important reform.

We know the ARL is a significant change from a traditional child safety intake service and we need to continue to help our agency partners, the community sector and the broader community to understand the approach and work with us in this new way. The Tasmanian Government remains committed to our new approach under the Strong Families, Safe Kids Child Safety redesign and the Advice and Referral Line. It is producing important results which are resulting in better outcomes for children and their families.

I have a couple of comments on the member for Launceston's contribution. There were implementation challenges, as with any major reforms. Many of these challenges have been overcome and importantly we have plans to continue development of the ARL, under our Strong Families, Safe Kids Next Steps Action Plan. The recommendations of the Auditor-General will also inform our processes of development.

The move to create a new Department of Education, Children and Young People will also present opportunities to develop the ARL in the future, particularly in areas of information sharing and breaking down the silos.

The success of the ARL is demonstrated in the statistics. There are more children and families receiving support; there are fewer families being referred to the statutory Child Safety Service; and fewer children are entering out-of-home care. These are important achievements, Mr President, and I note the report.

Motion agreed to.

MOTION

Consideration and Noting - Report of the Parliamentary Standing Committee of Public Accounts Review of Auditor-General's Report No. 4 of 2016-17: Event Funding

[12.34 p.m.]

Ms FORREST (Murchison) - Mr President, I move -

That the report of the Parliamentary Standing Committee of Public Accounts Review of Auditor-General's Report No. 4 of 2016-17: Event Funding be considered and noted.

Before I address my mind in particular to our report, which is not very lengthy, I will make the point that the role of the Public Accounts Committee is crucial in holding the Government to account and ensuring that there are rigorous reviews of Government expenditure and some of their performance processes. As members may have heard this

morning, I have tabled a motion to debate at a later time about the 160 years of history of Public Accounts Committees in Tasmania. New South Wales think they have had them longer. I disagree - they might have been continuously longer, but I will discuss that at another time.

A Public Accounts Committee plays a number of roles, and one of those important roles is doing follow-up reviews of the Auditor-General's reports and reviewing the recommendations the Auditor-General makes. Has the Government adopted the recommendations; if so, has it fully implemented the recommendations; if not, why not; and if there is a valid reason for not adopting them, or finding a different way to achieve the same end, then the committee will report on such matters.

The decision about which reviews we follow up is done in consultation with the Audit Office and the Auditor-General meets regularly with the Public Accounts Committee to discuss which reports he and his office will follow up, and which ones the Public Accounts Committee will do.

Some of the reviews that we have been undertaken go back some years, others are more recent. We have debated a couple of those more recent ones in relation to emergency departments and our ambulance service. This report was looking into event funding - the report of the Parliamentary Standing Committee of Public Accounts Review of the Auditor-General's Report No. 4 of 2016-17: Event Funding. It is a few years ago, and by the nature of that we found that the Government had taken a number of steps to address the matters raised. The Auditor-General's report is much larger than the Public Accounts Committee follow-up review. In fact, this is an unusual report of the Auditor-General, because a lot of it was suggesting different ways events could manage the way they did things. We did not really comment on that, because it was like an addendum to the report and it was the bulk of the Auditor-General's report. We noted that, but did not specifically comment on it because our task was to consider the recommendations the Auditor-General made and how they had been adopted.

The committee did not make any recommendations. I will explain why that is the case, because the findings will describe why it was not necessary to make any further recommendations. What is important to note is that since the Auditor-General undertook the review in 2016-17, the department had established a whole-of-agency grants management system which was lacking at the time this was done. The whole-of-agency grants management framework had been adopted and that was recommended by the Auditor-General in his report.

The Auditor-General found there was a lot of opacity around how events were funded. There were not clear reporting or accountability measures in there, and there had been a lot of change in the department and how things were managed. As we continue to see complete shakeups of departments, these things can drop through the gaps. That does worry me with the dissolution of the Department of Communities Tasmania, and it being subsumed into a range of other areas. That will be a spot to watch and potentially to look out for what may be missed or not appropriately done when we see this major restructure; it was not that long ago that Communities Tasmania was put into place.

Mr Willie - There has not been a great explanation to the changes on foot, either.

Ms FORREST - Anyway, as a result of the action taken by Government, in response to the Auditor-General's recommendations, there is now a clearer link between the government policy and decisions being made at the government level. To me, that is crucial. I am an

absolute supporter of funding events; I am on the board of Unconformity and we get significant funding from government through Events Tasmania, so I will name that. However, if you are going to fund events there does need to be a clear link between the government policy and the funding that is provided. Otherwise it looks like, smells like, and probably quacks like a duck, and that also looks like pork-barrelling and trying to buy a favour. Clear links are important.

The third finding of the committee was that the department adopt a more rigorous process and evaluate management of the event prior to funding, including the requirement for an establishment report. This is one of the things the committee did ask the departmental staff about: when you are considering funding an event, what sort of rigour do you require about the funding decisions? We want to fund events that have all the risk management strategies in place, and the proper structures and good governance arrangements, because ultimately it is public money that is going to these events. If they are going to fall over or their money is not going to be well spent or there is fraud, for example, then you need to be sure that is not likely to happen. These are all matters that were always at risk without this new rigorous process put in place.

The department also assessed the financial return on investment of events; however, the committee made the point that a greater focus needs to be placed on policy objectives as articulated in the event strategy. The event strategy is updated from time to time obviously, but one of the things we found in some of our small regional communities where they have festivals - and I spoke about the Tulip Festival today, I have spoken about Unconformity, but there is Junction Arts Festival, there is a range of festivals around our state. In the past, one of the key performance measures has been attracting interstate travellers. Some of these events continued in some form or another during COVID-19, and obviously that was a completely ineffective measure at that point as the borders were essentially closed. Even when borders reopened there was a bit of hesitancy of people to travel and there were also the challenges of airline travel, which many people may have experienced already; your luggage not ending up in the same place as you are or frequent cancellations of flights, delays and other matters.

It is important the financial return on investment in the event is measured. It should be considered in the context of what that event is seeking to do and how it is seeking to achieve that benefit. When we think about it, Unconformity for example first started as the Queenstown Heritage and Arts Festival. It was a small idea from a group of locals in response to the closure of the Mount Lyell Copper Mine, following the deaths of three workers there. Travis Tiddy was right there at the beginning and the CEO now.

Obviously, it was a tragic time and people needed something to look forward to and help heal the wounds that were very deep in that community. Even if there was not a massive financial return to the community at that time, the value of that event was very important to the community. Interestingly, it did actually generate quite a good financial return on investment right from the outset, even for a tiny festival that it was to start with and it goes on to continue to do that.

The other matter that has changed is that all events are now required to provide annual reports and performance reports for multi-year funded events. Obviously, that is pretty important keeping a check on those things and making sure the financial reporting is up to scratch and the whole governance arrangements with that are in place.

I will not go through all of them, but now the process has been formalised to ensure the evaluation of previous contracts is considered prior to providing ongoing support. Many of you might have thought that would be a no-brainer, before you give more money, you check it has gone well previously. It was not a routine approach taken and now that is part of the deal and the process. It is incumbent on the organisation who has the funding to provide the evidence. That is generally done, but if they cannot provide or it does not appear to be reflected in the actual outcomes observed, then they can ask questions and consider future funding.

It is a brief report. The process we took in conducting the review was to look at the Auditor-General's report, to send out a questionnaire to the department asking them to respond to the Government's response to each of the recommendations, which they did. Some of them are quite brief in their written response. Then we called the departmental officers in to actually ask further questions or to give further clarity around the matters we were raising. It was very apparent there had been significant change between the time of the Auditor-General's audit and the review by the Public Accounts Committee. It did confirm to us the Government had taken that report seriously and they had put in place measures that were necessary to ensure the rigour around funding for events supported by the Government in Tasmania.

I will continue to make the statement that these reviews are very important. It is an appropriate task for the Public Accounts Committee to undertake and we will continue to. You might note there are several others on the Notice Paper, all coming down the line, which are slightly more detailed than this one. However, it is good to see that when the Government have responded, they have adopted the recommendations. It has not just sat on the shelf. I am sure the Auditor-General feels quite happy that is the case too.

I note the report and commend it to the House, and look forward to the Government's comments on this.

[12.45 p.m.]

Ms ARMITAGE (Launceston) - Mr President, I thank the chair of the Public Accounts Committee for discussing this review today.

In the past two and a half years, the central place of events and events funding in Tasmania's economy have been brought into sharp focus. The public funds that go towards some of our events so our regions can have a share of some of the tourism dollars that get brought to the state to promote all the unique culture, and environment and food and drink, have been essential to getting the state back on its feet. It will continue to be important as we grow our economy and as people regain the confidence to travel within the state, visit from the mainland or visit from an international destination.

Therefore, this PAC review into the Auditor-General's report on event funding, although it predates COVID-19 pandemic, will be an important document to justify ongoing funding of events in Tasmania.

In the words of the report:

Tasmanian Government departments contribute funding to more than 100 events annually, at an estimated cost of \$10.0 million.

...

There are often good economic and non-economic reasons why a government provide support for a special event. Special events increase the opportunities for new expenditure within a host region by attracting visitors to the region. They have the capacity to stimulate business activity, creating income and jobs in the short term and generate increased visitation and related investment in the longer term. Sponsorship by governments of special events, even when they are run at a financial loss, is often justified by the claim that the events produce economic benefits for the region in which they are hosted, or the state as a whole.

It perhaps was as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic that we came to understand just how essential things like special events are to the state's balance sheet, and how much our regional locations and business operators rely on them year to year.

As we return to a position where we live with the COVID-19 virus, we can look to this review and the report it is based on, to ensure that in the longer term, events funding provided through public money is done responsibly, and that we have tangible benchmarks by which we can measure their success.

Among the recommendations, the Auditor-General's report included the recommendation that all documentation relating to event funding decisions be retained. I am unsure what might have happened in the past; however, it would be important for the purposes of transparency, accountability and risk management. While it may sound simple in theory, data collection and management are very difficult to carry out in practice. Consistency is extremely difficult to manage as departments, and the people who work within them, tend to have different ideas about what information is retained and in what form.

I note in the PAC review it was found the Department of State Growth had established a whole-of-agency grants management system and a whole-of-agency grants management framework, which, I agree, is the responsible thing to do. I am curious as to how other levels of government such as our local councils might manage their grant systems, and whether there can be any scaled down version of the State Growth grants management system that could be applied to local government systems. But that would be a conversation for another day. I also wonder whether there will be any follow-up as to how effective the State Growth grants management system and framework are.

I was pleased to see that the PAC found there were now clearer links between government policy and decisions being made at departmental level; that the department had adopted more rigorous process in evaluating the management of events prior to funding, including the requirement for an establishment report. There absolutely needs to be clear links between funding assessment criteria and public policy, which has been developed to promote Tasmanian events.

To this end, the department's use of the T21 Visitor Economy Action Plan, and before that, the Events Strategy, gives me confidence that events which do receive funding, do so because they align with policy developed in consultation with the Tasmanian public and with stakeholders who manage, or benefit from, special events held in our state. This, in turn, promotes accountability and transparency in decision-making processes.

The Auditor-General's recommendation is also a very reasonable suggestion that quantitated assessment, preferably as a cost-benefit analysis, be performed where possible prior to agreeing to funds.

I note the PAC review found that the department assesses the financial return on investment of events, but that a greater focus is placed on policy objectives as articulated in things like the Events Strategy, or Visitor Economy Action Plan.

While having something like a cost-benefit analysis is helpful in decision-making and justification, it is important to contextualise events funding into the bigger picture. Keep in mind that as stated by the Auditor-General's report, even when events are run at a financial loss, they can be justified by the claim that events produce economic benefits for the region in which they are hosted or the state as a whole.

They are quantitative, intangible benefits to holding and funding events which go beyond a mere financial calculation. Finally, the Auditor-General's recommendation that extra reports for funded events be routinely compared with the information used to make funding decisions is also very reasonable. It is important to make sure that what was funded was actually what was delivered and for ongoing funding of certain events, what can be expected in subsequent years.

Again, this speaks to risk management and dovetails back into the first recommendation of the Auditor-General, that all documentation relating to event funding decisions be retained. I thank the Chair of the Public Accounts Committee for discussing this review and believe it will remain the important document for events in coming years.

[12.51 p.m.]

Ms RATTRAY (McIntyre) - Mr President, a brief offering to this motion and as I was listening to the contributions and having a read-through of the report of the Public Accounts Committee, you see the value, not only of the Public Accounts Committee work, but certainly of the Auditor-General. I say that for a couple of reasons, because we all know, as elected members of our electorates, it is very difficult to argue against funding for community events or any events that appear to or have the intention of bringing significant economic and social benefit to our communities.

I recall my time here through the Estimates committee process where Events Tasmania come in and you get to talk about funding for this event and funding for that event and they all seem perfectly legitimate. However, when you have a look at this report, obviously assessment was not going on and certainly not recording of assessment for some of those events. If the Auditor-General's report and then the follow-up report by the Public Accounts Committee has delivered, and from what we read it is delivering, that better accountability and open and transparent process, because often this funding is significant - again, we acknowledge it is important funding, because often those events probably would not have seen the light of day without that funding.

It is of significant value that happens, but there has to be some accountability on behalf of the Tasmanian people. When you read the report and on page 9, the committee asks for a response on recommendation 4 about exit reporting tied to instalments of funding for each event. There was a question asked at the public hearing to Ms Allen, and she provided the following clarification regarding the reporting and review process and it says:

It speaks to the record-keeping challenge I mentioned at the beginning of the hearing. We were unable to provide those reports in the form the Audit Office required. These processes are carried out, but we were not able to produce the documentation, which is why the funding has been written in that way.

Obviously, there was a process, but it did not meet the Auditor-General's requirements. If this new system and arrangement is being put in place following those recommendations of the Auditor-General, then I feel much more comfortable in being able to justify why that amount of money has been approved on behalf of the Tasmanian people to particular events. We know there are so many events that do not receive any funding because there is nothing left in the bucket, there is only X amount of dollars. When you read that some of these events have funding for three, four years then it is hard to get a leg in the door if you are another new event when you have existing events continually receiving funding, but in some cases very little evaluation -

Ms Forrest - Just need a bigger bucket.

Ms RATTRAY - You need a bigger bucket, but we need a bigger bucket for everything, member, and we are only a state of 530 000 people and can only generate X amount of money for the bucket ourselves. Something has to give somewhere else if we put more money into this bucket. We need to be absolutely certain those events that are funded are meeting the community expectation and the rigor with that, because they are often significant amounts of money. If they are an ongoing funding that means nobody else gets an opportunity. No other event might get an opportunity to be able to apply for funding because the bucket is bare.

Again, I wanted to acknowledge of the work of the Public Accounts Committee. I have not been a member of that committee, Mr President. The all-powerful committee, I have heard it referred to, is very important.

Mr Valentine - It is the library committee.

Ms RATTRAY - No, that is the one that never meets.

Mr Gaffney - Knowledge is power is it not?

Ms RATTRAY - I hope it is going to meet some time because it has just been re-established.

Mr Gaffney - It has met once.

Mr Valentine - In 10 years.

Ms RATTRAY - However, in all seriousness every committee of the parliament is an important committee, but when it comes to open, transparent accountability then the Public Accounts Committee takes first prize in that particular area. It is a useful and important tool we have in this House to provide some scrutiny and obviously, an opportunity to look over these reports. In this case, this one is very important and we look forward to the opportunity through the Estimates committee to see how these new roles and functions are being

undertaken. The determination and value of funding for events is there now in the public arena. I note the report and thank the Public Accounts Committee for their work.

RECOGNITION OF VISITORS

[12.58 p.m.]

Mr PRESIDENT - I welcome to the public gallery the participants in the 2021 Frank MacDonald Memorial Prize. These fortunate students are taking part in what is a wonderful program established some time ago. Members who have been fortunate enough to be involved as the parliamentary representation for the Frank MacDonald Prize know what a wonderful experience it is and how it can be quite a life-changing event.

We wish you very well and congratulate you on being chosen. Personally, it would be nice to send every student in every school on the Frank MacDonald, but we have just been talking about budgetary constraints and all sorts of things. We are noting a report at the moment but I am sure that all members of the Legislative Council wish you all the best, and enjoy it, and we welcome you here to our Chamber today.

Members - Hear, hear.

Mr PRESIDENT - While the Leader seeks advice we are shortly going to break for lunch and then we will come back and continue debating the motion before us.

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

QUESTIONS

King Island - Shipping and Fuel

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

[2.32 p.m.]

With regard to shipping services for King Island, retail fuel prices are usually 40 to 45 cents higher on average on King Island than in regional Tasmania. During the last six months, the average retail fuel price on King Island was 55 to 65 cents higher than Tasmanian regional costs.

- (1) Please provide details of fuel - LSD, ULP and PULP - transport to King Island on Bass Island Line (BIL) for the last five years.
- (2) Please provide a breakdown by percentage of cost for each component charged by Bass Island Line that relate to -
 - (a) fuel supply/commodity;
 - (b) transport (road and sea);
 - (c) wholesale (storage and distribution); and

- (d) retail.
- (3) Please provide a breakdown by dollar amount for each component charged by BIL that relate to:
 - (a) fuel supply/commodity;
 - (b) transport (road and sea);
 - (c) wholesale (storage and distribution); and
 - (d) retail.
- (4) Please provide a copy of the financial statements for BIL for the 2020-21 financial year and the 2021-22 financial year, including any segment reports; and
- (5) Following Minister Ferguson's recent visit to King Island to listen to the concerns brought forward by the then mayor and King Island shipping executive:
 - (a) what solutions to the problem that were raised have been agreed to in principle; and
 - (b) what solutions have been actioned?

ANSWER

I thank the member for her questions. We have some lengthy answers, so I will work my way through them.

- (1) TasPorts plays an important role in the fuel supply chain for both Flinders and King Island. In 2021 TasPorts delivered 5.65 million litres of fuel products to King and Flinders Island. The total fuel import on the islands increased marginally to 5.65 million litres, compared to 5.6 million litres during 2019-2020. This was due to an increase of approximately 50 000 litres in diesel uptake.

Fuel is sourced competitively by TasPorts at terminal gate prices from Victoria and mainland Tasmania for supply and distribution to both islands.

Import fuel mix was dominated by low sulphur automotive grade diesel, which formed 79.5 per cent of the total volume on the islands. It should be noted that TasPorts, in addition to supplying the community, also supplies diesel to Hydro Tasmania for power generation.

To ensure continuity of supply on the islands, TasPorts has existing storage infrastructure for fuel storage for approximately two weeks supply to the islands, which has been purchased at a particular terminal gate price. Through the pricing formula, the appropriate pricing for end customers is determined for the stored fuel supply. The fuel pricing on King Island is calculated on a weekly basis. The calculation includes the re-averaging of fuel purchases for the past week, such that the pricing is reflective of what fuel is on hand for that period. That is, the fuel

price is re-averaged based on new purchases and remaining stock on hand on island. Fuel pricing varies depending on the terminal gate prices at the time the fuel is purchased by TasPorts. Further to this, it can also be impacted by several other factors, including changes in international benchmark prices, the value of the Australian dollar relative to the US dollar, as well as global supply chain impacts.

With regard to the reduction in excise that was approved by the federal government, TasPorts has passed through the price reduction as soon as the new purchases were reflective of the price change. TasPorts does not set the price for fuel at service stations on the island. That is set by the retail operator.

- (2) Fuel pricing varies depending on the terminal gate price at the time the fuel is purchased by TasPorts, and I am advised that it is not possible to provide a breakdown by percentage of the elemental costs referred to involved in fuel supply to King Island. TasPorts manages fuel distribution and transport to customers. It sells fuel on King Island on a wholesale basis. Bass Island Line's role is limited to the sea freight transport component. TasPorts does not set retail prices and notes the margin applied to fuel by the retailers would be a matter for the retailers.
- (3) TasPorts manages fuel distribution and transport to customers. It sells fuel on King Island on a wholesale basis. TasPorts does not set the retail prices and notes the margin applied to fuel by the retailers is a matter for the retailers.
- (4) In line with all public reporting obligations, the provision of BIL financial statements for 2021-22 financial year will be by way of the annual report which will be released on 31 August 2022. The 2020-21 financial year information is available in the 2020-21 annual report which is publicly accessible on the TasPorts website.
- (5) TasPorts / BIL had intended to participate in this meeting that you are talking about; however, the then mayor specifically requested that no representative attend which unfortunately limited the exchange of information.

One area of particular focus was the current air freight arrangement for fresh and perishable items. That transport mode must contribute significantly to relatively very high retail prices of such essential grocery items for residents. Notably, Flinders Island retailers use refrigerated sea freight for heavy, lower value perishables such as fresh milk and frozen food, and pay less for such items.

Subsequently, Bass Island Line is now offering the opportunity for local food outlets to source product from mainland Tasmania by sea freight, considerably cheaper than transport by air. Refrigerated containers have now been secured. BIL is now exploring the opportunity of a trial subject to market demand. To this end, BIL is awaiting positive responses from retailers and has engaged with a number of grocers to gauge interest. However, responses from retailers and shipping agents on King Island have not supported this opportunity, preferring the air freight service to King Island from Victoria. While the commercial reasons for this are not well understood, it does translate into higher prices for residents than is necessary.

Also in response to a question posed at that meeting, BIL is also working with the Australian Maritime College to prepare an independent assessment of the John Duigan vessel for sea keeping on Bass Strait.

COVID-19 - Penalties Issued

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

[2.39 p.m.]

Mr President, I ask the Leader of the Government regarding the state's response to the COVID-19 pandemic:

- (1) Under the auspices of the Tasmanian State of Emergency declaration from 19 March 2020 to 26 October 2020 inclusive:
 - (a) How many COVID-19 related infringements were issued?
 - (b) What were the nature of, and penalties specified by, those infringements issued?
 - (c) Were any issued to young people of the age of 18 years or younger, and if so, what were the:
 - (i) ages of each recipient, and
 - (ii) penalties prescribed to each recipient?
- (2) Under the auspices of the Tasmanian Public Health Emergency Declaration from 17 March 2020 to 12:01 a.m. 1 July 2022 inclusive:
 - (a) How many COVID-19 related infringements were issued?
 - (b) What were the nature of, and penalties specified by, those infringements issued?
 - (c) Were any issued to young people of the age of 18 years or younger, and if so, what were the:
 - (i) ages of each recipient, and
 - (ii) penalties prescribed to each recipient?

ANSWER

I thank the member for her questions.

- (1)(a) The State of Emergency was declared under the Emergency Management Act of 2006. Between 19 March 2020 to

26 October 2020, 21 infringements and caution notices were issued to individuals in respect of failing to comply with the directions by the State or Deputy State Controller, under the Emergency Management Act of 2006. The ability to issue infringements commenced in May 2020.

- (1)(b) These infringements were all for failing to comply with the directions of an emergency management worker. The penalty for an individual was \$756 in 2019-20, and increased to \$774 in 2021-22, due to the increase in the amount of the penalty unit.
- (1)(c) No infringements were issued to young people under 18 years of age.
- (2)(a) The Public Health Emergency Declaration was declared under the Public Health Act of 1997. Between 17 March 2020 and 1 July 2022, 126 infringement and caution notices were issued to individuals and businesses in respect of failing to comply with directions made by the Director of Public Health, under the Public Health Act 1997. The ability to issue infringement notices commenced in May 2020.
- (2)(b) These infringements included failing to comply with stay-at-home requirements; fail to comply with mask requirements; and noncompliant gatherings. The penalty for an individual was \$756 in the first half of 2020, \$774 in the financial year 2020-21, and \$778.50 in 2021-22. This increase was in line with the increase in the penalty unit amount.
- (2)(c) No infringements were issued to young people under 18 years of age.

Ms WEBB - Can I have a follow-up question there, and you might be able to clarify it?

Mr PRESIDENT - I have to move on.

Ms Rattray - I do not mind waiting, if the member wants to take a call.

Ms WEBB - Thank you, Mr President, and thank you, member for McIntyre. I appreciate that.

It was to clarify when answering about the penalties, they were the penalties that were able to be applied. Were they the penalties that were issued in each instance? That was the nature of my question.

Mrs HISCUTT - I am still not quite sure of what you are asking, so while I am on my feet, I was giving you the penalty units. What a penalty unit was.

Ms WEBB - Yes. So, I was not asking about that because I could look it up in the legislation. I was asking about the penalties that were actually applied, when there were infringements issued. Was it that maximum amount, or -

Mrs HISCUTT - Can I ask the member to please clarify the question, or have another go at it. Thank you.

Northern Roads Package - Stage 2

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

[2.43 p.m.]

Mr President, my question is to the Leader, and this is from a question that I asked some time ago on 21 June, so thank you for the answer.

In regard to the Northern Roads Package Stage 2, Frankford Main Road and Birralea Main Road. My questions are:

- (1) Can the Government please explain why the upgrade funding has been reduced from the promised \$24 million to \$15 million?
- (2) Why is the upgrade only addressing road widening and some limited pavement rehabilitation, and not the safety upgrade required?
- (30) I understand works have been delayed from Selbourne Road to Frankford Road. Can the Government please advise of the issues causing this delay? It may well be rain, rain, and more rain.

Clarification of Answer - King Island - Shipping and Fuel

Mrs HISCUTT (Montgomery - Leader of the Government in the Legislative Council) Mr President, before I move on to answering that question, I want to correct something that I said to the member for Murchison.

When you are talking about the annual reports, I said the wrong date. To clarify, question (4) about the annual reports:

- (1) In line with all public reporting obligations, the provision for BIL financial statements for 2021-22 financial year will be by way of the annual report to be released by the 31 October 2022.

Ms FORREST - I thought it was going a bit early. It is only a week away.

Mrs HISCUTT - I believe I said August, so I want to correct that on *Hansard*, please. You should have said then, wow, how lucky.

Ms Forrest - You did say August, so I was very excited about that concept.

ANSWER

Mrs HISCUTT - I have an answer here for the member for McIntyre with her roads.

- (1) The claim that funding has been reduced is not correct. In April, 2019 the Australian Government committed \$24 million to upgrade the Birralelee Road from the Roads of Strategic Importance Initiative, the ROSI. In order to maximise the benefit, and consistent with the 2016 Tasmanian Integrated Freight Strategy, additional funding was leveraged from the Roads of Strategic Importance program. The scope of the original Birralelee Main Road commitment was extended to include the Batman Highway and a connecting section of the Frankford Road. The total northern roads program budget is \$55 million.
- (2) The Northern Roads Package will effectively open a shorter freight route in the north of Tasmania providing freight especially vehicles a higher efficiency route. Non-freight vehicles will also benefit from the improved route. The major benefits will include freight operational cost savings, being shorter trips and the enabling of higher productivity vehicles; time saving for all vehicles and occupant types; crash reductions; environmental benefits, reduced greenhouse gas emissions due to fuel savings; and lower maintenance costs. The project will improve safety by widening and sealing shoulders which provides a safe and efficient road and allows additional space for drivers to regain control, reducing road crashes.
- (3) Works have been completed on the Batman Highway between the East Tamar Highway and Batman Bridge, and are currently in progress west of the bridge, with completion expected in mid-2023. Stage 2 of the Northern Roads Package, which includes the upgrading of Frankford and Birralelee roads, is being released in multiple tender packages. The next tender to be released is the section of Birralelee Road at the southern end. Further tenders for the remaining sections of Birralelee Road and Frankford will follow as the design is being completed, including the section of Birralelee Road between Selbourne Road and the Frankford Road. The community has been recently provided with a project update.

King Island - Shipping Services

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

[2.47 p.m.]

With regard to shipping services for King Island:

- (1) What consideration or investigation has been undertaken in the last five years by the Government or TasPorts regarding the possible transition to a private operator taking over the entire King Island shipping and freight task?
- (2) If any consideration or investigation been undertaken in the last five years:
 - (a) who has conducted the process?
 - (b) what, if any, companies have been directly approached and how many expressions of interest and other responses have been provided?

- (3) If no consideration or investigation has been undertaken by the Government or TasPorts in the last five years:
 - (a) will the Government commence a process to engage potential private operators?
 - (b) when does the Government intend to commence this work?
 - (c) What approach will be taken?

ANSWER

(1) and (2)

Firstly, it should be noted that shipping and freight to and from King Island is an open market of which there are currently two participants, a private operator, Eastern Line, and TasPorts' subsidiary, the Bass Island Line, the BIL. In regard to considerations or investigations that TasPorts has undertaken of transitioning the BIL service to a private operator, I can advise that TasPorts undertook a marketing investigation and assessment of the BIL business model in late 2018, the results of which were announced in 2019. The purpose was to ensure BIL's operations were as efficient as possible and suitably servicing customers.

Potential Bass Island operators were invited to submit indicative proposals to participate in the delivery of the BIL service. The evaluation panel determined that none of the market participants sufficiently demonstrated their proposals were able to independently achieve and improve the BIL service without ongoing involvement and support from TasPorts.

- (3) As per the previous response, the market investigation and assessment has already been undertaken.

Tourism Projects

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

[2.50 p.m.]

In relation to the Project X Huon Valley:

- (1)
 - (a) What is the current status of the project, and when is it anticipated to be operational?
 - (b) Given the delay in the commencement, will further funding be required to complete the project?
- (2) What is the level of Government support for the proposal to create a public walking and bike track around Great Lake in the Central Highlands?

- (3) What is the Government doing to actively support heritage rail initiatives such as the Derwent Valley Railway and the Don River Railway to gain access to the main line?

ANSWER

I thank the member for his question. Are you sure there was not any input from the President on that one?

- (1) The proponent, DarkLab, is continuing to progress the concept and has recently submitted a revised DA to the Huon Valley Council, which had rejected the initial DA. Pending a decision on the revised DA, time lines and budget for the project will be reviewed. However, at this point in time it is not anticipated that increased funding will be sought from Government, noting that the costs committed by both the Australian and Tasmanian governments are set. It also has funding committed by David Walsh, but at this stage, DarkLab expects to be able to construct and open the venue 18 months from approvals being provided.
- (2) Hydro Tasmania and the Tasmanian Parks and Wildlife Service have been working with the private sector project proponents to better understand their Great Lake trail proposal. At this time, no funding has been provided by the Government towards the proposal, which remains preliminary in nature and is yet to be formally assessed.
- (3) The Tasmanian Government has provided extensive support to the state's tourist and heritage rail operators, both in terms of considerable administrative support to enable practical access to railway lines and substantial financial support.

The Tasmanian Government introduced the Rail Access Framework, which facilitates access by these organisations to the operational lines for the Tasmanian Rail Network managed by TasRail. Don River Railway has expressed an interest in using this framework to access the main line to Penguin and Devonport from its current place of operations.

In addition, the Tasmanian Government introduced the Strategic Infrastructure Corridors (Strategic and Recreational Use) Act 2016 to enable tourist and heritage rail operations to have access to non-operational parts of the Tasmanian Railway Network. So far, three organisations have taken advantage of the act; The Tasmanian Transport Museum Society, Derwent Valley Railway and the Launceston and North East Railway.

Under the act, these organisations have taken management control of disused sections of the Tasmanian Rail Network for their rail operations. They are now working through the necessary accreditation requirements under the National Rail Safety Law to allow them to commence rail operations on these lines. Also noting the Tasmanian Transport Museum at Glenorchy already operates on a short section, but plans to extend its operations in the near future.

The Tasmanian Government has also provided significant financial support, including \$600 000 to the Tasmanian Association of Tourist Railways to offset

costs of premiums for public liability insurance, as well as a \$2 million grant to the Don River Railway to support redevelopment of its site and preparation for main line operations.

Conservation Covenants

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

[2.54 p.m.]

In relation to conservation covenants:

- (1) On what date was the register of expressions of interest for conservation covenants last updated?
- (2) What are the reasons for the low level of conservation covenanting in Tasmania and what changes does the Government anticipate making to improve the efficiency of the process and the likelihood of successful outcomes?
- (3) What are the Government's internal targets for conservation covenanting process times, including the preferred average process time in months?

ANSWER

Thank you, Mr President, I thank the member for his question.

- (1) The register of expressions of interest for conservation covenants was last updated on 26 June 2022 with the addition of new EOI.
- (2) The scale, scope and activity of the Private Land Conservation Program has and will continue to evolve in response to a range of factors, including partnerships, funding initiatives and conservation priorities. For example, since Australian government funding for large scale covenanting programs ceased in 2013, a primary focus of the Private Land Conservation Program has been ongoing support for landowners with existing covenants.

New conservation covenants continue to be established by the Private Land Conservation Program on a prioritised basis, including to offset impacts associated with development activities and to support Australian government funded NRM programs targeting the protection of key threatened species and vegetation types.

The Private Land Conservation Program continues to review and rationalise aspects of its operations to identify opportunities for efficiencies and/or alternative business models that will enable more streamlined processing of applications and ongoing administration of established covenants.

- (3) The time taken for conservation covenanting depends upon a wide range of factors, including the complexity of the individual covenant proposal; the quality and

completeness of information contained within the submission; allocation of staff resourcing in accordance with internal priorities; and the responsiveness of the applicant through the process.

Truck Wash Facilities - Effluent Dumps

Ms RATTRAY question to MINISTER for PRIMARY INDUSTRIES and WATER, Ms PALMER

[2.57 p.m.]

Mr President, I will continue to ask this question and hopefully, before I retire - when that might be I am not sure yet - we might get some progress. It is about stock effluent dumps and potential truck wash facilities in the south and the north-east of the state. Has the department done any more work in securing a location and a possible operator post the building of these two important facilities? I am happy to take it on notice, minister, if you do not have it at your fingertips.

ANSWER

Thank you very much, Mr President. I will take that question on notice and hope to have a full reply for you tomorrow. Thank you.

Bruny Island Levy

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

[2.58 p.m.]

Noting that the infrastructure needs on Bruny Island are significant, especially given high visitation from tourists, can the Government advise if any consideration is being given to sources of funding for additional infrastructure needs on Bruny Island? For example, a \$1 levy on all ferry fares to Bruny Island.

ANSWER

Mr President, the question was short but the answer is long. The answer is: a levy on Bruny Island ferry fares is not currently being considered.

Based on 2021 passenger numbers, a \$1 levy on ferry fares would generate approximately \$174 500 in levy revenue per year. Collecting levy revenue as part of ticket sales, identifying investment priorities and then distributing levy revenue across multiple agencies would be a significant administrative burden with very little return when compared to recent infrastructure investments on the island. For example, the Tasmanian Government is investing \$7.5 million to improve terminal infrastructure at Kettering and Roberts Point, compared to the \$174 000 it would raise.

In addition, a \$1.5 million grant from the Tasmanian Government is funding the implementation of several projects relating to visitor infrastructure and information on Bruny

Island. Projects within the scope of the grant include construction of public toilets at Dennes Point; road safety works along Adventure Bay Road and Nebraska Road; improvements at the Mavista Falls track and picnic area; new waste and recycling bins at Alonnah, Adventure Bay, Dennes Point, Roberts Point and Lunawanna, and the provision of visitor information to enhance the visitor information experience and communicate impact minimisation messaging.

In 2019, \$6 million was allocated to continue the sealing of Bruny Island Main Road with two sections being prioritised between Alonnah and Lunawanna and a short section between Lunawanna and Lighthouse Road. In 2018, the car park at Bruny Island Neck lookout was upgraded; and a new larger car park with 24 spaces plus bus parking, safer entry and exit driveways provided improved access to the popular site. The Government would need to consider the potential of a negative impact of any levy on tourism visitation or weigh heavily on locals who need to travel to and from the island for work and island-based businesses that need to attract workers from the Tasmanian mainland.

MOTION

Consideration and Noting - Report of the Parliamentary Standing Committee of Public Accounts Review of Auditor-General's Report No. 4 of 2016-17: Event Funding

Resumed from page 31.

[3.01 p.m.]

Mrs HISCUTT (Montgomery - Leader of the Government in the Legislative Council) - Mr President, I had not started my response so, I will start now. I thank the member for Murchison for bringing on this motion. The Tasmanian Liberal Government is a strong supporter of our events industry and I welcome the Parliamentary Standing Committee of Public Accounts review into the Auditor-General's report on events funding for the 2016-17 financial year. The review notes the complexities of event funding and the Government is reassured, through the review, that events are being funded and acquitted in an appropriate manner.

Over the last two years, events have done it hard. They are business that rely on a single point in the year to make their revenue and they do not have the flexibility to spread the risks that brings over the months. As quickly as COVID-19 impacts were felt, we responded to ensure that events could ride out the wave and especially now that density limits have been removed, get back to normal.

I will touch more on our current support shortly, but first I want to go back to the years surrounding the Auditor-General's audit of state funding of events. When the Government came to power in 2014, there was very little in place to say why events were funded in the way that they were. I am not suggesting the investments at the time were wrong. In many cases it is far from it, but there was very little strategy to guide the investment. We made a commitment when we came to office to remedy that and devise a strategy to steer our investments into the future.

The Tasmanian Government Events Strategy 2015-2020 set a new bar for event investment and ensured all parts of government that work in the area knew why they were

doing it. That included events supported through Business Events Tasmania, Arts Tasmania, Screen Tasmania, Communities, Sport and Recreation and most substantially Events Tasmania. The strategy provided that Events Tasmania look to events that make a positive economic impact on our visitor economy. It sat side by side with the T21 goals for reaching 1.5 million visitors to our state by 2020 - a target which we actually reached in 2018.

Events Tasmania aims to deliver three things when it invests into events. They are:

- (1) To bring people to our state from the mainland and overseas;
- (2) To encourage these visitors and local Tasmanians to move around our state, especially into the regions; and
- (3) To ensure there are plenty of people to talk about that which is aligned to our brand and sense of place.

These principles sit alongside benefits of events like their ability to bring people together and allow people to be part of something bigger than themselves. We have stayed true to this plan for our support and with the impacts of COVID-19 hitting hard and fast, we have spent the last two years ensuring that as many events as possible can continue into the future. We have facilitated the Regional Event Recovery Fund that has provided over \$1 million to 14 recipients, ensuring that they are well prepared for COVID-19 recovery and the acknowledging there is a different environment and there are certain costs that did not exist previously. We have worked with Austrade to deliver \$1.7 million in funding to another 14 events through the Recovery for Regional Tourism program. The fund works to drive in interstate visitation, create jobs in regions and improve product diversity to attract domestic visitors. We are pleased to have had such success in the program through our event partnerships.

It is also important to note as the nation was still feeling the greatest impacts of COVID-19, our management of the state allowed us to take advantage of our safe environment and bring events to Tasmania in a way we have never done before. We have attracted more AFL content than ever before, supported the inaugural and highly successful season for the Tasmanian JackJumpers, and who can forget the historic fifth Ashes Cricket test match held in Blundstone Arena earlier this year?

These events provide huge exposure for our state and, in a time where travel has been difficult, allowed Tasmanians to keep on experiencing the best events right in their own backyard. We are all aware of the big-name events we are proud to support; Dark Mofo, Festival of Voices in the south, Festivale in Launceston, Unconformity on the north-west - an event I know the member for Murchison is particularly proud of - and of course, the Burnie 10.

We may not see many of the smaller events though, Mr President, that sit so well with our island's uniqueness. Celebrations of garlic in Koonya on the Tasmanian peninsula, scallops in Bridport - that went ahead this year, member for McIntyre?

Ms Rattray - Excellent event, sold out as always.

Mrs HISCUTT - We cannot forget the sparkling wine in the Tamar Valley, apple cider in the Huon Valley and I will mention it again, our geological uniqueness in Queenstown.

These events all celebrate a sense of place you can only find in Tasmania and we all continue to support events that show it all off to the world.

I thank the committee for their hard and diligent work in reviewing the Auditor-General's report. We will continue to support our events sector and continue to ensure the events we support represent our state, our brand and our sense of place. Also, Mr President, we have announced our intention to develop the next five-year, whole-of-government events strategy and Events Tasmania are in the process of developing and consulting on this strategy as we speak.

Mr President, I note the report.

[3.08 p.m.]

Ms FORREST (Murchison) - Mr President, I thank members for their contributions on this and acknowledge they raise some very valid points in relation to events generally. I also want to thank my fellow committee members on PAC. We have powered through a fair bit of work recently and I appreciate their commitment to that - thank you member for Nelson, member for Elwick currently.

The member for Launceston raised the point which I sort of alluded to in my contribution in moving the motion, we should not just be measuring financial benefits from events particularly, because there is much more than that and the member for Launceston clearly articulated that. She is absolutely right, it should not just be about the money and the financial return on the investment because there are benefits in terms of people's health and wellbeing. Working actively to address loneliness in some communities where people feel safe to come out to an event can be a powerful thing. It is important those sorts of measures are considered and recorded and it should be part of the assessment of the overall success of any event.

The Auditor-General's work highlighted a number of flaws in accountability and a lack of a paper trail. They might have done some of these things that were required, but there was no evidence to show it, so the old saying, 'if it is not documented, it did not happen' is true and you need to make sure those probity measures, the risk management, the Government's assessments and reporting is all documented so you have the trail and can clearly demonstrate the value of your event or rationale for seeking further funding.

I also want to thank the Government for their ongoing commitment to events, especially in our regions. The Leader went through a number of ones that are not talked about as often because they are smaller events, more niche and more local.

Mrs Hiscutt - I will claim the Burnie 10. It starts in yours and finishes in mine.

Ms FORREST - Only just, because I have pushed over a fair way into your electorate. It starts and finishes in my electorate.

Mrs Hiscutt - Well, yes, that is true, I am the turnaround point.

Ms FORREST - Yes, you are the turnaround. They get to your place and no, let us go back. They get to Montgomery, and they think, 'no, let's go back to Murchison'. The 321-GO is all in my electorate, that is the kiddies' event. It is amazing to see the number of families who turn out for that too. It is really valued.

I know there are sometimes criticisms of government being seen to be funding the arts and events and things like that, whether it be football, the cricket, The Unconformity, Festivale, or even Dark Mofo. We all see the very real and very desperate challenges we have around housing, access to housing, health, demands on teachers, all of those things, but we need to be able to do both. We need to do all of these things because the enormous health and wellbeing that attendance and participation in events creates is part of our social fabric and part of what makes us who we are. It is not one or the other, it is trying to manage both.

I acknowledge the member for McIntyre's comments that there is only so much money available, and we do need to continue to lobby the federal government for looking at those regional renewal buckets of money to assist this. However, when you measure the return on investment not just in terms of the financial return but also the health and wellbeing returns, then it is a no-brainer. That is why it is important to consider some of those measures.

I acknowledge the comments that have been made by others, and thank the commitment of governments past and present in funding events. I also thank those who work in the events space. This has been a terribly difficult time, as the Leader alluded to. This is not just the artists - who are often pretty lowly paid and poorly cared for in some respects - who put their heart and soul into some of the artworks they produce and the performances they put on. It has been an extraordinarily difficult time for them, and I thank them for their ongoing commitment to the arts.

Also, those involved in sound, light and staging; a huge number of people are involved in putting on events. We get to turn up and just lap it up and enjoy it, but there is a massive body of work that goes on behind that. The artistic directors, those on the boards and things like that who make the tough decisions about how do we manage that. How do we make sure that we have risk management in place? How do we deal with the COVID-19 requirements when they were there?

We all know what happened with The Unconformity last year when we had the three-day snap lockdown that stopped The Unconformity on the first day. In spite of all our COVID-19 preparations, one person employed to do it, our best laid plans went astray. I again thank the Government for acknowledging that and continuing to support The Unconformity to continue in developing other products as well.

It is all those people who work hard in this space. Even putting on a massive footy match, crowd control, security, all those people you cannot do those events without. I am glad I was not at the Collingwood-Carlton game in Melbourne this past weekend. It was a bit hairy at the end there, and afterwards. I watched the news. People get very passionate about their sport. It is good to attract some of these major events into our state too, because we do see a lot of people come, and some of them - quite a few of them probably, including the Bulldog's players this weekend - stay overnight. They wanted to see if they were in the eight or not, so you could not be on a plane and watch the television there, could you? Maybe that is why they stayed.

I thank the Government for their support of events, and it is good to see a more rigorous process now in place to ensure that there is a proper evaluation of these and record keeping.

Report considered and noted.

MOTION

Consideration and Noting - Report of the Parliamentary Standing Committee of Public Accounts - Review of Auditor-General's Report No. 8 of 2018-19: Student Attendance and Engagement, Years 7 to 10

[3.15 p.m.]

Ms FORREST (Murchison) - Mr President, I move -

That the report of the Parliamentary Standing Committee of Public Accounts Review of Auditor-General's Report No. 8 of 2018-19: Student Attendance and Engagement, Years 7 to 10 be considered and noted.

In moving this motion standing in my name, and the noting of this Public Accounts Committee report into a review of the Auditor-General's report into student attendance and engagement, Years 7 to 10, this review by the Auditor-General was done in 2018-19. It was pre-COVID-19. COVID-19 has put a real full stop in some things, and so, things have been extraordinarily difficult in education since this time. Our review was conducted over a period where COVID-19 was very much front and centre of the considerations.

I will not speak in too much depth to our report. The member for Elwick may want to make a number of comments about this report, but in case someone is reading this debate in the future, or listening to it now, I reiterate the importance of the Public Accounts Committee's work in reviewing the Auditor-General's reports. It is a very important mechanism for asking the Government to explain how they have responded to the recommendations made by the Auditor-General, what response they have undertaken, whether all the recommendations have been adopted, or not, and reasons for not doing so.

Not so much in this case, but in the past, we sometimes see a flurry of activity once we have started asking the questions.

We did use a similar, or basically the same process as with other follow-up reviews, where we outline all the Auditor-General's recommendations that are contained in that report. We asked the Government, or the department, through the minister, to respond to each of those recommendations in terms of, do they agree with the recommendation, has it been adopted, and what stage that is at.

The Government, or the minister, has provided a written response to those questions, then we invite the minister and departmental officers in to give evidence to the committee to give further information related to those matters.

It is not a broad-ranging review of student attendance and engagement. It is about whether or not the Government has adopted the recommendations made by the Auditor-General and if not, why not.

Again, I acknowledge it was pre-COVID-19, so a lot of things have happened since COVID-19. The recommendations and the findings of this committee, the PAC committee in this report, are just as relevant during, and as we move through the COVID-19 pandemic

period, as they were in relation to have these things been done. Our recommendations still stand, our recommendations, not the Auditor-General's recommendations.

I will talk briefly and then I will let other members.

During our hearings, it became very apparent, there are lots of programs and processes and initiatives that are being developed in education, for a variety of reasons. Some of them are about student retention and attainment; some of them are about student wellbeing. Some of them are about professional development of the teachers and other staff. It seems that there are many such programs being developed, almost all at once. It seems that it would be very difficult to actually determine if any of them, or one of them, or all of them, are actually making a real difference in student learning outcomes.

If someone has an allergy to something, a child with an allergy, a food allergy, and they have had 10 different foods that day, you do not know what it is until you eliminate all except one, and do one at a time, and then assess the impact.

Sometimes when you know there are a lot of challenges here - issues with student disengagement, and that is for a variety of reasons. One student may be disengaged because of problems at home, an inability to get to school. Another may be disengaged because of their own health issues, or some other things. It is not like there is one solution for every problem here, or every reason why a student may disengage.

The committee makes five overarching recommendations, and there are other recommendations throughout the report.

Essentially, what the committee said in an overarching sense was that measurable performance targets inform and guide the evaluation of all departmental programs, processes and initiatives aimed at student attendance and engagement.

It is about knowing what you are looking for. What is the measure going to be? If your outcome is not improved student outcomes, then what are you doing?

It might be that you need to address student attendance if the attendance of a student is particularly low. We know that is going to have a detrimental effect on their learning outcomes, but what are you trying to measure? What is your performance target? It seemed unclear as to what some of the programs were trying to achieve and how they were going to measure that success or otherwise.

We also recommended that the reporting against performance targets be provided in the department's annual report. It is something we have talked about on many occasions, in budget Estimates and others, about having outcome measures and performance measures that measure outcomes, not just outputs - like how many kids turned up to school on a certain day. Also, we recommended measurable performance targets with a basis of maintaining current and/or developing future initiatives. We know that many initiatives are put in place, presumably for all the right reasons; but if they are not reviewed and checked against the intended outcomes, and they just keep going because they are there, they could be doing harm or they may be doing no good, which is almost as bad. There needs to be that ongoing monitoring to ensure that the measures, programs, processes and initiatives put in place have measurable performance outcomes or targets, and that they are reported against.

The fourth overarching recommendation was that all analysis and assessment of departmental programs and initiatives must focus and report on student outcomes as a key measure of success or failure and ongoing funding. All these programs cost money. As the member for McIntyre said in a previous debate, the bucket is only so big and it is important that we make sure the money is well spent and is achieving outcomes for students.

Student engagement is the final overarching one - that student engagement be consistently defined in relevant departmental documentation. It seemed to be rather a nebulous term. It was not clear exactly what we were referring to at times, so that was a recommendation. I imagine other members who were on the committee, particularly others who have an interest in this, may wish to comment more deeply on the particular recommendations related to the report and recommendations of the Auditor-General.

I hope that the Government will provide some response to the committee's recommendations, not just their actions on the Auditor-General's recommendations. It is a bit complicated when we are talking about two lots of recommendations and which is better adopted and dealt with. Overall, the department had done a lot of work on all the recommendations to a point, some of them had been completely dealt with or others were well in progress. Overall, they have been responded to; but out of that evidence comes a bit of a flag that says we need to be sure that we are delivering programs and initiatives and processes that make a difference to student outcomes. I will leave it at that, Mr President. I may say some other things in my reply.

[3.23 p.m.]

Ms ARMITAGE (Launceston) - - Mr President, I read with interest the PAC's review on the Auditor-General's report regarding student attendance and engagement, years 7 to 10. These crucial and formative years in a person's life can set the direction of their future. It is incumbent upon all of us - lawmakers, parents, teachers, policymakers and families - to make sure that every Tasmanian adolescent has access to the right resources and has the best chance possible to succeed and thrive at school and beyond.

Attendance is obviously necessary for a student to be able to learn and grow. The COVID-19 pandemic drastically changed the way our kids learn, and being kept away from physical attendance and face-to-face interaction with their teachers and peers posed an unprecedented set of challenges for everybody.

The way we understood attendance and engagement completely changed as our children learned through their computers and tablets, and things like drama and sports became impossible to coordinate. I express my sincerest admiration for our teachers and schools for adapting during the pandemic. To ensure that our children were not left too far behind with their learning and giving them the tools to learn at home have been essential to keeping their engagement with their educational life, and our teachers, parents and students did an incredible job. In fact, I have been told that many parents felt that they could go on and be teachers they have done so much of it now. They have all done a wonderful job.

Mr Willie - I think we need a few too.

Ms ARMITAGE - In usual circumstances, maintaining good attendance is vital to having positive educational outcomes. The multiplier effect of absenteeism over time can place a student months or even years behind a student of the same age whose attendance rates were

good. Missing one day every two weeks equals 20 days a year, which is four weeks. Over the course of a 13-year term of schooling, that student will be one-and-a-half years behind a student who did not miss those days. A student who misses one day of school a week will therefore be three years behind a student who did not.

There is a difference between attendance and engagement, as the reports acknowledged. A student can be attending school, even doing better than the bare minimum, but still be failing to meaningfully engage with their schoolwork and their learning. According to the Tasmanian Audit Office report, attendance is only part of the equation for good educational outcomes, as the level of participation and intrinsic interest a student shows in school is of equal importance.

Research indicates there was a significant proportion of students who are quietly and passively disengaged from learning. These students are behaviourally compliant and do enough work to sit above minimum for the standards, so their disengagement may not be indicated in data or analysis. However, they may be disengaged to such an extent as to fall well short of reaching their full potential.

This is worrying. To me, it indicates that young people may be lacking in optimism about their futures and consider it is not worthwhile to invest much of their own effort, pride and enthusiasm into their learning and their growth. It suggests that they are not willing to try as hard as they can to engage, learn and perform. Proper engagement of students to maximise their participation, performance, and potential also depends on having and implementing good policies. This responsibility falls on us as lawmakers. What is clear, is that there is no one-size-fits-all measure that can be implemented that will resolve issues as big as this.

However, recording, maintaining and analysing data about attendance, retention, engagement and participation is essential to formulating good policy. A number of metrics and benchmarks have been developed to assess student and school performance, and I note that the PAC found that the Department of Education has taken significant steps, including through the use of data analytics, to identify at-risk cohorts in all schools. One of the PAC recommendations was that this data also be used for monitoring and reporting the effectiveness of student engagement strategies.

The Tasmanian Audit Office report found that the Department of Education collects information on attendance and absence, but no evidence was found to show that this data is used to effectively monitor trends or establish improvement targets for students at highest educational risk. The PAC review did, however, find that the department is using attendance information to measure Department of Education and school performance and is used in school improvement plans. Developing a cohesive response is a monumental task, and I understand that it is a work in progress. There are ways in which data that is currently being collected can be used more meaningfully.

To this end, I note that the Tasmanian Audit Office report recommends that the Department of Education considers providing further clarity to schools regarding the inclusion of targets in school improvement plans for improved parent, community and stakeholder engagement. Clarity is needed and schools, principals and teachers should be allowed discretion in how they manage the collection of data. This is a delicate balance.

I understand that coordination between the department and schools must present a number of challenges. I note from the PAC review that, in the implementing the

recommendations arising from the 2019 Family Engagement Review, the Department of Education developed the Together with Families approach. This includes clear expectations for staff to build strong and trusting relationships with families; be guided by engagement principles to be caring, purposeful, inclusive, genuine, responsive and effective; and be deliberate about how families are engaged in decision-making.

Good performance at school really does start at home, and we cannot help our families unless they have a solid base at home and that families are also engaged with their children's learning. The Together with Families approach seems to be a very good start and the employment of a family engagement project officer to implement the program I am sure is helping. I hope to see some more quantitative data relating to the work of the Together with Families approach and the effectiveness of the family engagement project officer in the months and years ahead, when there has been a good chance for the policy to be implemented and assessed.

Mr President, our children's education is too important to neglect or not take seriously. Their future, and ours, quite literally depends on having a quality education system where Tasmanian kids feel safe, accepted, engaged and are given every chance to grow and succeed. The Tasmanian Audit Office report into attendance and engagement is necessary to ensure that our current educational policies are on track to deliver on positive educational outcomes. Similarly, our Joint Standing Committee of Public Accounts review into this report can help guide the way we contextualise educational policy development, implementation, and improvement over time. I thank the Chair of the Public Accounts Committee for bringing this motion, and the Public Accounts Committee for their work on this important issue.

[3.30 p.m.]

Mr WILLIE (Elwick) - Mr President, this report is interesting in the context of the current national debate about teacher shortages and the workforce talking about increased compliance, the increase in data-driven schools, and increased accountability for teachers. In a way, schools do have to be data-driven; we just have to find better ways of freeing up teachers to do what they are trained to do, which is education, instruction, teaching and learning. A lot of these additional tasks from these sorts of compliance things that they are now doing are contributing to burnout. That is what we are hearing at a national level from all education ministers, including our own minister, Mr Jaensch. This report is interesting in that context. It is from 2018-19, but I have a few questions I will ask today too, because the public hearings we had were nearly a year ago now - September 2021 - and the department outlined a number of initiatives in that public hearing, which is their response to the Auditor-General's report.

The Auditor-General started by undertaking a performance audit in order to form an opinion on the effectiveness of the Department of Education's management of student attendance and engagement for years 7 to 10 - it is important that we narrow it down to those year levels - and how effectively the department collects information about student attendance and engagement, and whether the information is used to improve students' educational outcomes. The audit examined information relating to full-time and part-time students in years 7 to 10 at only Tasmanian government schools over the period 1 January 2014 to 31 December 2017. However, some of the data was related to 2018, including school visits, so it was post that analysis. That was where the Auditor-General started and it is important that the Public Accounts Committee follows these reports up. It is a good process for the departments too, across government, to be able to explain their position and what they are doing to respond. In some instances, as in the first recommendation here, the Auditor-General was

talking about ICSEA scores, which is socioeconomic status of school-based data, but the department was more interested in the student level, looking at the parental educational attainment. There is some good explanation there on where the department's thinking was in relation to the Auditor-General's recommendations.

Why do we do this? Attendance is important. Then we have this question of engagement too, which is quite hard to measure in some instances. Engagement is essential to develop knowledge and skills for the future, and attendance is a legal obligation for parents and guardians to make sure that the young person is at school. We cannot have engagement without attendance first. Engagement is incredibly important, and you would think that if students are arriving to school with their needs being met - Maslow's hierarchy of needs - so they can self-actualise, and that classroom teaching and best practice is occurring, and it is an engaging learning environment, some of these compliance issues might not be needed. You would think attendance and engagement would be up.

Unfortunately, we are increasingly looking at these sorts of measures to use data to improve student outcomes. I do not know if that is having a detrimental effect over time. If you look at results as a nation over the last 20 years at international tests like Positive Education Schools Association, we are going backwards as a nation. We seem to be becoming more data-driven and whether that is having an impact on teaching and learning is another question, but it is relevant to this report given the national discussion.

The Auditor-General, in his first report, concluded that key elements are in place within policies, processes and systems to support the Department of Education's effective management of student attendance and engagement for years 7 to 10. Whilst the framework for managing student attendance and engagement is effective, it could be enhanced by further investment in improving student attendance data quality, better defining and capturing student engagement data, enhancing, monitoring and reporting systems and establishing and monitoring performance targets for acceptable attendance and engagement. I acknowledge since the Auditor-General made that conclusion the department has undertaken quite a significant amount of work. We have yet to understand how effective that work will be in terms of attendance and engagement. There are things like the Annual Student Wellbeing Survey, which is a good initiative. South Australia was the first to do it, then us, so we are the second state to move in that direction. It captures a lot of important information on engagement, not just attendance. That data is important but how do we respond to it to improve engagement across schools? I am sure the department has school-level data they use when it comes to that survey, that is not published publicly and that is also important. I acknowledge that work has been undertaken; that is a good initiative and provides a good foundation for change.

The key datasets and the annual reports have been updated since the Auditor-General's report and we heard in the hearings that attendance data is now published in the annual reports. The key datasets provide a wealth of information. I take a keen interest in those reports every time they are released and often refer back to them.

I have a few questions in terms of the data analytics. The Secretary of the Department of Education, when he appeared last year, said the department was implementing a case management system they were going to pilot in some schools. Perhaps the Government could update us on how that pilot is tracking, whether it has been useful for those schools, or when and if it will be rolled out across the system.

I know from my time in teaching, some of this stuff has improved. Schools have access to dashboards now with key performance information which gives them real-time data in a good visual display that has been in use for two to three years since the Auditor-General's report.

I have a couple of other questions. There was talk about the inclusive practice team last year when the department appeared before the committee. We have inclusive practice leaders now who are engaging with schools and helping to change practice. How is that initiative being rolled out and what sort of engagement have we had from schools? The department secretary said there was about 90 per cent engagement from schools last year. What is counted as engagement? Is it just an email asking a question or is it someone walking the school and working with teachers to improve practice?

Professional learning is very important and making time for it; whether that is improving attendance or more importantly, improving engagement. If you get the engagement piece right, attendance will probably look after itself. We need to invest in the profession, elevate the profession and the important work they do for the community. Some people might think this is only a problem for young people now. It is not. It is a problem for all of us if we do not improve our educational outcomes. Young people are going to be community leaders, business leaders. They are going to be leading volunteer-based organisations. They are going to be political leaders.

Ms Forrest - Teachers.

Mr WILLIE - Teachers. They will be working in the age care service, in the health system.

Ms Forrest - We want those people to be nice and skilled, do we not? Some of us more than others.

Mr WILLIE - Yes. This is something all Tasmanians should take an interest in because it is about our social and economic development as a state. These reports are important. I enjoy working on the Public Accounts Committee, looking into all of these matters. I appreciate the rigor the Chair brings to these matters. It is important for the government departments to know we are keeping a watchful eye on many different areas of Government. It is a good process for them too, to come and explain the work they are doing. In some instances, it is good work. I would be interested if the Auditor-General goes back and evaluates some of these programs what they will show over time. However, as I said, quite a lot of the response last year was that these are new things and it will be interesting to see their effectiveness over time. If the Government could update a few of those questions for the Council that would be appreciated.

[3.42 p.m.]

Mrs HISCUTT (Montgomery - Leader of the Government in the Legislative Council) - Mr President, thank you to the member for Murchison for bringing this important motion forward from the Public Accounts Committee. Thank you very much for that and the review of the Auditor-General's report. It is pleasing to note the committee found there are a significant number of programs and initiatives aimed at supporting student engagement and attendance. The department has implanted a number of programs and initiatives to support student engagement and attendance. Some of these include:

- the student engagement and attendance team
- the inclusive practice team
- the school-based support and wellbeing teams
- targeted and individual funding allocations for students impacted by trauma
- family engagement programs
- Anything Can Happen campaign to improve engagement and attendance
- the Years 9-12 project which includes a focus of VET and vocational learning.

Several recommendations relate to the measurements and reporting of these initiatives. I note the department has significantly improved its data collection and reporting systems over the last few years. The continued refinement of these systems is a priority for the department, as they focus on measuring the impacts of these initiatives and setting targets for improvements. The department has prioritised work to focus on using the upgraded data system, to measure the impacts of initiatives aimed at improving student engagement. It is important to note the department uses a range of datasets to understand student engagement, with attendance data being one part of the picture. The Annual Student Wellbeing and Engagement Survey now provides the department with measures for student engagement in learning. The data shows, across our system, that 81 per cent of our students are confidently engaged in their learning. 71 per cent of our learners report a sense of belonging to school and 95 per cent of our learners are emotionally engaged with their teachers.

The department recognises there is still more work to do to increase the number of young people achieving the target of attending school 90 per cent or more of the time. Attendance is not an issue to address in isolation which is why many of the department programs and initiatives address a range of factors. The key factors affecting student attendance and engagement are outlined in the department's approach to student engagement which recognises that the quality of teaching for learning, wellbeing and engagement are all interrelated and that only by working on all three aspects simultaneously will they positively impact attendance outcomes.

Evidence shows that we can do this by focusing on four key areas and they are: quality teaching for learning; belonging and strong relationships; the school culture; and student voice and agency.

I will now turn to the department's responses to the 11 new recommendations made by the Public Accounts Committee. I will not read the recommendations out again because you have them in your pack.

The response to recommendations (1), (2), (8), (9) and (10), starting with the response to recommendation (1): monitoring and reporting process will form part of the student engagement and attendance team's work and will feed into the further development of the case management platform to allow for operational and strategic tracking of students and the effectiveness of engagement provisions.

Recommendation (2): as part of the ongoing evaluation process, systems process measures with associated growth targets will be considered. This will include attendance and academic progress.

Recommendation (8): the student engagement and attendance team currently supports schools in building capacity to maximise student engagement. Using the student engagement

guide, leadership teams are supported to map and audit the effectiveness of their current provision and identify next steps. A priority is to ensure school support and wellbeing teams oversee effective, flexible learning provisions that meet learners' needs within the school context.

Recommendation (9): the student engagement and attendance team monitors and tracks the impact of the hands-on learning program and the climb program, as well as flexible learning and tier four re-engagement provisions.

Recommendation (10): while the student engagement and attendance team and schools can track the progress of individual students engaging with flexible provisions, the department currently does not have a system-wide approach to identifying these students in its system-level data collections. The student engagement and attendance team is finalising ways of identifying student progress in flexible learning provisions at a systems level.

The response to recommendation (3): school support and wellbeing teams play an important role in planning and implementing school strategies and processes that support the wellbeing of all students, with a particular focus on those students with diverse and complex needs requiring coordinated support. The functions of the team correspond to the national school improvement tool, the NSIT. The functions undertaken by the team align with creating and maintaining a learning environment that is safe, respectful, tolerant, inclusive and that promotes intellectual rigour. The department is currently developing a plan to effectively measure the impacts of support and wellbeing teams using a range of student outcome data, both quantitative and qualitative.

The response to recommendation (4): the role of the inclusive practice team is to mentor and coach school staff to develop and maintain effective inclusive practices to maximise learning outcomes for students with diverse learning needs. Inclusive practice coaches currently collect data on the number of schools that are requesting support specifically for student engagement, both at the whole school level and for individual students. Inclusive practice coaches regularly gain feedback from school support and wellbeing staff on whether their capacity has improved because of the coaching. Through policy development to support schools to embed support and wellbeing teams, clearer expectations of these teams are being developed, ensuring a standard approach to implementing quantitative and qualitative measures to understand the impact is improving in student engagement.

Recommendation (5): the Department of Education continues to implement the Together with Families approach across the sites and embeds the principles in our ways of working. The Families and Us, the ARACY pilot project - that is the Australian Research Alliance for Children and Youth - concluded in June 2022, which is an evidence-informed approach. I will seek some advice.

The pilot project concluded June 2022, which is an evidence-informed approach with built-in evaluation measures to assess the effectiveness of strategies from the family, student and staff perspectives, with specific links to improve learner outcomes, both academic and wellbeing. The learnings from this pilot will inform the development of system-wide supports in the form of professional learning to build staff capacity, targeted supports and strategies through our approach to school improvement, and create a culture of shared lead practices across the system.

The impact of family engagement strategies are measured in multiple different ways and can vary at a site level. At a system level, the parent satisfaction survey and external school review are used to evaluate the effectiveness of the strategies used.

The responses to recommendations (6) and (7): student vulnerability indicators are one dataset to assist schools identify and monitor students at risk of disengaging. It has been developed through the case management platform. The strategic systems development team is working with learning services stakeholders to support implementation. Due to COVID-19 related priority shifts, engagement with schools on the development of the case management platform was reduced in Term 1 2022. However, it is expected the vulnerability functionality commenced being implemented during Term 2. The evaluation of the case management platform will be performed through a dashboard to show to what extent vulnerability data is being updated by schools across time.

Other initiatives are being considered as the development of the case management platform progresses. Impacts on outcomes of initiatives to identify disengagement will be reported on a regular basis to the executive, with consideration being given to other reporting avenues, including the annual report.

The response to recommendation (11): feedback is collected from all participants who attend professional learning through the Professional Learning Institute (PLI) via a standard online survey, ensuring consistent data is captured for quality assurance and continuous improvement. The PLI provides a survey link to facilitators and coordinators, and this link is then provided to the participants at the conclusion of delivery to collect feedback. The PLI also provides the facilitator or the coordinator access to the collated feedback data for their review and consideration.

I am pleased to share this progress on all of the recommendations made by the Public Accounts Committee. This work has the goal of making positive differences to attendance and engagement across our system.

I have a few other things I will add to this. This was mentioned by the member for Launceston and the member for Elwick about measuring impacts and use of data. The Department of Education has developed the approach to school improvement. The approach documents the targets and measures for school improvement plans, which includes attendance and engagement. Student voice is essential. The Student Wellbeing and Engagement Survey begins next week. Listening to students is critical and the survey data is used in school improvement planning to set targets and measures.

I have been provided with a document here that explains how it works.

Mr President, I seek leave to table this document.

Leave granted.

Mrs HISCUTT - I have some more information here, relating to some specific questions asked by the Member for Elwick.

In response to your first question about the case management platform, we are currently piloting a module of the case management platform. It is capturing data on vulnerability indicators and data from this will inform the broader rollout.

Mr Willie - How many schools are participating in that?

Mrs HISCUTT - At the moment there are four.

Your second question was about the role of the inclusive practice team, to mentor and coach school staff to develop and maintain effective inclusive practices, to maximise learning outcomes for students with diverse learning needs.

Inclusive practice coaches currently collect data on the number of schools that are requesting support specifically for student engagement at the whole school level, and for individual students. Inclusive practice coaches regularly gain feedback from school support and wellbeing staff on whether their capacity has improved because of the coaching.

Your last question related to recommendation (11) and was about professional learning. I am advised that feedback is collected from all participants who attend professional learning through the Professional Learning Institute (PLI) via a standard online survey ensuring consistent data is captured for quality assurance and continuous improvement.

The PLI provides a survey linked to facilitators, or coordinators. This link is then provided to participants at the conclusion of delivery, to collect feedback. The PLI also provides the facilitator, or the coordinator, access to the collated feedback for their review and consideration.

That should have covered everything. Mr President, if anybody would like a briefing from the Department of Education on this, we can arrange that if a request is made to the Leader's office.

Mr President, I note the report.

[3:58 p.m.]

Ms FORREST (Murchison) - Mr President, I thank members who have contributed to the debate for their thoughts on this, and I acknowledge that the Department of Education has taken this matter of student engagement and attainment very seriously.

Members may have read right through the report. There were some concluding comments. I will read them, and I assume it still stands true.

In conclusion, Mr Bullard provide the following statement. Mr Willie made a comment first, asking a very vital question:

If there was a follow-up audit by the Auditor General, you are very confident he would agree with the 18 that you stated had been completed?

Mr Bullard said:

Am I confident? Yes. I am conservative in the way that we mark this. Hopefully you've heard from me that there are a couple you might want to close off, such as continuing to use the student wellbeing data. I am not going to close it off because is that ever finished? Where there was a tangible tidy up of systems, I'm very confident in saying completed. Where it says have a system to measure engagement, we do have one now but we also need to keep revisiting, updating and upgrading it.

It is important, as Mr Bullard said, that some things are ongoing and you cannot tick off they are completed, because you need to continue to monitor them. New students come through the school all the time. Sadly, the socio-economic challenges out there for some children and families persist.

[3.59 p.m.]

Mrs Hiscutt - Mr President, I will clarify the question I answered about schools in the pilot program.

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

MOTION

Consideration and Noting - Report of the Parliamentary Standing Committee of Public Accounts - Review of Auditor-General's Report No. 8 of 2018-19: Student Attendance and Engagement, Years 7 to 10

Resumed from above.

Ms FORREST (Murchison) - Mr President, I believe the Leader was interjecting. She might like to continue to interject and I will finish my comments.

Mrs Hiscutt - By way of interjection while the member is on her feet, I can confirm the amount of schools in the case management platform. The confirmation that has come through over the break is three. I can confirm that there are three schools.

Ms FORREST - I cannot remember what I was saying before she so rudely interjected. I acknowledge the ongoing work of the department. They continue to focus on this. These are the sorts of things that can be followed up in other processes like budget Estimates in the Education portfolio or even in Government Administration Committee B if it was necessary for other matters that needed to be followed up, to keep a check on how those things are going, or through questions without notice, or questions on notice on our Notice Paper.

Education of our children is such an important matter and as others have, I also acknowledge the extreme pressure teachers and other support staff are under, and have been under for some time. COVID-19 has been a hell of a time for so many people, and for teachers more so - trying to do the juggling act of ensuring that children of essential workers could be educated, predominantly in a school setting. Also, those children who were required to stay at home because of the Public Health orders, having their needs met as best as you can. Trying

to do both at the same time for many children in my electorate and I assume in others as well, and not having access to reliable internet or even the technology to use it, or the digital literacy to use it, made it extraordinarily difficult. There is a massive body of work to continue to ensure that our children can catch up where they may have missed out or been left behind. I acknowledge that enormous work that teachers and the leadership in the schools, the principals, have had to stump up to meet the needs of our children.

I also acknowledge the work of parents in this. Parents have taken on an enormous role and task in trying to assist their children to continue to learn at home. We know that some of the parents are not well equipped to support their children - often because they do not have access to the digital technology or other matters that would make that possible. They may be struggling themselves with their own literacy needs. It has been a very tough time.

I will be very interested to watch the ongoing release of the student wellbeing surveys and how they play out over a period of time. It is good we have the couple that were done before COVID-19 to look at the potential impacts that might become apparent, maybe not this year but in two or three years time. This is not unique to Tasmania - it is unique to the world. It is important that we do not fail to respond, particularly to those students who did struggle with those challenges with the COVID-19 pandemic.

Thank you to the teachers and all those support staff that work so hard to care for our young people at school. We will continue to watch how the department measures and reports on student outcomes in a way that is meaningful and effective.

Report considered and noted.

MOTION

Consideration and Noting - Government Administration Committee A - Report on Inquiry into Finfish Farming in Tasmania

[4.35 p.m.]

Ms WEBB (Nelson) - Mr President, I move -

That the Legislative Council Sessional Government Administration Committee A report of the inquiry into Finfish Farming in Tasmania be considered and noted.

Having been chair of the inquiry, it is my pleasure to speak on this report today and contribute a final chapter on this piece of work. The scope and duration of this work was not inconsiderable. Members may well recall at the time the report was tabled in May, also tabled were 14 folders of evidence taken during the inquiry.

In light of that and at the outset of my contribution today, I acknowledge and thank those who contributed to the work of this inquiry. Firstly, and most sincerely, to the secretariat staff who supported the progress of the inquiry with patience and diligence, in particular, Jenny Mannering and Allison Scott, Jenny in particular on whose shoulders the greatest burden fell.

Secondly, I also thank the Parliamentary Research Service for its assistance. In particular, the provision of a summary of submissions and the background paper on the industry, which appears in the report. My deep, personal thanks go to my fellow subcommittee members. In particular, and especially, the member for Hobart and the member for Mersey, who stayed for the duration and provided such thorough and thoughtful consideration and work on this. I thank previous members of the subcommittee, the previous member for Rosevears, the honourable Kerry Finch and the member for Murchison, for their earlier participation and contribution as members of the inquiry subcommittee.

An important thank you is to those who contributed evidence to the inquiry. Making submissions and presenting at hearings requires an investment of time, expertise and personal commitment. It is no small thing to ask and the value of our parliamentary committee process, as all members here would attest, relies on the willing participation and contribution of many people providing valuable evidence. I also extend my personal thanks to the individual citizens, the community groups, the subject matter experts, the industry operators, the representative bodies and the departmental staff who have invested their time, expertise, insights and personal experience to the work of this inquiry. I am extremely grateful for all those contributions.

Commercial farming of finfish commenced in Tasmania in the 1980s. It expanded to various areas across and around our state and has become the most valuable primary industry in the state. The key legislation regulating the industry is the Marine Farming Planning Act 1995, the Living Marine Resources Management Act 1995 and the Finfish Farming Environmental Regulation Act 2017. Planning, regulation and promotion of the industry had rested with government; however, issues arose with very low dissolved oxygen levels in Macquarie Harbour, threatening the marine environment and the protected species there. At the time, that shone a light on some inadequacy in terms of regulation of the industry.

In response to those concerns in relation to Macquarie Harbour, in 2016, the EPA assumed responsibility for the day-to-day regulation and environmental management of the industry. At the same time that crisis in Macquarie Harbour was playing out, with the EPA having to progressively reduce biomass caps to less than half of what had been previously approved, we also saw the government double the 2030 growth target for this industry from \$1 billion to \$2 billion. We saw an, at times contentious, approval granted for further expansion of the industry into Storm Bay and we saw, with that approval process, two then-members of the Marine Farming Planning Review Panel resign, citing concerns about the panels processes and the decision to allow the Storm Bay expansion to occur as it did.

It may be a fair observation to say the success of the salmon farming industry in this state occurred at a pace that outstripped the regulatory framework around it. As a result, looking at the history of the industry here, it is hard not to have the sense that over time, the regulatory framework provided by successive governments has always been playing catch-up to some extent.

We heard something quite similar to that in the inquiry hearings from Frances Bender, the then-CEO of Huon Aquaculture, who, when commenting on the sustainable industry growth plans, said this:

For many years the industry was growing. To be quite frank, in some ways we took the state, and the government, perhaps, by surprise that we were

quietly going about growing, and all of a sudden this industry was actually so valuable to the Tasmanian community. There wasn't really a plan in place.

I can understand the excitement of the success of this industry in our state, as it powered ahead, looking for opportunities to develop and grow further.

My sense is the governments over the years have been enthusiastic supporters in, maybe even cheerleaders for, the success of this industry. However, they never quite caught up on comprehensive planning, regulation and effective environmental protection alongside that enthusiasm.

Looking back over the time line of events relating to the growth of the industry and the progress on the regulatory environment, one cannot help but be struck by the impression that governments were often prompted to act when things started to go wrong, to a degree that perhaps caused public fuss.

Others may interpret those matters quite differently and they are welcome to do so. I challenge anyone to make a case, that as a state, to date, there has been what could be described as a proactive, comprehensive government- and community-led consideration of the presence and circumstances of this industry in our state.

Which brings us to the establishment of the inquiry. In 2019, the situation was one where there were still unresolved issues in Macquarie Harbour. There was a government plan for a fairly massive expansion which appeared to be entirely industry-driven. There was a cloud over elements of the approvals for expansion into Storm Bay and communities proximate to existing in-shore salmon farms were increasingly becoming vocal, raising concerns of environmental damage and impact on community amenity from the existing industry.

At that time, there had never been a Tasmanian parliamentary inquiry relating to the finfish farming industry. Some briefings were provided around that time, to the Legislative Council members, from various stakeholder groups including industry, on matters relating to the current and future plans for the industry. As a result of those briefings, the members of Government Administration Committee A discussed the potential to hold an inquiry.

The focus of the inquiry was appropriately on the legislative and regulatory arrangements relating to the industry. Matters which are determined by government, and which established the context in which the industry operates.

I note here that a very clear message we heard from the industry operators during the inquiry was that they willingly operate within, and are prepared to comply with, the regulatory environment and framework put in place by government.

A proposal was put forward to undertake a parliamentary inquiry on this topic and it was not about making judgments on the operations of private businesses or making recommendations to private businesses or industry groups. It rightly focused on the matters of government policy, regulation, decision-making and functioning and it would make recommendations to government based on the findings that were made.

In September 2019, Government Administration Committee A resolved an inquiry be established, to inquire into and report on planning, assessment, operation and regulation of finfish farming in Tasmania.

Shortly after that, at her request, the member for Rumney was discharged from the inquiry, and therefore a subcommittee from Government Administration Committee A was formed to continue the inquiry under those existing terms of reference.

I take a moment to note here the progress of the inquiry was interrupted on numerous occasions, by circumstances beyond the control of the subcommittee members. Due to prorogation of parliament and the operational strictures placed on the subcommittee resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic, the activity of the inquiry was paused for a period of approximately four months between April and August 2020. An interim report was prepared in April outlining progress made prior to that interruption.

When re-established in August 2020, the honourable Kerry Finch was no longer a member of the subcommittee, having retired from parliament at the 2020 Rosevears election.

On 20 March 2021, the inquiry was again interrupted for approximately four months by the prorogation of parliament as a result of an early Tasmanian election.

The inquiry was re-established on 6 July 2021 with a membership of three - the member for Hobart, the member for Mersey and me. At that time the member for Murchison had resigned from the subcommittee. On 5 April 2022, the inquiry was interrupted for yes, the hat-trick, the third time, for a period of one month by the prorogation of parliament following the resignation of the premier, Mr Gutwein. Quite a number of interruptions, to say the least.

While our numbers had shrunk to three on the subcommittee, we were committed to our task and willing to invest a great deal of time and consideration to completing the work of the inquiry. In relation to this inquiry, the formal deliberations of the committee, the subcommittee, all up amounted to approximately 190 hours of time, and that does not include the many additional hours of work devoted by members of the subcommittee in preparation for those meeting deliberations.

Prorogations and external delays aside, this was still a lengthy inquiry and was always going to be. A factor in the length of time taken for the inquiry was its sheer size - both the scope of the terms of reference and the quantum of evidence taken. The subcommittee received 225 submissions, which are published on the inquiry webpage and appear listed in the report in Appendix A.

Public and private hearings were held in Hobart over four days in February 2020, across one day in Burnie in February 2020 and via videoconference in April 2020. Twenty-nine witnesses gave verbal evidence to the subcommittee during those hearings. The inquiry resumed public hearings over two days in September 2020, and further days in October and November that year. Nine witnesses gave verbal evidence to the subcommittee during those hearings, including a second appearance from both the department and the EPA.

I will mention and thank both the industry operators and the community groups that provided site visits to members of the subcommittee. A number of site visits were made in the course of the inquiry, and it is incredibly helpful to have those visits facilitated to assist in our

better understanding of matters that were raised in the course of the inquiry. I thank those groups for that.

While the makeup of the subcommittee and the progress of the inquiry was subject to change across the two-and-a-half years duration, there were also a number of notable changes in the policy and industry context for finfish farming in Tasmania during that period of time. Those included: a government-announced review of the salmon industry growth plan and a government-announced 12-month moratorium on increases to lease farming areas from September 2021; the change of name from the Department of Primary Industries, Parks, Water, and Environment - DPIPWE - to the Department of Natural Resources and Environment Tasmania - NRE Tas; and an announced intention to increase the independence of the EPA Tasmania as a statutory authority. We also had the sale of Petuna Aquaculture to New Zealand company Sealord Group; the sale of Huon Aquaculture to Brazilian company JBS, and the even more recently announced sale of Tassal to Canadian company, Cooke Inc.

We encourage people to engage with the report of the inquiry, with these and any other changes that have occurred over the period of time that the inquiry has been undertaken, with these things in mind, knowing that we needed to operate on the basis of the evidence that we received. While we noted those changes as they occurred, the report reflects the evidence received.

Speaking of the evidence we received, before I go into detail on some of the matters through the report that I will discuss today, I take the opportunity to highlight some key themes that emerged in evidence to the inquiry. It is useful because there were some very clear themes throughout, and they are important ones, that we ask ourselves if they have been heard and noted.

The themes that I would mention are a theme about independence, and about the need to have things independently undertaken, verified and presented in a range of ways in relation to this industry, particularly involving the scientific evidence basis and things of that nature. Another theme was about transparency, in terms of information, data, and decision-making processes. Another theme I would mention is that of accountability; explicit accountability clearly in processes and decision-making. A theme that emerged regarded the need for clarity about how we balance considerations in this state, particularly considerations across economic, environmental, social and cultural matters. A final theme that is one of the centrality of community input and participation, that many citizens would expect to be part of important processes and decision-making that is undertaken in relation to key public areas of our state.

You will note that all these themes relate to process. These themes are all connected to how things are done. These themes all relate to the inescapable fact that there is a strong perception of what we might even call regulatory capture of government by vested interests in relation to this industry. To whatever degree that this perception is accurate, it does exist. We saw it and heard it through evidence to the inquiry; it is discussed in the public domain regularly and I do not think it benefits us to pretend that it is not there.

This means that building a social licence for this industry, if it is to be achieved, will only occur when this perception is effectively acknowledged and government planning and regulatory frameworks are reconstructed to dispel any past failures that led to that perception. A key reason that the themes I have mentioned are important to hear, understand and respond to in good faith, is that this is an industry that operates on our public waterways. Our public

waterways are meaningful to the Tasmanian community in a wide range of ways. They are valued for all manner of activities undertaken in and on them. Beyond their use, our public waterways are intrinsically valued by Tasmanians as a fundamental and precious asset of our natural environment. Many Tasmanians, particularly those who live near the coast, connect strongly with that. For some Tasmanians, including some Tasmanian Aboriginal people, their connection to the coastal environment is also cultural and spiritual.

When it comes to our much-valued public waterways, the primary responsibility of government must be to prioritise careful stewardship, clearly led by the best interests, the aspirations and the will of the community; while also being mindful of preserving that intrinsic value and access for future generations.

Any perception of prioritisation or special consideration being given to a commercial corporate interest in relation to the use and the potential damage of our public waterways is anathema to what is the primary responsibility of government. That equates to a failure of government to lead and strengthen our community. Instead, it risks driving hurt, division, mistrust and opposition. That is an unfortunate situation for us to find ourselves in in this state in relation to this industry.

However, I do not regard this to be an irredeemable situation. Our intent with this inquiry was to be constructive in our approach and to look for positive opportunities to move ahead.

In the report, in the chair's foreword, the inquiry identified constructive opportunities that we had observed during the course of the inquiry and I reiterate those here. It was our observation that there is support for a sustainable finfish farming industry in Tasmania if areas for expansion and growth targets are transparently developed and evidence-based. We noted there appears some common ground in regard to a pause on further expansion of the industry in the form of new farming areas or increased stocking limits until consultation and planning has occurred.

We observed that the online data portal will be integral to delivering public confidence in the industry. However, the portal, as it is now, requires significant improvement and expansion in scope and functionality through consultation with all stakeholders.

We identified legislative reform was a constructive opportunity to improve regulation and establish further mechanisms of transparency, accountable decision-making and community participation. Increased resourcing of the EPA is an opportunity that would enable more comprehensive independent monitoring, investigation, enforcement and reporting relevant to the industry and contribute significantly to improved public confidence.

Finally, learning from other jurisdictions we identified there is an opportunity for greater financial return to Tasmania from this industry. One final observation was a very clear one. We observed this is an industry that has demonstrated a willingness to adapt and to innovate to reduce environmental harm. It is an industry that acknowledges the need for continual improvement to be sustainable and it states its readiness to work within the regulatory framework set by government. I applaud the industry for that. It was something we heard a number of times.

Given these constructive opportunities, a way forward can be navigated if, in good faith, there is a genuine effort made to build the social licence of this industry primarily through restoring confidence in the government's role of planning and regulation.

I thank the Government for providing a detailed response to the inquiry report and recommendations. It was useful to receive the response and have a week or so now to consider it before making today's contributions. The response document indicates the Government monitored the progress of the inquiry over its duration and it self-reports significant progress on many of the issues the inquiry identified.

The Government response points to activity that is currently being undertaken and links that activity to recommendations made by the inquiry. In some cases, those links are straightforward and welcomed. In other instances, while the Government may regard an action it is taking as fulfilling a recommendation from the report, there would be some discussion over whether the activity is fully aligned with the detail and the intent of the recommendation. Some of those I will discuss in some more detail as we go through some elements of the report.

In many instances, the Government response points to processes that are either still in progress or yet to begin. In these cases, we are yet to see if the intent of the recommendation is fulfilled, once that process plays out. In particular, I reiterate in every instance increasing public confidence and building a social licence for the industry will not just rest on what the Government does, but crucially on how it is done.

It is difficult if there is not clear acknowledgement of failures of the past, especially failures of process, to move forward constructively. Because, without fully recognising what may have been done poorly in the past, the likelihood is we lurch ever onward and risk repeating those same mistakes. I hope that is not the case for this topic and this industry and the efforts currently underway.

I will speak on some matters from each of the terms of reference. It will not be possible to discuss in detail all matters covered in this report and I do not mean to downplay the importance of any matters I may omit at this time from my contribution. I encourage those who are interested to read the full report.

Term of reference (1) of the report was:

The implementation of the Sustainable Industry Growth Plan for the Salmon Industry and its impact on commercial finfish farming operations and local communities, including:

- a) data collection and publication;
- b) progress in the development of an industry wide biosecurity plan;

The Government released that Sustainable Industry Growth Plan in 2017 which the department says in its submission:

Sets out how the Government will support the industry to achieve a revised target of becoming a \$2 billion a year industry by 2030.

The plan included a map which indicated grow and no-grow areas around the coast of Tasmania. Questions were raised in many submissions over the lack of comprehensive consultation, especially with non-industry stakeholders, in the preparation of that plan and the lack of a transparent evidence base for the areas identified for industry expansion and the overall growth target of \$2 billion.

Those concerns were summed up most succinctly in a submission from independent scientist, Christine Coughanowr where she said:

First and foremost, the Plan was not developed in consultation with the community, with commercial fisheries, or even with the scientific community. The SIGP appeared as a draft for comment in August/Sept 2017 and there is no description in the plan about how it was drafted, or even the rationale for the proposed expansion target of \$2 billion by 2030. Consultation occurred afterwards, not as part of the process, and many of the valid concerns raised were proposed to be addressed through regulatory change, improved science and information, and/or adaptive management. Unfortunately, this has not yet eventuated.

There is no evidence that the SIGP was based on scientific, environmental or socio-economic investigations. In particular - what was the basis for the grow and no-grow areas? What was the basis for the expansion targets and timelines, and why are they considered to be sustainable? Were any other considerations included, such as the value and location of prime recreational and commercial fishing areas and potential impacts on areas of high biodiversity?

That was the summing up of a number of concerns we heard from a range of stakeholders. The inquiry sought to find out more about the development of the plan from the evidence, in submissions and at hearings. We heard the department carried out what it considered to be a comprehensive consultation process in the development of the plan. While evidence was received that scientific data and information was used in the development of the Sustainable Industry Growth Plan, the extent of that evidence base is unclear because it was never publicly available or shared.

We also heard that the department understands the \$2 billion growth target in the 2017 plan to be 'aspirational', a policy decision by government at the time. The department's public consultation material relating to the plan did not provide a rationale for that growth target of \$2 billion. Apparently, the government's \$2 billion growth target was based on progress made towards the previous target of \$1 billion and from discussions with finfish farming industry regarding likely growth opportunities.

On the other hand, we heard finfish companies indicate that they had limited involvement in the Sustainable Industry Growth Plan at the time. Inconsistent views were presented between finfish farming operators and also the department, as to the role the industry played in setting the \$2 billion growth target.

What we heard from the industry operators, on their views of the plan, was quite interesting. In response to a question on notice about Petuna's involvement in the development of the salmon industry growth plan, this comment was received:

Petuna had minimal involvement in the development of the Government's Sustainable Industry Growth Plan. It is our understanding this work was conducted by the Government, largely independent of industry consultation. At the time, the regulation of the industry had been the subject of a Senate Inquiry and Four Corners investigation, sparking significant community scrutiny, led by environmental activists. It would not have been appropriate for the industry to play an active role in determining its own future growth in the state.

An interesting view. Similarly, we heard from Mark Ryan, CEO of Tassal, who provided a summary of Tassal's involvement in the development of the plan, and I quote from that hearing transcript:

At that time, plenty of leases in Tasmania were unutilised, so it's simply a matter of filling those leases and optimising what we did have. We knew we would get to a point where they would be optimised and new frontiers would be needed. We engaged with government as an industry to talk about what that might look like and how that might evolve. Much to our surprise, when the growth plan came out, we really did not have a lot of play into that process, a lot less than I thought we might have because we had seen many of the areas where we were growing fish, so we knew where the better areas were to grow fish.

From Frances Bender, CEO of Huon Aquaculture at the time, the following comments on the growth plan, the ones I quoted earlier:

For many years, the industry was growing. To be quite frank, in some ways we took the state and the government perhaps by surprise that we were quietly going about growing and all of a sudden, this industry was actually so valuable to the Tasmanian community. There wasn't really a plan in place. There was legislation and environmental management of us, but not a strategic plan.

The fact that we have a plan now is great, but the plan needs to be constantly reviewed, just like some of the issues, like the portal and those sorts of things. The whole thing just needs to be constantly reviewed.

She went on to say:

We need to work together, in whatever way is appropriate, to make sure that the Government understands the requirements of the industry and the responsibilities that we have and what the community wants from living in this state.

That is a significant acknowledgement from Mrs Bender, that the planning processes have to explicitly include consideration of what the community wants from living in this state.

I do not believe that has been one of the starting points for such planning to date. I do not believe that an explicit conversation has been led or invited by government with the community about that, but it is admirable that that was recognised as an important way forward.

A key feature of the plan was the Grow-No Grow map, indicating areas for further expansion around the Tasmanian coast. This map gave rise to community concern due to the perception that it was a definitive planning document.

A succinct comment came from Chris Wells, a community member with experience in aquaculture development planning in South Australia. He said this:

The Tasmanian Government aquaculture growth plan is essentially a map of the state with red dots for sites stuck all over it, except for the parts of the east coast where people's objections have run too strong.

The only considerations in this plan are convenience for business owners, farmers and politics.

Now, that is a comment that has come from a certain perspective and others will have information beyond that, that would flesh out how, in fact, that map came about. As it turns out, the department, we heard, regards the salmon industry growth plan, including the Grow-No Grow map, as a strategy document. Apparently, it was not designed to be definitive on future growth areas.

It was confirmed that, in the creation of the map, there was no comprehensive marine spatial planning process undertaken to identify areas suitable for sustainable industry growth. This may be because at the time there was no legislative basis or requirement for comprehensive marine spatial planning, including the identification and planning for future industry growth areas.

Nicole Sommer, who is the principal lawyer of the Environmental Defenders Office, highlighted the importance of spatial planning in determining sustainable growth areas for this industry, where she said:

We have made recommendations about spatial planning which is what needs to happen. It's a very opaque planning term, but it means you identify areas where you can have salmon farming and there will be limited environmental risk and adverse community outcomes by doing the science in identifying those locations. Then we should identify what are no-grow areas, and that should guide how the industry develops. That science needs to be done upfront, and that's not how the industry growth plan operates to my understanding.

Interestingly, again, Mark Ryan, CEO of Tassal, made the following comments in relation to Tassal's view of the map in the growth plan. He said this:

One of the things we were advocating at the time before the growth plan came out was the whole concept of spatial planning, to look at this, not just from the area where you could grow fish, but to look at communities in areas where industry was wanted and where we could continue to grow and prosper.

We have always taken that really seriously, but we said to both sides of government, you need to do this process in an informed way. You need to go out to the communities and engage with them.

Further, Mr Ryan compared the process to his company's experience in Queensland. He said:

Government put out a map that really did not have a lot of relevancy to anyone. I guess what we experienced with Queensland was they did a whole spatial planning exercise. They went up and down the coast of Queensland. They went to all the communities. They identified both adequate areas to grow and then also adequate areas that communities wanted industry, and they had a match.

Mr President, there is no getting away from the fact that the 2017 salmon industry growth plan, and its associated growth target, and Grow-No Grow map was problematic. The process used for its development was flawed, including the fact that it presented no evidence base or rationale to justify the goals and outcomes it proposed. That plan, in my view, probably caused more harm than benefit to the industry in the long term, and it positioned the Government and the industry at odds with significant elements of the community.

It is hardly surprising that submissions received by this inquiry expressed support for a pause on expansion of the finfish farming industry until such time as issues and concerns raised in relation to planning and regulation of the industry are addressed.

As a result of what we heard in regard to that salmon industry growth plan from 2017, and its associated parts, the inquiry made some key recommendations.

The first recommendation was that 'a revised Salmon Industry Growth Plan be developed as one aspect' - this is important:

... as one aspect of an overarching Marine Plan for Tasmania, through a process that includes comprehensive stakeholder consultation, is informed by assessment of environmental, social and recreational values, and has a transparent evidence base.

That picks up on a lot of those concerns about process. It is not just what you do, it is how you do it that is also equally important.

Recommendation (2) was that the Government should:

... ensure a revised Salmon Industry Growth Plan specifies potential fin fish farming areas identified through a process of marine spatial planning and sets an industry growth target for those areas that is transparently developed, sustainable and evidence-based.

I also point to recommendation (4), that:

there be no further expansion of the fin fish farming industry in the form of new farming areas or increased stocking limits until the revised Salmon Industry Growth Plan is finalised ...

as per recommendation (1).

I note that in September 2021 the Government announced the development of a new 10-year salmon plan. The Government described the process for the development of this new 10-year salmon plan, which I hope rectifies the failure of process that occurred in the previous plan. Certainly, in evidence received in hearings, there was what I observed to be a fairly stubborn resistance from the department leadership to admitting that there was anything lacking in the development of the previous plan and to any need for doing things differently. That is unfortunate. It would be very constructive if there was a receptivity always to thinking about how we do things in an improved way, if there have been clear issues with the way it was done in the past.

It remains to be seen whether the Government has heard, understood and accepted that there were failures in the previous process, and whether it has fully rectified those issues. A good starting point was the establishment of four principles to guide the development of a new 10-year salmon plan, which is planned to be enacted next year in 2023.

Those four principles were, (1) that there will be no net increase in leased farming areas in Tasmanian waters while the plan is under development. It is particularly helpful that that was made explicitly clear as an intention of the Government while it was undertaking this planning process. I note that the development of the plan is probably taking longer than initially anticipated, and the Government has extended the intention to have no net increase in farming areas through to when the plan is completed, so beyond the initially announced 12-month period. That is appropriate and respectful, and in the spirit of the intention of putting a pause while planning happens.

It is unfortunate - I know the Government and the minister have received some harassment from other parties about their extension of that moratorium and received questions even in this place on it. It is a good decision from the minister and from the Government to be extending that pause. To do otherwise would be a real slap in the face for the intention with which it was established in the first place.

Of the other principles to guide the development of that new 10-year salmon plan, the second one relates to innovation, with future growth lying in land-based and offshore farmed salmon farming. That is an excellent, explicit statement about what it is generally accepted to be the future direction of the industry as it continues.

The third one is world best practice through continuous improvement. Again, a very important principle to have stated from the outset. The fourth principle being strict, independent regulation, and again, that picks up on one of those themes I mentioned earlier, relating to the importance of independence.

One of the things that I do not see picked up on there - and I wonder about in relation to progressing forward with a new 10-year plan - is that broader question of a marine plan for the state. The Government says that separate to the development of the 10-year salmon plan, the Government is conducting a review of the Living Marine Resources Management Act 1995, and that is fine. That is a good thing to be reviewing that legislation. It does provide the legislative framework for the administration, management and protection of living marine resources and the marine environment. What we are calling for in an overall marine plan for Tasmania is beyond just reviewing and then updating the legislation. It is looking to put an overarching planning process in place under which would sit things like the new 10-year plan.

I have not seen a response to that recommendation yet but I see lots of positive signs on some elements of the development of the new plan.

Madam Deputy President, recommendation (3) from the report was to:

... develop a plan in consultation with industry, scientific and community stakeholders, to reduce inshore fin fish farming sites, with priority given to ceasing operations in sensitive, sheltered and biodiverse areas

The Government apparently does support in principle a consultative process with industry and scientific and community stakeholders to develop a policy setting that encourages exploration offshore and land-based into the future. That is fine, we have agreement on that. However, in its response the Government is not picking up on this recommendation that was made, to look ahead to a plan to reduce inshore finfish farming sites in this state.

While they do say that the approach they are taking forward may realise an overall reduction in those sites, they are not prepared to engage in a process to plan for that to occur. From the Government's response - and perhaps this can be clarified if I am mistaken - it seems that the Government regards those current inshore sites as sustainably operated and are subject to best practice environmental management and regulation by the independent EPA. The Government's response notes that there are provisions in place for the EPA to regulate and manage environmental performance of those existing inshore finfish lease areas, and that the Director of the EPA can - and has previously - taken action to reduce the scale of finfish farming in those areas, when there is an indication to do so, as happened in Macquarie Harbour.

Unfortunately, the core problem here is that there are justifiable questions about the accuracy of the assertion that some of these inshore operations are being sustainably operated under best practice management and regulation. That might be the intention, especially once some of the standards and the processes that are currently under development and new requirements come into regulation. However, at this time, and in times past, there are significant question marks over some of these sites. As an example, we have most recently have seen a report released from IMAS on the Tassal operation in Long Bay. I know this is a sensitive topic to talk about today, but I had already written it in, so I am going to continue. We know that after a long period of not being used, operations were resumed at that site. Our understanding is that there was limited reassessment of its suitability, which did not include public consultation. Considerable concerns have been raised at the environmental impact that is now occurring in that Long Bay area, especially in relation to algae. It seems that the recently released IMAS report has indicated that the finfish farm operations in Long Bay are having an impact beyond the allowable perimeter.

I cannot see how, if we had a blank slate, under contemporary marine spatial planning approaches and with contemporary understandings of best practice, sustainable, environmental management - would we choose that site as a site for finfish farming operations?

I am not in a position to say yay or nay to that; but we do know that the accepted understanding is that the future direction of this industry is more appropriately located in offshore sites and land-based operations, not in sites like Long Bay. This recommendation is a reasonable prompt for the Government to reconsider - in consultation with industry, scientific and community stakeholders - making a plan to reduce finfish farming operations in areas that

are contentious and may well otherwise now be considered unsuitable or undesirable as areas for this activity.

Data and information is another area that fits under terms of reference (1). Independence, credibility, and public release of data and information relating to the industry is important to deliver transparency and accountability, to improve public confidence in the industry and its effective regulation. It was clearly communicated to the inquiry that the finfish industry operators regard their collection and publication of data to be comprehensive. It is a matter of pride for the industry that they gather and publish a great deal of information about their activities, and in some cases go beyond requirements set by government and others.

However, alongside this, concerns were raised that the monitoring, collection and publication of data is not sufficiently comprehensive, transparent, and/or independent from the industry. There is a great deal of complexity in the finfish farming industry about who collects data, the regulatory environments in relation to data, and where data is published and made publicly available. Data and information relating to the industry is collected by a whole range of entities: the industry itself; the EPA; the department; independent consultants; scientific research institutions, to name some of them.

Data and information and reports may be done because it is regulated that they be done; they may be voluntary; or they may be undertaken independently as part of scientific investigations. They are published across a range of different sites, with the result that it can be extremely hard to find, compare, interpret and assess data and information about this industry.

Currently, published data on the finfish farming industry is not always presented on company or government websites in a way that is clearly connected to the relevant regulatory requirement, and publicly available data and information related to companies at individual fish farm operations lacks consistency.

Data and information on key matters of interest about this industry - salmon biomass, pollutant loads, localised impacts relating to the finfish farming industry - are not always publicly available. When information on them is sought, it was reported to us that requests to the companies or the EPA have been denied, rejected on the basis of commercial-in confidence, or diverted through cumbersome right to information processes.

Madam Deputy President, there is rightly an expectation from members of the community that there should be timely public release of information relating to the finfish farming industry. It was reported to us that there are good examples of this, with other aquaculture farming regions outside Australia, stipulating and regulating the publication of industry data to a greater degree than occurs in Tasmania, and more effectively in terms of informing their communities. This is an area where there is a great deal of opportunity for improvement. I know that the Government will point to a move towards that improvement by highlighting the data portal. Indeed as we were embarking on the inquiry, the data portal was just coming into existence.

We know that transparency of information is important. It comes back to one of those key themes of transparency and accountability. It also links to independence - because people like to know where data has come from and that it has come from a source that does not have a vested interest in its presentation. Data and information can dispel misunderstandings and

empower community members. It can be a source of pride for industry, and it means that you can have informed participants in planning and decision-making processes.

The salmon industry growth plan 2017 included the commitment to establish a web portal hosted by IMAS to present environmental data and information relating to the industry. The Government, it was reported to us, consulted with industry in regard to that portal and the data it should contain. However, at the time, community and non-industry stakeholders were not consulted. It was subsequently decided that the department, rather than IMAS, would host the portal and it would focus solely on regulatory compliance data. This is where things come unstuck. The idea of a portal was to have one location where people could access the information they needed about the industry and to keep abreast of what was available through data and information around industry operations. What we heard was as the idea of the portal was further developed and it was removed from IMAS in terms of a location to the department, we heard from the department in hearings that, and I quote from Fiona Bourne:

The decision was a decision of government of the day. When it started to look at the implementation of developing a salmon portal, it realised, and it was clear, that there was already, in the public domain, a significant amount of information from the EPA on its website about environmental compliance and management.

IMAS had quite an extensive website of its own about where its science was at. The gap, what was missing, was more in the operational and regulatory space. The decision was to increase the transparency around there because those are the data that needed to be made more visible. As the data rest with the department, it was more appropriate that the portal rested with the department as well.

While the department put the portal into the public domain, it went live in late 2019 and at that point we heard the department regarded they had met the commitment in the growth plan.

However, unfortunately, because it had actually just become yet another list of science presenting information to the public, it did not actually fulfil its original intent that had been articulated in the salmon industry growth plan. We are still waiting for its intent to be fulfilled. It did not solve the problem of disparate locations and inconsistent and non-comprehensive presentation of data, so there is still no one stop shop.

We have made some recommendations in the report relating to improvement of the data portal. It does hold a lot of promise, it could be made to be even more functional and useful than it is now, it could become more of an assistance to public confidence through transparency and openness.

To do that, it needs to be engaged with, not just by industry and government, but by all stakeholders and it needs to think how it can fulfil that original intent of a one stop shop to some extent. The Government has flagged that, as part of the development of the 10-year salmon plan, changes to the portal and other transparency measures will be considered. That is promising to hear, I welcome that, I am heartened to hear it. Of course, it is an intention and we have yet to see how that plays out and the degree to which it delivers on the intended and hoped-for outcomes around such portal.

Madam Deputy President, biosecurity came under that first term of reference and I will mention that briefly. There is much that could be said on that and there is a lot of evidence presented in the report. If people have an interest in this area, we encourage them to have a look at it. Biosecurity is clearly fundamental to the success of this industry in Tasmania. The development of an industry-wide biosecurity plan is still yet to be completely finalised. However, industry operators have always been quite proactive in introducing biosecurity on a voluntary basis. It is in their best interests, it is in their commercial interests to have effective and robust biosecurity.

We have had excellent information presented in this state through a global symposium around biosecurity back in 2018 and we have an intention, which is articulated in the Biosecurity Act 2019, that a biosecurity plan for the finfish farming industry be established and then enabled under regulations under that act. It was intended for the biosecurity plan, through evidence we heard, to be in operation by the end of 2021. Unfortunately, we also heard at that time the evidence was presented that non-industry stakeholders had not been involved in the development of that biosecurity plan to date. I hope as it has progressed further since the evidence was heard that has been rectified. We did recommend further expansion of the industry be postponed until the biosecurity plan was completed and regulations were implemented and applied to the current farming operations.

The Government has stated its commitment to implementing the salmon industry biosecurity program to be regulated and enforced under the Biosecurity Act. I hear now through the Government's response that the biosecurity regulations are due to be implemented by the end of this year, 2022. We are getting there, it is obviously a complex process and takes time. I hope part of the delay has been more comprehensive consultation with a whole range of stakeholders.

I have taken some time looking at those matters under term of reference (1) because it is part of painting a picture of how we have travelled to where we are now. One of the key messages I reiterate here is we have to acknowledge what has come before to best make use of and benefit from what we are now doing to set ourselves up for the future. The 2017 salmon industry growth plan showed the Government knew what the fundamental building blocks of industry expansion should be, but they lacked a good faith commitment at that time to ensuring those building blocks were in place before rushing ahead with supporting the industry with its expansion and growth. My overall impression in relation to that plan was it was something of lip-service from the Government, in terms of engaging in good faith with the community, presenting information clearly, transparently and showing there was an evidence base for the intentions it articulated.

The formation of this inquiry in late 2019 was perhaps a bit of a speed hump that might have pulled Government up a bit short and prompted a more considered approach, especially the pause on any new expansion in the industry until the next iteration of the growth plan could be developed. That is positive, if that is the case, and I am pleased if that may have had some influence on that. Reflection on past process is important for us improving and benefitting from present process.

Term of reference (2) of this inquiry stated this:

Application of the Marine Farming Planning Act 1995 relating to:

- a) preparation and approval process for marine farming development plans, including modifications and amendments to marine farming development plans;
- b) allocation of leases, applications for and granting of leases;
- c) management of finfish farming operations with respect to the prevention of environmental harm.

Marine based finfish farming is principally planned, regulated and managed under the Marine Farming Planning Act 1995, the Living Marine Resources Management Act 1995 and the Environment Management and Pollution Control Act 1994. The legislative basis for the industry has to be regarded as the most fundamental building block to underpin a responsible approach to planning, development and effective regulation.

With a sense of déjà vu, I note while the Government is progressing with a review of the Living Marine Resources Management Act 1995 and the Environmental Management and Pollution Control Act 1994, it is postponing a review of the Marine Farming Planning Act 1995. Yet, while it is postponing the review of that legislation, it is pressing on with the next 10-year salmon plan, which will include expansion of the industry which is governed under that act. If there is recognition the legislative instruments guiding the planning and approval of marine farming operations needs review and improvement, how can the Government allow there to be any further expansion of the industry until work on its legislative foundation is complete?

Under the Marine Farming Planning Act, we see a range of responsibilities and roles. The minister has the ultimate decision-making discretion in relation to draft marine farming development plans and amendment plans. He is not required to follow recommendations from the Marine Farming Planning Review Panel. A finding of the inquiry was there is a conflict - or perhaps, at best the perception of a conflict - between the minister's role in the promotion and development of finfish farming industry and the minister's statutory responsibilities for planning and regulation of the industry under the act.

The Environmental Defenders Office submission made this point about the separation of governance arrangements of industry development and regulation:

Strong decision-making requires independence as between the regulator and the promotor of an industry. That is one reason why we support the role of the Tasmanian EPA as regulator of finfish farming.

The inquiry requested and was provided with a helpful diagram, which lays out the whole approval process for marine farming development plans and amendment plans. Those diagrams are included in the appendices of the report and you will see that this is a very complex process, with numerous steps and entities involved. It will be quite some piece of work to review and look at this legislation.

Evidence presented to the inquiry raised concerns about a number of elements relating to the process outlined. A lack of statutory requirement in the Marine Farming Planning Act for the minister to make decisions based on scientific evidence. A lack of clear and specific criteria to guide decision-making by the Marine Farming Planning Review Panel, the minister, the EPA

board or the Director of the EPA. A lack of legislative criteria relating to environmental outcomes, such as requirements for caps on biomass or nitrogen in either marine farming development plans or environmental licences.

It was put to us that the Marine Farming Planning Act provides no defined framework to balance economic, social and environmental considerations and that it is not clear how impacts, including on residents, tourism, recreation activities, are weighted in the marine farm planning process. Concerns were further raised that legislation does not require the consideration of integrated and cumulative impacts of marine farming on the marine environment and communities. It was put to us in evidence that other jurisdictions with intensive finfish farming industries, such as Scotland, New Zealand and Norway, have adopted a more integrated approach to marine farming planning.

Within the constraints of the inquiry, we are not in a position to fully assess the right or wrong of any of those particular elements. What is clear to me and what my takeaway is from this discussion in this element was that there is a lack of confidence in the process that is there. There is a lack of confidence in its transparency, in its accountability and in the involvement and say that the community get to have as part of the process. As this is taken forward for consideration, if there is a review of the act that then results in a review of the approval process for plans and amendment plans, that is what I encourage the Government to take away as a key message. It might be that we could pick apart any suggestion that has been made in evidence to the inquiry by members of the public or by other independent experts about how to change or improve this process. That should be a comprehensive discussion that is held and it should be held with a clear intent to build better confidence, transparency and accountability into it.

The key recommendation here is recommendation (11), which recommends review of the Marine Farming Planning Act 1995, including the purpose and objectives of the act; alignment with other legislated planning instruments; the role of the planning authority and powers of the minister; membership, general functions and powers of the Marine Farming Planning Review panel; stakeholder and public consultation; criteria for and discretion in decision-making; public release of information; access to appeal rights and merits review; lease allocation processes and recognition of community amenity.

That is a long list. The intention of it is to point to the areas where there is currently contention or lack of confidence or questions over current process and to encourage within the context of reviewing that act when it comes about, that all those matters be well considered and well consulted. If that does not occur, what we will find is a reviewed act and the implementation of a new reviewed act and we will run into the same issues of a lack of confidence and the same contention that arises as a result of that.

Within this process, there is a key role currently for the Marine Farming Planning Review Panel. The Marine Farming Planning Review Panel is a statutory body established under section 8 of the act. Its primary function is to consider draft marine farming development plans, or draft marine farming development amendment plans, and make recommendations to the minister.

The Marine Farming Planning Review Panel must perform its functions and exercise its powers in accordance with directions given by the minister, and the panel is an advisory body, not a decision-making body. Under current legislation it is not empowered to refuse or reject

a draft marine farming development plan or draft marine farming development amendment plan.

The act itself was amended in 2011, resulting in changes to the decision-making powers of the minister. It took away some decision-making powers from the panel prior to that, and gave it to the minister, is my understanding.

The Marine Farming Planning Review Panel can - actually, I will not go into that in too much detail. Suffice to say, this panel is a key part of the current approval process and considerable concerns were raised in relation to the Marine Farming Planning Review Panel, including, that it is neither fully independent nor broadly representative. That there is an inadequate mix of qualifications, representation required under legislation, and highlighting that there is a perception that the panel, to date, has had a close relationship to industry, which is viewed as being advantageous to the interests of industry.

Now that is a shame, coming back here to some perceptions about the influence on decision-making and processes that are unfortunate, because it undermines confidence.

We know that in times past, two additional members were selected to strengthen the expertise of the Marine Farming Planning Review Panel during the assessment of the Storm Bay proposals. Those two members subsequently resigned. On their resignation, they highlighted a range of issues, including a lack of statutory authority for the panel to refuse an application, concerns regarding the rigour of the application assessment process and the assertions that there was inappropriate relationship with industry.

In evidence, the inquiry members of the review panel defended its decisions and its processes in relation to Storm Bay, defended its diligence in following legislated processes and rejected those assertions made by those resigning members. It was not appropriate in the context of this inquiry to adjudicate any elements of that dispute. But it was noted as a further indication that the legislation and the powers and configuration of the panel would benefit from prompt review, prior to it being part of any further approval process, to restore public confidence and to provide a clean slate.

I also note that when, in the context of hearings, I asked the department whether the resignation of those two well-credentialed and well-respected members of the panel and the criticisms that were made by them at their resignation had prompted some form of review, where consideration was given as to whether the panel was appropriately configured and was able to fill its functions as a result of the criticisms made - or perhaps even, whether some form of review and full consideration of those concerns, was undertaken. The answer that we received in those hearings was 'no' that had not prompted any review, or consideration within the department. That is a shame. That is a missed opportunity. Clearly, if you have two well-credentialed, well-respected members involved in a process who subsequently lose faith in that process and step away from it, who publicly make known that they have done that, I would have thought a sensible course of action would have been some form of review to identify to what extent there was an opportunity to make improvements.

I will not go in detail into the recommendations in the report that relate to the panel; suffice to say, that we have made some, but again it comes down to a thoughtful review of that as one element of the approval process under the act.

The Government, in their response, point to the development of the 10-year salmon plan, and the intention to then have a timetable to conduct a review of that act. So that is something to look ahead to in terms of fruitfully progressing.

I will speak briefly about the Environment Protection Authority (EPA), because within the course of the inquiry, concerns were raised relating to a perceived lack of independence of the EPA in times past and inadequate resourcing of the EPA to carry out all of its regulatory responsibilities with respect to finfish farming.

The EPA's capacity to undertake long-term noise and water quality monitoring programs was reported as being inadequate and constrained by a lack of staffing and resources. Some of that was directly in information provided from the EPA itself, in particular in relation to noise.

The Director of the EPA reports recovering close to 100 per cent of direct management costs from the industry for current regulatory activities related to finfish farming - and yet, on the other hand, says that there are not necessarily enough resources and staffing to investigate noise complaints. There is a bit of a mismatch there. It is positive that regulatory costs are recouped from the industry. This is an industry that is making considerable profits from our public waterways. I suggest that there is an opportunity to recover from industry regulatory levies an amount that is sufficient to fund not only the current, apparently constrained, functions of monitoring and compliance, but also what we could regard as a full and comprehensive regulatory monitoring and compliance regime, to an exhaustive extent.

I do not believe we can possibly have any suggestion levelled at us that our regulatory body for this industry does not have sufficient funding to comprehensively undertake its full functions in monitoring and compliance. There is more to say about fees and levies in the next term of reference.

Since the inquiry began, the Government has separated the EPA from the department and is in the process of establishing it as a state authority under the State Service Act. The new agency is to be a separate legal entity. Mr Wes Ford, who was the director under its previous iteration, has been appointed as the chief executive officer of that new state authority and retains the statutory position of Director Environment Protection Authority. The Government has put forward the intention to further strengthen the independence of the EPA through changes to the Environmental Management and Pollution Control Act. Those are out for public comment, and it will be interesting to see what happens.

On the face of it, Madam Deputy President, this is a good development. Many have called for a more independent EPA. However, it is potentially an example of a situation where the 'how' is as important as the 'what'. We need to look at whether this move to an independent EPA will deliver the intended or the desired outcomes from such a change.

After the announcement, I understand there was no community consultation on designing the model of the EPA at that time. I know that other states that are focused on developing new independent EPAs have used a community vision as a starting point on what an independent EPA could be and could deliver. That was not a starting point in this state. There has been something of a stark difference in approach with some of those other jurisdictions as they remodelled their EPAs. Victoria engaged in a great deal of consultation. Queensland is currently consulting with the public on whether to move back to an independent EPA and in

that process, they are asking the public what outcome they are looking for from a move to an independent EPA.

I understand that in the draft act that was being prepared, there is no provision about the director's independence, conflict of interest management, and no change to how the director is appointed. I wonder; are we going to see change in any of the discretions of the director about the finfish farming industry? I am not sure what flow through there will be into that area.

The concern is that we risk making a cosmetic change, but just extend the status quo. I am hopeful that that is not what is playing out here. When I hear descriptions and processes in other jurisdictions that sound more open, more consultative, more focused on what the community wants and intends from this, I worry that does not appear to be what we have undertaken here.

The report has some recommendations about the independence of the EPA and about the EPA being fully resourced to undertake its regulatory roles and responsibilities. I know the Government has some information about the increased funding to the EPA in this Budget and into future budgets, and increased funding that has specifically been allocated to the management of the salmon industry. That is pleasing to hear. It will remain to be seen if this addresses the issues which prompted the recommendation in the report about increased funding. Will the EPA be able to undertake its full range of compliance and monitoring functions? The test would be if we were to have a future inquiry with the Director of the EPA sitting in front of us, would that person respond to a question by saying, 'No, we don't have the resources to do that' in terms of something fundamental to its role and function - which is what we heard on some elements in this inquiry.

Matters relating to environmental licences were covered in the inquiry and I will not go into detail on those here, other than to point to them for people who may have an interest in that area. Various concerns were raised relating to the current process of granting environmental licences, including a lack of opportunity for public involvement or appeal, and a lack of transparent criteria for decision-making. We will move through those ones.

My understanding from the Government's response is that, as part of the new structure of the EPA and establishment of some new processes and standards, some changes and some new requirements may be put in place. That will be pleasing, if it begins to address some of the issues raised.

The report also contains a section about allocation of leases. I will not go into detail about that, other than to point to issues raised relating to the allocation of leases. Some rather stark comparisons were drawn between the financial return that we achieve in Tasmania, compared to the financial return achieved in some other international jurisdictions. That is one aspect of the concerns. Other aspects related to the processes involved and who gets first dibs on lease areas.

No doubt, as we move forward with the new 10-year plan and with the review of the legislative basis of this industry, we may well address some of these issues relating to allocation of leases. It was interesting to hear similar arguments made from some environmental groups and also from the Shooters, Fishers and Farmers Party submission. There was some congruence there with the call for more open and transparent processes and a better financial return to the state. It will be interesting to track the progress of the Government's intention

there. Given the contention around the approval of plans and the granting of leases, we would be prompted to think about process and about those themes I mentioned at the outset. What would we expect of our system for approving finfish farming areas and allocating leases? There would be a reasonable expectation from the community that we would have processes that are free of political influence; that are based on transparent, independent scientific assessment; that include the consideration of the full array of the uses and experiences relating to the waterways in question; that allow for community participation and input; that were fully documented and accountable; that were fully reviewed within reasonable time frames; that would achieve the greatest financial return for our state for the use of the shared resource of our public waterways; and that these plans and leases would be approved and granted for an appropriate length of time to provide for the reassessment of the changing environmental and regulatory contexts that may eventuate.

If that is a reasonable expectation, which it should be for the community, is that what we have? If we look back at what has come before we would have to say no, I do not believe we have ever had that. Is that what we will get under the changes being brought forward by the Government now and the things in train? That remains to be seen, but I would point to that list as a checklist against which to assess how we are doing on any changes we are proposing to make here.

Fees and levies were an area that came up as a concern. Particularly, in relation to the fact that we would not only want to collect fees and levies to the extent we need to cover the cost to the state of regulating the industry. We would want to do that fully and comprehensively but we would also want to gain a return for the use of our public waterways. Many submissions and evidence at hearings called for this. Many of them pointed to other jurisdictions that achieved much greater returns and made comparisons about what Tasmania could achieve if were to apply similar regimes.

Be that as it may, we are a place unto our self and it is up to us as a state to determine what is appropriate. I would hope our Government would have first and foremost, at the forefront the best interests of our community in determining what to achieve for leasing areas of our public waterways and recouping not just costs but benefits above that from this industry.

Recommendation (40) was to ensure appropriate returns came to the Tasmanian community, for an independent review to be commissioned of fee and levy structures for finfish farming, including lease value and its reassessment over time, setting of lease fees, rates of levies required to fully fund regulatory monitoring, compliance and enforcement activities, and local government rates as relevant to the industry.

I am pleased to see through the development of the salmon plan and as part of the processes of updating these arrangements, the Government is intending to commence a review of the fee and levy structure for the industry. The review, apparently, is initially considering the costs of services to regulate and support the industry, but I would also hope, to achieve an appropriate return to our state and Treasury and Finance are involved in doing that.

I welcome this wholeheartedly. I hope we see it deliver an outstanding result for our state. Again, it will be one we look for and it remains to be seen whether the intent of the recommendation we have put there is delivered on.

The last part of term of reference (2) related to environmental harm and the management of environmental harm. From the outset we heard quite clearly from industry operators they regard measures taken to minimise environmental harm, in relation to their operations, to be highly regulated through federal and state legislation, supported by robust industry policies and practices and validated by third party accreditation. That was a very clear message and there was a great deal of evidence that pointed to those elements. Industry representatives also acknowledged quite clearly the need for continual improvement to be sustainable, demonstrated a willingness to adapt their operations to minimise environmental harm and could point to instances and examples of doing so. I point readers to a section which outlines measures taken by the finfish farming operators to minimise environmental harm; it is quite informative in that sense.

The submission we received from the department also pointed to legislation and regulation requirements for the industry, including management controls on a range of issues, environmental surveys and assessment requirements for marine farming licenses and environmental licenses, baseline surveys, reporting, monitoring and compliance requirements, and the submission said:

This framework ensures that the impacts on the marine environment from the production of salmonoids with respect to both solid and soluble wastes, are limited to a level that can be assimilated without unacceptable environmental harm.

The department was pointing to the processes there and making the claim that they work.

Yet concerns regarding environmental harm were a feature of many submissions received by the inquiry. Some of the submissions came from respected independent scientists and experts. Others were from concerned community members, written from a personal experience and observation and some, to be honest, were very upsetting to read. They painted a picture of distress at times from a range of community members from different areas of the state, from different backgrounds, who have observed environmental changes and damage they attribute to finfish farming.

It cannot be ignored. There are hundreds, likely thousands of Tasmanians who believe their local environment and their lives have been made worse by the impact of fish farming. Issues and concerns they raise included visual amenity, noise, light, marine debris, ecosystem and habitat modifications, impacts on wildlife, nutrient loading, water quality, accumulative environmental impacts over time.

One example which summarised a number of the community-raised issues relating to finfish farming was from a submission from the Tasman Peninsula Marine Protection group, from Trish Baily, who said:

These submissions express the anguish of issues such as loss of amenity, lack of social licence for the salmon companies to operate, the lack of transparency in the industry and poor public consultation.

These issues include noise and light pollution, the endless debris problems along our shorelines, the algal blooms that have washed great roils of green filamentous algae upon our beaches, docks and shorelines, smothered healthy

sea grass beds and seaweed colonies, compromising valuable habitats for marine life and destroying favourite recreational areas for swimming, fishing, kayaking, etc.

Concerns were raised the current regulatory regime is not adequate to manage the environmental impacts of the finfish farming industry and regulation has failed to keep pace with the expansion of the industry.

The Tasmanian Conversation Trust's submission expressed this concern regarding the legislative framework, and it said:

The industry has been going through a rapid expansion in recent years. The regulatory controls have proven to have been grossly inadequate and the state government and industry have failed to respond to community concerns.

I quoted earlier from Chris Wells, an aquaculture planning consultant who noted in his submission the initial environmental harm caused by the industry was low. However, the regulation failed to keep pace with the expansion and growth. He said:

There was never any serious attempt in this State to address site selection criteria, such as water depth, water movement, fallowing to enable dispersal of nutrients loaded from farming activity.

Instead legislation was passed fast tracking salmon farming development and bypassing normal planning processes.

This very poor start to the industry did not immediately cause problems in the environment, because farms were small, pens were small, and stocking densities limited.

Leases were granted in areas of little tidal movement that were conveniently located for business owners and the business of salmon farming begun.

As the years went by, pens became larger, biomass of fish increased and companies invested in the ASX. As this occurred, nothing changed in terms of regulation by State Governments and Local Governments were bypassed.

The marine environments were compromised by large-scale farming, overstocking becoming the norm to increase profits and the regulators at DPIPWE and later the EPA turned a blind eye to the problems.

That is probably not a fair assessment and that does not capture efforts and changes made by governmental regulators over time. However, stepping back from that, it is fair to say that there was some catch-up being played and we did not adequately keep pace, and this is why we see through these submissions, and in the community currently, a great deal of concern about harm caused.

The very fact that now we have a flurry of activity putting in place an environmental standard, a biosecurity plan, a review of the legislation underpinning this industry and these activities. A whole range of new measures coming into play over the next little while.

The very fact of that acknowledges that we did not have those to an appropriate degree previously. We simply did not and that is why we have arrived with some damage caused, with some consternation in the community and the distress that has gone along with that.

The report touches on a number of concerns raised in relation to the use of freshwater resources by the finfish farming industry and the lack of a comprehensive audit or review of those resources that are used and the apparent absence of a clear and equitable water strategy for the state that would govern that.

I will not go into that in detail in the contribution today, other than to point to its place in the report and some recommendations made in relation to it. I note that the Government in its response to the report has suggested that as part of consideration of the new 10-year salmon plan there is an intention to propose to phase out flow-through systems for all freshwater salmon in fish farms over a certain size. This will involve, they say, working with industry to establish time frames for transition of existing flow-through systems to fully recirculating systems.

That is something that I welcome. That is something that we heard quite clearly in the inquiry as a concern, that rather than all freshwater systems being the topnotch recirculation aquaculture systems - RAS systems - that we still had some flow-through systems which people understood to be less than best practice. It is an excellent move to propose to phase those out. We have to remember it is not just what, it is also how. It is a matter of when is that going to happen? It says here over a certain size; well that will be a question about what is the appropriate size in which that requirement will come into play? What will that then leave us, in terms of flow-through systems? There are a lot of questions still about that but I welcome the intent of it and the recognition that that is an issue and a concern that has been raised.

Another area that came up in relation to environmental harm related to penalties and enforcement. It was noted that penalties for breach of environmental regulations are set at lower levels than in some jurisdictions. That was relating to concerns raised that penalties applied to the finfish farming industry for breach of environmental regulations were not adequate to act as a genuine deterrent. That is what we need them to be. It needs to be not worth the while of industry operators to break the law and to step outside environmental regulations. If that is something that they can afford to do, as a cost of doing business, then that is problematic and we need to address it. That was expressed quite effectively by Environment Tasmania in its submission where it said:

Currently, penalties for breach of regulation fail to discourage ongoing intentional regulatory breaches. It is more financially lucrative for operators to breach regulations than comply with them.

The fact that we now have this industry operating in this state owned by multinational companies, we will be even more likely as a state to want to require quite significant penalties and enforcement for any environmental harms caused, given that we do hear reports of breaches of those matters in other jurisdictions where these companies operate. We would want to be on the front foot in looking after our natural environment here.

A number of recommendations appear in the report relating to a review of penalties and the scope of liability in regulation that genuinely reflect the potential serious environmental consequences and strengthen that deterrent effect.

The Government does point again to consideration of this in the 10-year salmon plan and the intention to develop a timetable for review of penalties and compliance frameworks. Again, that is something I welcome. It is good to see that intention stated. We will see where that ends up and whether we have some improvement and resolution. It is another wait and see, in my view.

We do have an environmental standard coming soon. That was initially mentioned in the 2017 salmon growth plan, the EPA developing an environmental standard to provide consistent, more rigorous and comprehensive approaches to environmental management of the industry.

It is quite outstanding and disturbing to think that we have come this far with this industry without something as robust and definitive to be guiding our approach to it. Once implemented, that standard should provide greater public confidence in environmental management and accountability to the industry, but again, it is not just about what you do, it is about how you do it.

We have already had some concerns raised that community and stakeholder groups were excluded from the development of the environmental standard. I am hopeful that as that process has progressed more recently that that is something that has been rectified. I am interested to hear from stakeholders about their experience of engaging with that project. The Government may have updates on that. We have a consultation open now on the environmental standard, and alongside that we also have consultation occurring on the proposed amendments to the Environmental Management and Pollution Control Act (EMPCA). The legislation underpins the environmental standard because the objects of what the standard has to achieve and be should be outlined in that legislation. I hope that those two things are being progressed in a way that is cohesive and connected and that we end up with that standard in place to become that robust backbone to how we approach things and we can hold people to account for it. Industry can be held to account for it, but also, we can hold our regulator and the operations of its compliance and monitoring functions to account in relation to that standard once it is implemented.

A great deal of discussion was generated in the inquiry and I am not going to delve into it in great detail here, but it was about the concepts of adaptive management versus a precautionary principle. There is a lot of information in the report that I would point people to and it is interesting to consider appropriate approaches and the way in which both those approaches are applied or brought to bear in the context of this state.

There is a lot of genuine concern about an adaptive management approach being applied here in this industry without an appropriate evidence base and scientific understandings to begin with. We could launch in with an adaptive management approach before we are in a position to effectively and responsibly have that work for us.

I noted some descriptions that were useful in understanding what an adaptive management approach is and what is required for it to work well and I can see why it is that there is concern that is something we may not have well in place at times that it has been applied in this state. Again, I am not going to delve into it in detail, but I point people to that conversation. It should be an ongoing conversation about the appropriateness of the approach taken, particularly in relation to this area of environmental harm, how we are preventing that

and to what degree we are responsibly in a position to understand the environmental impacts as they play out if we do not have the evidence base at the starting point.

That does not do justice to the full conversation relating to those topics, but again, it is a long report and this is a long contribution, I know. Let me move on. Term of reference (3), the final term of reference in the report, is that catch-all that we typically have in our inquiry processes, any other matter incidental thereto.

Many other matters came up that were incidental thereto in the course of this inquiry and we have outlined a number of the key ones that we felt were important to note in the report. I will mention a couple of them. Some of the issues turned out to be areas of very distinct interest and quite clear concern.

One of the key ones I will speak to is the issue of marine debris. This connects back to that previous idea of environmental harm, but it is a good, distinct one to look at in its own right. The issue of marine debris resulting from finfish farming activity was a matter of significant concern, including safety risks, environmental impact and the potential for debris to be increasing as the industry expands.

It is acknowledged that not all marine debris is produced by finfish farming operations and that extreme weather and high energy offshore sites present ongoing challenges. That is always thrown into the mix - that finfish farming does not create all marine debris. Of course, that is true. In the same way that we also hear, in relation to nutrient loading in certain areas, it is not just finfish farming that is nutrient loading into those areas, it might be other agricultural processes or other processes in the local area. Of course, that is true too but in terms of the nutrient loading in some cases, and in terms of the marine debris, we cannot get away from the fact that there is significant evidence that the finfish farming industry is the main contributor of that debris, in this case, and in some cases the nutrient loading of areas.

Just because there are other contributors does not mean that we cannot have a conversation about finfish farming and its place; nor does it mean that we should contemplate doing anything less in trying to alleviate the issue, in terms of finfish farming. Some of the submissions we received clearly outlined the extent of the debris problem that has been identified by local communities; proximate but also, in some cases, not overly proximate to fish farming operations.

I will give a couple of examples of some of the things we heard. A submission from an individual, Susan Wardle stated:

Debris is regularly collected, which we dispose of at our own cost, as there is no rubbish collection on Bruny Island. An economic concern for a lot of people but also this raises environmental and safety concerns. As reported publicly, during a strong storm a pen washed away completely. This would have been a danger for small craft and swimmers. Storm Bay is called Storm Bay for a reason. It is no longer acceptable to deal with pollution and debris by simply letting the tide take it away, as seems to have been the methodology here.

We heard from the Tasman Peninsula Marine Protection group:

The beaches are becoming littered with debris from the fish farms. Many locals now go to the beaches armed with bags to collect the bits of rope and plastic washed ashore. Literally, trailer loads of the debris have been delivered back to Tassal on a regular basis. Not only is this trash unsightly but the plastics that remain in the ocean are broken down into micro plastics which are consumed by marine organisms and hence, enter the whole food chain and marine ecosystem. Very large pieces of debris, including meters of plastic pipe and rope have been reported to MAST floating in Storm Bay and associated waterways, major hazards to recreational and commercial boaters.

In the 2017 salmon industry growth plan there was a statement about a zero-tolerance approach to marine debris but I have to say that that is an on-paper commitment in many instances. It is virtually meaningless to have said we have a zero-tolerance approach to marine debris. It is impossible to have comprehensively implemented such a thing, and it is not clear in any evidence presented how or if - or the degree to which - it has been enforced. What we do know is that we have had a number of efforts made though through industry. Industry has put in place a voluntary code that they developed, in terms of marine debris, including the development of a marine debris hotline and debris tracker app. However, neither the department nor the Tasmanian Salmonid Growers Association were able to confirm how the effectiveness of the zero-tolerance policy or the voluntary code the industry developed would be measured. How will we know if we are doing better? How we will know if this is working? What are we meaningfully measuring to say we are working towards zero?

Concerns were expressed about the debris tracker app including: a lack of input from community into its development; the appropriateness of its operation by industry; and no requirement to report the data collected either publicly or to government at that time. Finfish farming operators were identifying and reducing marine debris through the use of tracking technology, colour coding, marking of equipment, staff education, rope recycling stations, collection bins and shoreline clean-ups. That was all reported to us. It was really positive efforts being made within industry to reduce marine debris.

However, what that tells us is those efforts coming into play at that point in time meant that they were not necessarily in play before that. Therefore, it is not surprising that we are still seeing a lot of historic results of marine debris and it is hard for us to gauge to what extent we are improving. At least we are now doing better at identifying equipment through the tracking technology and the colour coding and marking. That is very important, because marine debris infringement notices can only be issued when ownership of debris can be identified, leading to a very limited number of infringement notices being issued. Previously those marking and tracking elements were not there.

It was reported to us that marine debris infringement notices are not publicly reported and many regarded the penalties as insufficient to act as an appropriate deterrent. According to the Neighbours of Fish Farms submission, the issue of marine debris is not taken sufficiently seriously for the authorities to record the incidents and frequency of occurrence, or levy penalties for creating waste and hazard, nor for the companies to institute rigorous methods that should prevent debris in the first place.

That is a claim made by a community group. Evidence from the industry says that they are still taking measures. I do not think that they are exhaustive measures. I consider we are

still seeing an issue with marine debris and there is still improvement required. There seems to be a lack of public information and promotion of the mechanisms for reporting marine debris. One good suggestion came through a submission - again from Neighbours of Fish Farms. They said:

There should not be a boat ramp, beach, or accessible waterfront fish farming area without clear signs advertising where to report marine debris. Further, there needs to be a system that makes it easy to report debris on water, or on shore, to an authority that collects statistics and reports regularly to parliament and the public. How otherwise can the public even start to monitor the size and extent of the problem of marine debris and how can government and regulators effectively monitor and manage the problem?

Those are reasonable points to make.

Some progress occurred during the course of the inquiry, which was reported back to us the second time the department came to hearings. At that second appearance, the then acting secretary, Tim Baker, appeared before the subcommittee in October 2020, and said:

The first thing on my list is that all floating marine equipment is now required to be uniquely marked and can be traced back to the operator. And, based largely on a conversation we had here, we have established a single point of reference for responding to notifications of marine debris and that system was developed in consultation with MAST, Friends of Bruny, and the companies themselves.

It was very positive to hear a development reported to us during the course of the inquiry, based on prompting through the submissions, the messages that were heard, and the questions that had previously been asked.

The report makes recommendations about marine debris, and 'where to from here' in terms of a marine debris policy. Recommendation (55) is to:

develop a fin fish farming industry marine debris policy in consultation with community and other stakeholders that can be effectively implemented, monitored, enforced, and reported on publicly.

There are also some other recommendations. I note that the Government, again, points to the development of its 10-year salmon plan, as being the context in which they may well address this issue again. I hope that it is a more purposeful approach that is outlined in that beyond the zero-tolerance approach that was expressed in the original 2017 plan. That one did not necessarily tangibly play out to be accountably monitored.

I wonder about infringements and I wonder about the penalties applied to them and whether there is a great deal we could improve there. More identifiable equipment is going to help with that, but that will remain to be seen, whether we get a change in what is experienced in communities who are the ones using shorelines and encountering this debris.

I note that the Government has said that the question of ongoing responsibility, effectiveness and matters relating to the app and the hotline will be addressed in the process of

updating the marine debris policy going forward. Again, it is a wait and see; we will see if that arrives at a spot that sees tangible improvement if we are out on the shoreline of Bruny Island or the Tasman Peninsula or wherever it might be.

One of the final things I point to, but it is another issue of significance that I will spend a moment on, is the issue of noise and light in relation to this industry. Noise and light are issues that are specifically problematic in relation to the inshore finfish farming operations. Finfish operations that are close to the shore and close to residences are likely to negatively impact on community amenity with noise and lights.

This is even more likely due to the fact that some of these inshore farming operations are in locations that are beautiful, peaceful, appealing places that Tasmanians have chosen to live specifically for the natural environment around them. Within the course of the inquiry we heard very clearly from many submissions that noise and light generated by the industry have caused significant distress and has a negative impact on the health and wellbeing of community members. I will quote a few of those directly so that their voices are heard here:

Firstly, from a resident in Killora on Bruny:

We think of social impact being about our ability to enjoy the unique amenity offered by the Killora coast. The residents were there before Tassal and Tassal should accommodate the residents, not the other way around. I have major concerns. Breaches still occurring, multiple noise complaints from Killora residents concerning lease machinery, attendant vessels. We have fought hard over nearly 20 years to limit the noise and light pollution from Tassal's Shepherds lease, yet breaches continue. The system relies too much on residents complaining before action happens, rather than Tassal ensuring that all machinery is silenced before it comes near the site.

Another resident of North Bruny said this:

My neighbours and I are repeatedly being impacted by the noise from marine fish farm service vessel movements transiting between the D'Entrecasteaux Channel, North West and Storm bays. The noise, a low drone or deep throbbing, can be heard during the quiet periods of music and during the muted ads on the television, even with the windows and doors closed. It penetrates habitable rooms and disturbs sleep.

The opening between the Channel and Storm Bay is 1.6 kilometres narrow. Vessels are therefore in close proximity to residential houses at Dennes Point and Tinderbox. Vessels are often within 300 metres of the shoreline. Many incidents occur at anti-social hours between 6 p.m. and 7 a.m.

A resident of North West Bay said this:

Huon Aquaculture has assured us on many occasions that their vessels operate within noise regulation guidelines. However, the low frequency drone of the engines and hydraulic equipment that can go on for hours is very distressing. It can be heard through our double glazed windows and has, on occasion, caused the windows to rattle and pictures on the wall to shake.

During the warmer months, we prefer to have the windows open which causes much more distress. The vessel movement can occur at any time of the day or night. Recently, a vessel towed a pond liner into the jetty at midnight. Bright lights from the vessel shone in through our windows and was accompanied by shouting and loud engine noises.

I can go on and on, and in the report, we include a number of these stories from personal experience, from many different areas that are proximate to inshore farming operations. Some of them describe the health and wellbeing impacts of the noises that are experienced and some of them raise concerns about the impact, not just on residents, but also on tourists and tourism operations in nearby areas.

This is yet another situation relating to this industry which has been allowed by government to become a point of contention and has fuelled bad relations between industry and communities.

In relation to noise, the finfish farming industry is required to operate within a regulatory framework, legislated by government, monitored and enforced apparently by the Environment Protection Authority (EPA). While decibel levels might be set in regulation, the impact of noise can also be related to tone, frequency, regularity and a time of occurrence, which are not regulated currently.

In response to noise complaints, the EPA stated to us that it does little monitoring of industry-generated noise and would require additional resources to increase its monitoring function. For example, in the case of North Bruny, through questioning in our hearings we received information from Wes Ford, the Director of the EPA, in September 2020 - this was in hearings in September 2020 - that although the noise complaints in relation to North Bruny fish farming operations made to both EPA and to the company directly had escalated over the previous 18 months due to fact that a second lease area had been brought back into operation, the EPA had not undertaken any monitoring to assess the situation. Eighteen months. No monitoring.

On further questioning, it turns out that no noise monitoring had been done in that area or undertaken during the five-and-a-half years that Mr Ford had been Director of the EPA, nor to his knowledge, he told us, had there been any undertaken in more than a decade.

This is disturbing. We have had complaints reported to us that there have been complaints made about noise in these areas for extended periods of time, for over a decade, and yet no monitoring to assess the validity of those complaints, or to assess the compliance of the industries who are there. Apparently, according to the EPA, that is, to some extent, a resource issue.

There are various avenues for making complaints in relation to finfish farming noise. However, there is no central collation or public reporting of those complaints, or there was not at the time that we took the evidence.

In response to complaints, finfish farming operators report they have made efforts to reduce noise through adjustments to operations and improvements to equipment, and indeed, often, it was suggested residents should make the complaints directly to the companies and to try to negotiate and work with them for changes and adjustments.

It was confirmed in some submissions from community members who described that at times over the years, direct discussions with industry operators had resulted in changes being made, such as modifications to equipment, alterations to schedules and instructions to staff.

However, this has only delivered improvement to a point. It also requires community members becoming distressed enough to reach the level of complaining, which can be quite a confronting thing for people to do. As well as requiring community members to reach that threshold of complaint and the distress that builds up towards that, it also requires that there be some actual change the operator can offer that is practical and that they deem will not be too detrimental to their operations and can be applied. There are only certain circumstances under which that is going to be fruitful.

As there have been technological developments over time, some noise and light issues have been resolved through those developments but then, others have also cropped up. So, we have an ongoing issue here.

I was struck by a comment made by the EPA Director, Mr Ford in the hearings, in relation to noise complaints, and the difficulty in judging how significant an issue it is. He said this:

The challenge in trying to deal with those sorts of things is unravelling how many individuals, where they're located and what might be driving any particular complaint on any given night. Why does one person complain and the other 20 or 50 people who live nearby not complain? We don't know the answers to those sorts of things.

In thinking on that, it was pretty clear to me from the evidence to this inquiry if I were a community member living close to one of these inshore farming operations who had been making noise complaints for over a decade, which had resulted in absolutely zero monitoring by the EPA to assess and respond to my complaint, I would be overwhelmingly likely to just give up. I would likely be feeling abject helplessness and hopelessness in that situation.

It is also clear there will always be some people with the confidence and capacity to make complaints when a situation they are subjected to, which is detrimental to their wellbeing and amenity, occurs and there will always be some other people, who despite being similarly affected, will be unable or unwilling to take the step of complaining.

In terms of noise complaints relating to fish farming operations, there is more than enough evidence in the public domain, through complaints records and the evidence to this inquiry, to entirely dispel any suggestion that complaints may be due to one or two vexatious individuals, while all other residents in an area are blissfully unaffected and unconcerned.

If complaints in an area are coming from a few key people, the likelihood is that it is because they have taken on a representative role for their neighbours or communities and have the capability and resilience to continue to seek a resolution to the harm being experienced in their community.

Further to that, I am also left wondering how many people being affected does it take for a regulator to respond to a complaint? Where is the bar set for the industry regulator to engage in monitoring and enforcement functions that it holds? Local residents already feel they are in a David and Goliath battle to have their voices heard on matters to do with this industry.

Quite frankly, this issue around noise and lights is another classic and clear issue, where inshore fish farming operations are demonstrably the most problematic. It is very hard to imagine if we had a clean slate and were planning the presence of this as a major tech industry in our state from the start, we would ever have put these intensive farming operations on our inshore public waterways in such close proximity to local residences and communities.

They were placed there in times past when the industry was vastly different to what it is today. It would appear we have no mechanism by which there is a full reassessment of the appropriateness and desirability of approving such operations now in a continuing way in these environmentally and socially sensitive locations.

We hear in the evidence of this report the EPA regards matters relating to noise could be further codified in the environmental standard currently being developed. Wes Ford, the Director of the EPA, confirmed that. He said:

We are certainly looking at noise in terms of how to incorporate noise into the standard, because noise is part of current license conditions incorporated in the old marine farming licenses. We are revisiting noise in terms of a condition within an environmental licence.

The EPA identified that lighting is difficult to regulate and it is not clear actually at this time whether lights will be included in the environmental standard currently being developed.

Again, the Government's response to the report does point to, you guessed it, this is an issue being given further consideration in the 10-year salmon plan and again, as I have before, I welcome that, at face value, if that is the case. It does mean it is an intention. It is not something we can measure or assess or see whether it is coming to fruition to address the issues that are there. It is another wait-and-see.

Some progress has been made through the newly independent EPA for a hotline for complaints and notifications and that is now being dealt with a bit differently to what was reported to us initially. Again, if that is progress and that is something that community members see as fruitful and beneficial, I would applaud it. We have yet to have that demonstrated.

There are recommendations in the report around matters to do with noise and lights and how they may be dealt with. Again, I hope those things are looked at and considered fully as the salmon plan is taken forward and these matters, apparently, are to come within it.

One last matter to mention from term of reference (3), and again it warrants mentioning because it was represented substantially in evidence presented to us as a concern, regarding seal management. I will mention briefly here and point people to the report for a fuller exploration of the evidence presented, our considerations on findings and recommendations on this matter.

Clearly, the issue of how we manage interactions with wildlife, including seals as a significant example, is one of interest and at times, concern, in the communities. Particularly in relation to seals because of the use of deterrent devices. That was raised as an ongoing concern in the inquiry. We heard the practice of seal relocation has been phased out since 2017, but the Seal Management Framework that has been in place allows for special permits

to capture, hold and relocate seals in certain circumstances. There is still some relocation that may be happening and is reported on. Now, a focus of concern in relation to seals is the use of deterrents and whether that is the explosive devices - the 'seal crackers' as they are colloquially known - or whether it is the lead shots used - the 'bean bags' - which sounds friendly but is not friendly to receive a bean bag full of lead. It is called a deterrent for a reason.

These are matters which strongly need to be reviewed and assessed, including the efficacy and safety of all seal management devices and transparent public reporting of their use in the public domain. The Seal Management Framework requires review and in the Government's response we have an intention, again, in connection with the 10-year salmon plan, to look at that. There is an intention, or a proposal there be a new aquaculture standard for wildlife interactions which would replace and modernise the current Seal Management Framework.

Again, I welcome that intention. It is needed and now it will be a matter of waiting and seeing how that plays out. I point back to the themes I mentioned quite early on in my contribution; on independence, transparency, accountability, community involvement and participation. With all these things, all these matters in train stated by the Government as an intention to be addressed through various mechanisms, we need to see those matters include transparency, independence, accountability, community involvement and participation and the others.

Without that, what we will end up doing is moving the furniture around on this industry and the regulatory framework that sits with it. Moving the furniture around and arriving at exactly the same position we are in now five or 10 years down the track where communities have not seen the outcomes of greater transparency, accountability or participation. Where the industry has not had an opportunity for a social license to be genuinely built. That would be a great shame indeed.

What I am interested to hear, having seen the response from the Government, and having in my contribution today welcomed many aspects of it - with the corollary of that wait and see, it is a good intention expressed, we will wait and see how it plays out. What I want to know is whether the Government thinks that the steps it is taking now, the plans it is making for this industry, the mechanisms that it is putting in place, will resolve to a significant extent, the community distress and concern that has been generated under its planning and regulation regimes to date. If so, on what basis does the Government feel that it can make a commitment that it will do so? In my opinion, the Government clearly sees the need for reform and is undertaking it quite actively. It would be a great shame for this to be, in some sense, just a readjustment and a reformalising of the status quo, particularly the negative aspects that are there for the community.

We need a reset. We need that reset to not just be fixing things on paper, or just getting the pieces lined up properly; it needs to be about how we do it. We need to do it in a way that is healing and restorative. We need to ensure that we do not see the perpetuation of the same issues that are plaguing us now with this industry.

The Tasmanian community, including those involved in this industry, deserve that outcome. I conclude my remarks on that note and thank members for their patience in staying with me through this contribution. I want to do justice to the fact that this has been an extensive inquiry. It is a large piece of work, and many people out there in the community and in the

industry and in the relevant departments have all given of their time and contributed so generously. I want to ensure that we do justice to that, not only in the report that has been tabled but in our noting of it today.

Mr President, I note the report.

[6.46 p.m.]

Mr VALENTINE (Hobart) - Mr President, this is the longest inquiry I have been involved with, if my memory serves me correctly. It started around 19 September 2019 from Government Administration Committee A resolving to establish the inquiry. It paused for four months due to COVID-19, as the member for Nelson pointed out. We provided an interim report to the House, and examined 11 further witnesses from September to November 2020. We then started to develop the final report and there was a prorogation in March 2021 for the state election. We got underway again in July 2021 and there was another prorogation in April 2022 with former premier Mr Gutwein's resignation. It was re-established in May, and here we are today after about nine months of delays.

It is almost three years - to be three years it would have to be 19 September so it is not quite there. It has been two years and three months, to be precise and indeed, there have been other inquiries that have taken a similar amount of time.

I say that, because the inquiry members were not at all tardy. This was a huge inquiry, in terms of the amount of information that it had to deal with. I thank the Chair for guiding us through and keeping us focused on the various aspects of the inquiry. We had a lot of information to deal with.

I also thank the staff for the way they applied themselves, with Jen Mannering, ably assisted by the then Allison Waddington, now Allison Scott. Thank you to those who provided submissions as well, because an inquiry is nothing without submissions. Some went to very significant lengths to share their stories by arranging visits, describing their concerns with the operation of the industry, or provided submissions that supported the industry in one way or another. Some of those came to us as well. It was good that people were willing to engage with the inquiry.

I thank the Government for providing very significant sets of information on a number of occasions. We delved right into the acts and regulations and strictures that currently exist regarding finfish farming. I thank the industry for their level of engagement with the inquiry as well. You need the fullest information when it comes to an inquiry like this. You cannot deal with a one-sided set of information, and I thank the industry for the level of engagement that they chose to take with the inquiry.

The detail on hearings and visits are all in the report and I will not be going back over that. They were extensive, and we visited a number of sites by kind favour of the companies involved - Huon Aquaculture, Petuna Seafoods and Tassal at that stage - to gain firsthand knowledge of their terrestrial sites and their marine operations. It was quite fascinating to have the opportunity to go into some of those areas. It is not hard to see where a major portion of the investors' dollars are going to with regard to this industry.

There is a very significant degree of interest in the community in this industry, there is no question about that. You would need to have been living under a rock to escape the robust

community debate surrounding the industry that is being expressed weekly, if not daily, in Letters to the Editor in local newspapers and comments on social media - even today, on the news and in the print media. That community debate over an extended period underscored the need for an independent inquiry, to look more deeply into the landscape of matters surrounding the industry, or perhaps the seascape I should say, in an effort to provide some observations based on information received through submissions.

The inquiry provided equal opportunity to the different sides of this debate, and it is important to note that. It was there for anyone to take up, to provide a submission. I acknowledge the part the member for Nelson played in bringing the matter forward to Government Administration Committee A for consideration, and for the committee agreeing to the inquiry, as well as for her ongoing efforts as Chair throughout this inquiry. It has been a power of work for all involved and it has been important work from everybody involved and I thank the member for Nelson.

Two hundred and twenty-five submissions is not an insignificant number. I am not sure where that stands in terms of inquiries all up, but it is up there. They were received from across the spectrum of community and industry, including individuals, community lobby groups, industry participants - including feed suppliers and those involved in scientific monitoring as well as an industry representative body. As a result of those submissions and hearings, the volume of reading for this inquiry was not insignificant, as you might imagine. When analysing the submissions there were many aspects of industry operations that came to the fore, but by far the most common covered optional aspects, such as: the degree of noise and light at night; the problem of debris on beaches and in waterways and the danger it presented to those of the boating and/or sailing fraternity; degradation of beaches and bays; pollution of rivers and streams; problems with regulation; and issues around baseline scientific studies, or the lack thereof, to underpin decisions that were being taken. It points up the power of work required to deliver a sustainable industry, as well, and that is important to understand.

We also received very significant information on regulatory strictures that companies are expected to meet, including their monitoring regimes to measure their environmental impact; a host of information on government leasing and licensing processes and procedures, along with the Marine Farming Planning Review Panel's operations and the legislative framework in which it operates; associated detail on government planning for the industry; and the acts of parliament that govern monitoring, operation and regulation.

I say that in one line - the three major acts that govern monitoring, operation and regulation. There is a heck of a lot of work in that. Again, thank you to the staff within what was DPIPWE at the time, for providing very comprehensive notes on how all of that operated. We went right down into that.

Given the level of information provided, there was a considerable deep diving into the various aspects of legislation, regulation and the like. You could not put it any other way. When you have an inquiry like this, it is important that you get the facts right, because the inquiry depends on it. It was necessary to dot the i's and cross the t's, when it came to that aspect.

Our findings provided a fertile ground for the formulation of questions to various parties, to refine the committee's thinking on issues, and in providing recommendations to Government.

There were so many submissions. It is no wonder we had 194 findings, and from those flowed 68 recommendations to Government.

When reading the report, you will see that the executive summary on page 5 could not have stated it better. It covers all of the important areas. I am not inviting people to only read that summary, because the body of the report provides significant evidence that underpins each of those statements. However, for a quick synopsis of what is a 313-page report, with about 140 pages of appendices, the executive summary is a succinct coverage of the main issues.

You can see why the report is 313 pages long - it considers the salmon industry growth plan; data and information issues; biosecurity; the Marine Farming Planning Act; the EPA and the part it plays; the allocation of leases; environmental licences; fees and levies; environmental harm; penalties; environmental standards; adaptive management; benefits of the industry to local communities; competing claims of the extent of economic value and employment; marine debris; seal management; noise and light; other matters such as antibiotic use; heavy metal contamination; fish escapes; jellyfish blooms. On it goes.

Importantly, this report is a fair synopsis of the concerns and the issues that the people out there have, as well as feedback from the industry. You will find the industry is quoted through this report, including on matters such as biosecurity, which is a very important area for the industry.

They take it very seriously, for the most part. I remember when we visited their sites, off with the boots, on with the gumboots; on with caps and gloves; on with everything else you could imagine to make sure that you did not carry anything through into the processing areas. I have an idea it might have been the member for Murchison who arranged some visits on that occasion. Some of us have had a couple of opportunities to visit those sites.

Ms Palmer - Through you, Mr President, would it be alright, member for Hobart, if we adjourned the debate for purposes of a dinner break?

Mr VALENTINE - I am happy to do that. I move that the debate stand adjourned for the purpose of a dinner break, Mr President.

Debate adjourned.

[6.59 p.m.]

Ms PALMER (Rosevears - Deputy Leader of the Government in the Legislative Council) - Mr President, I move -

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

This is for the purpose of a dinner break.

Motion agreed to.

Sitting suspended from 7.00 p.m. to 8.00 p.m.

MOTION

Consideration and Noting - Government Administration Committee A - Report on Inquiry into Finfish Farming in Tasmania

Resumed from above.

[8.01 p.m.]

Mr VALENTINE (Hobart) - Mr President, I ran through the executive summary. The report we have produced talks about the salmon industry growth plan and we have a significant number of findings. The thing that surprised me was those community and non-industry stakeholders felt there was inadequate opportunity for involvement or input, that is one thing, but the industry itself had quite a mixed response.

It would be fair to say the salmon industry growth plan was a vision of the Government. Not something that was resolved with the industry itself to be able to understand whether they were capable of delivering it or not. The EPA's input was also limited to commenting on environmental standards and they also did not include freshwater or smolt production or well-boats and downstream processing, all of which have a significant part in the whole industry.

The growth plan was not sufficient. It is going to be revised and the important thing is we hope when it is revised the salmon industry growth plan follows a more sustainable path and indeed includes the opportunity for the input of industry, but the community more particularly.

The community have to live with this industry if it is going to exist. They have to be able to be confident their concerns are being heard. We have heard the member for Nelson run through some of those issues being experienced in the public domain. We are not talking about the private domain. By large, it is the Government providing a licence for the use of the public domain and that is where it is important the community has a say.

A lot of people have holiday homes they go to, they want to enjoy their time, they are used to going down, used to going out in their boats, used to fishing, used to sailing, they are used to doing all of those sorts of things over the years, then along comes salmon farming and it alienates them from those spaces they find are very special to them. You cannot blame the community for getting upset at that alienation. I am sure all of us in this House had the occasions where you have gone away on holiday to your special place, you have a great time there; it might be with family, special friends, whatever it is but you enjoy it. Then maybe you have had the experience where you go back and all of a sudden, there is development happening and it is not quite the way it used to be.

Yes, to a degree the salmon industry provides employment. It provides product. It provides state product, in terms of the economics of it. That is all well and good, but if it is doing it at the expense of the community's enjoyment of their space, then you have to think about how you go about managing all of that.

A lot of people are calling for land-based aquaculture. That is all well and good too because I do not think that would be without its problems. You still get noise on land-based industry. It may not carry as much as it does on the water, but you still get it. The difference

with a land-based site, it is subject to the Land Use Planning and Approvals Act and generally, under that, providing it is not considered a major project, you get a merits review; a right of appeal on certain aspects of operations like that.

That is all the community are calling for with regard to this. They want the chance to have a say and a chance to be heard. They do not want their special places to spoil. Yes, they want to see jobs, but they do not want to have to put up with night after night of noise that drills through them and just makes them sick or lights that continually shine in through their windows totally and utterly disturbing them and they cannot get a good night sleep. It is those sorts of things. It is not insurmountable.

There are some that would say salmon farming should never exist and it should go. It can exist, it just has to exist within a regulatory and strategic framework that makes it sustainable and makes it a good neighbour. To do that it might mean it takes itself to waters far offshore but obviously, that is an expensive exercise. So be it, if that is what it takes. If it costs government more to monitor it, then the licence fees need to go up and our recommendations go to those sorts of things we need to review, the licensing arrangement, just like other countries have.

It is important we get it right. It is important that the baseline science is right, that the studies are done, there is a good understanding where salmon farms are sited, and that indeed it can be sustainable, whether that means building nappies to catch the faeces of fish, rather than letting it go straight into the environment. Again, it is part of the business of keeping your environment clean. We have information that came to us with regard to the amount of faeces that actually gets put into the environment and it is absolutely significant when you look at it in totality, of what is actually put into the river from all of the sewerage works that are up and down the Derwent, and that is treated water as far as sewage treatment plants are concerned. Yet, when it comes to aquaculture, high-density fish raising, it is unbelievable the amount of effluent that comes out of that over a period of time. That is some of the concern that has been raised by the community, a lot of the areas that are being chosen to set salmon farms up are in shallower waters and they do not flush properly. As a result of that, it causes local degradation of the environment. You have seen it all.

We have received lots of pictures associated with that sort of degradation. Yes, there might be some other things that are actually contributing to some of the degradation, but the people's experience - the ones who are coming to us through these submissions - telling us what they have noticed over decades, how they have noticed that different places have changed - as they would say, it is the evidence of the eyes. You look and see what it was like a decade ago. You know what sort of farming practices have been around, whether there has been any major change there. Aquaculture comes into town and then next thing you know, you have mats of algae.

We have to do the science. Yes, we have to prove these things, but going forward is what matters. The data that is collected is what matters. The data has to be comparable. We had a recommendation - recommendation (8) says:

Expand the scope of the data in the online portal and ensure it is presented in a format that connects directly to regulatory requirements and is comparable over time and between industry stakeholders, including references to when and by whom it was collected.

People might say that is onerous, but if you cannot compare your data, you simply will not be able to make findings from it. It is going to be too confused. You will not get definite findings out of data that is not comparable.

I put it to the Government that that is what they need to do, and the community will thank them for that. It needs to be available to the community as well, because on our recommendation (9), we say:

Legislate/regulate that fin fish farming operators produce and make publicly available Annual Environmental Reports.

That would include the data that is collected as well.

I encourage the Government. I notice in their response to us, and I thank them for that, they have significant numbers of 'supported', but the 'support in principle' is the one that seems to have the most put against it. There were 21 supported, with a note of 'already implemented', 'has commenced' or 'considered through the development of the 10-year plan'. There were 43 recommendations supported in principle which appreciates the premise of the recommendation but:

Further policy analysis or consideration is required to fully understand the nature, the implications, complementary or alternative information and the opportunities arising ...

There were two recommendations supported in part because they believed there was an alternative approach available and there were two that were not supported. So, 64 of them either supported, or supported in principle.

The Government is listening, but it is what they do with what they hear that matters. They are there for the community, as we all are here for the community. The community put us here. The community are the ones who look to us to consider their rights, to consider the impact that anything Government does is properly managed. I urge the Government when they are reviewing these recommendations again and I am sure they will - if they do not think they will I urge them to look at those supporting principles and ask the question, what is the sticking point? I hope that they might even come back and ask for a little more information from us if they are uncertain. They would state that they are not entirely clear on what some of the findings mean and what some of the recommendations are alluding to.

There is one particular act that they say, well this applies to all marine farming, not just salmon farming. That is a fair comment to make but I suggest that the same strictures would apply to whichever type of farming that is happening in the public domain, out there in our bays and estuaries.

Regardless of the type of aquaculture it is important that a comprehensive marine spatial planning process takes place, absolutely. I urge the Government to consider these recommendations and to consider them very carefully, especially the ones where they say 'support in principle' because they give quite a number of reasons as to why they cannot fully support them. It is easy to try to find a reason to be able to obfuscate and not commit fully to something. Inshore finfish farming, if the Government was to turn around tomorrow and say, 'we are going to - there is a definite date where we will not be allowing inshore fish farming to

occur from that particular date' - and I do not mean a date 50 years hence - the community would loudly applaud them.

That is what I am hearing through these submissions. That is what we heard through the various hearings we had. It is obvious that that is a major concern. The regulations are a concern. The way it all operates. Ministerial power, all of those sorts of things they are concerns, and they want more arms-length and they want more power for the Marine Farming Planning Review Panel to be able to recommend refusal to the minister and not have to keep bringing it back until they find that they can approve it. They want that panel to have some power, and for the minister not to be able to override the panel. The panel is the one that can drill down and look at the science and decide whether or not it is reasonable for certain activities to take place in certain places.

I will finish my offering there because I have covered most of the main areas of concern as I heard it from the duration of the inquiry. I hope the Government, when it reviews the legislation, takes a view that the community matters and is not looked upon as a hinderance to them. If the industry is to survive, it will need to live with that community and to find areas of compromise that very heavily reduce the impact that is out there at the moment. The Government says in its response to us that they accept it with goodwill:

Another 43 recommendations are 'supported in principle'. This is in recognition that the Government, on initial analysis, appreciates the premise of the recommendation. However, further policy analysis or consideration is required to fully understand the nature, implications, complementary or alternative information and the opportunities arising before settling on a definitive response. The Government assures Legislative Council Inquiry members, the public and industry that it however does so with goodwill, consistent with the intent of the recommendations.

That is something to hold on to. I urge the Government to think very carefully about those supporting principles; indeed to put their effort where their mouth is in that regard, if I can put it that way. Hopefully, as a result of that, we will have a much more content community and an industry that appreciates the need to live as a good neighbour to those that are close by; hopefully not by inland waters. I would expect at the end of the day that everyone benefits from that aspect, a government that cares. I note the report.

[8.24 p.m.]

Mr GAFFNEY (Mersey) - Mr President, I rise today in response to the tabling of the report of the subcommittee into finfish farming in Tasmania. I congratulate the Chair, the member for Nelson; and the Deputy Chair, the member for Hobart, for their attention to detail, commitment to the process and for their efforts in contributing to and producing the resultant final report. I appreciate the very thorough and detailed speeches from both the Chair and Deputy Chair. I am not going to restate that which we have already heard.

As has been stated, it has been a long journey. The inquiry into finfish farming in Tasmania commenced with the Legislative Council Sessional Committee Government Administration A, resolving to form a subcommittee to initiate the inquiry in September 2019. A long journey but a very important one, due to interruptions caused by the pandemic, parliament being prorogued and the need for a detailed investigation of the terms of reference. This committee has undertaken one of the longest inquiries that I can recall in my time in the

Legislative Council, with 225 submissions, six sessions of public hearings, an interim report and the committee members travelled many miles to visit fish farms, fish operations and community groups.

I have responded to many emails and learnt a great deal from the numerous conversations I have had with passionate and positive individuals from within the industry, the EPA, the Government, the scientific fraternity and especially the wider community.

It would be remiss of me not to mention the hard work, coordination and administration of the inquiry performed by the dedicated committee staff, specifically committee secretaries Jenny Mannerling and Allison Scott.

The feedback I received from individuals and the industry, Government and community groups has been very constructive and largely supportive of the report. There was some anxiety and annoyance from some due to the delays in tabling the report. Only having three of the original five members complete the bulk of the work, it was an inquiry that was not going to be rushed, especially as all members had other committee obligations and legislative responsibilities over that time period. It is not excuses, Mr President, just a statement of fact and a reality check of the importance of inquiry work.

The report, whilst receiving a diverse range of opinions, seemed to provide an objective balance of perspectives and as we heard from previous speakers, offered recommendations to address many of the issues and concerns raised throughout the journey.

It must be realised that there are a number of Tasmanians who are quite nervous about the future of the finfish industry; Tasmanians who are supportive of the industry and those Tasmanians who are not. I have publicly stated I am in support of a vibrant, sustainable, environmentally sound finfish industry, and hopefully the recommendations in the report will allow the Government, industry and stakeholders a productive and responsible way forward.

Finfish expansion is, however, an issue on the north-west coast, Mr President. I have spoken before in this place about the concerns. Some of those concerns are: the impact on the safety and environmental harmony of the Bass Strait waters and creatures such as whales, dolphins, tuna, penguins, commercial sea fish and migratory birds; the likely changes to the sea environment as experienced by the surfing community who are passionate about the preservation of the waters around the north-west coast. Many of us remember how things were in the old days of the heavy polluting industry along the now largely recovered waters off Sulphur Creek. People on the north-west coast can recall the strategy of extending the pipeline out further into the waters, hoping that the waste product would just dissipate. That was not the case; it just spread the environmental disaster further down the coast.

There is a concern that future generations have the right to inherit an ocean and an earth that is clean and not abused by an industry that is, by and large, now not even owned by Tasmanians. There is legitimate concern that the waste product from extensive finfish farms will have detrimental impacts on our Bass Strait waters and the coastline. There is concern about the cruelty to marine animals, like seals and dolphins, and even the health of the salmon themselves, and the possibility of disastrous environmental and divided social community impacts, as experienced due to neighbouring fish farms in the Channel, the Huon and the Tasman Peninsula for the past 20 years. There is likelihood of a degraded marine environment,

fish pen debris and the negative impact of 24/7 industrial operations on the amenity of local communities through visual light and noise pollution and increased land and sea traffic.

Unlike the European experience, the industry pays a pittance to use the waters that are public property of all Tasmanians and with the recent ownership transference arrangements, these concerns are even further intensified. I hate to use an analogy, Mr President, but our Government is now playing with the big fish in unchartered legal waters.

That community concern has largely been ignored by finfish companies, the Environment Protection Authority (EPA) and the Government alike. Scientists have emphasised that Bass Strait does not flow or wash out. Is like the water in a bathtub where the excrement and the impacts of fish farms will not disperse but will impact forever on the sea beds, the coastlines and the pristine environment we need to protect and save for future generations.

We already know from the pipeline extension strategy, that just by moving the problem further out into the Strait, it does not solve the issue. Indeed, it might hide it for a while but eventually, it comes back to bite the environment with even more catastrophic impacts. The nitrogen levels, the phosphorous levels that could impact in the Bass Strait waters on some of our key breeding grounds. We have actually given a licence for them to sell the product and scientifically investigate that over so many years. That is a real concern.

Many in the north-west coast want Bass Strait as a place that is protected and not sacrificed to what they view as a greedy industry and a Government more concerned with financial returns and the economy, more so than environmental amenity.

Since the rally held in Burnie, I have attended another meeting in Port Sorell in July, and now the inquiry report has been tabled, I will be able to speak at a public meeting in East Devonport on 3 September.

In closing, I express my appreciation to all who have provided submissions, and/or gave evidence. I am grateful for the opportunity of being part of this inquiry, and production of the report, and I have learnt many things.

[8.31 p.m.]

Ms PALMER (Rosevears - Minister for Primary Industries and Water) - The Tasmanian Liberal Government recognises the importance of the salmon industry to this state, to its economy, people and to our brand.

The industry is undoubtedly one of Tasmania's great success stories and it is one we can all be proud of. It is in everyone's best interest that this important industry, Australia's largest seafood industry sector, is sustainable, is world-leading and has the support of the Tasmanian community.

This Government is committed to delivering public policy that will enable a modern aquaculture industry in Tasmania. One that fosters world-leading and sustainable businesses, underpinned by robust, independent environmental regulation and contemporary standards, with appropriate safeguards of monitoring, compliance and enforcement.

We recognise and acknowledge the considerable time and effort of the Legislative Council Government Administration Committee A in conducting this inquiry and the many

community and industry submissions that led to the release of the final report and recommendations in May 2022.

The Government has carefully scrutinised the committee's 68 recommendations and has responded to each of these in its formal response, which was tabled here on 16 August.

Prior to and following the establishment of the inquiry in 2019, this Government continued to deliver on the many actions set out in its 2017 Sustainable Industry Growth Plan for the Salmon Industry, leading to improvements in transparency, work to develop aquaculture standards, and the commissioning of independent research into spatial planning.

We transferred responsibility for the environmental regulation of the industry to the independent EPA, including the requirement for new environmental licences along with environmental monitoring.

We brought greater transparency, through publishing environmental fish health and other industry data on the salmon portal, as well as benchmarking the Tasmanian industry through the Tasmanian Salmon Industry Environmental Scorecard.

We have ensured all environmental licences and marine farming licences are now also accessible from Land Information System Tasmania Listmap for any member of the public to access. We invested with industry into science and research and development through the world-class Tasmanian Institute for Marine and Antarctic Studies, as well as the leading aquatic animal health and vaccine centre in Launceston.

We have commenced consultation on three proposed standards, that build on existing regulatory requirements for our sustainable industry. The proposed standards are:

- (1) Biosecurity Regulations to enhance finfish farming biosecurity management.
- (2) Environmental Standard to improve environmental regulation and ensure a contemporary monitoring and environmental management framework.
- (3) Marine Farming Operations to ensure statewide consistency through standardised marine farming management controls across all aquaculture sectors.

These standards aim to provide a contemporary, best practice framework that ensures consistency and streamlining of regulation across all sectors, while also building on existing voluntary measures undertaken by the industry. We are progressing a review of salmon industry fees and charges which is being developed by the Department of Natural Resources and Environment Tasmania in consultation with the Department of Treasury and Finance. Importantly, we also announce the development of a consultative process that would involve all stakeholders in the development of a new future plan for salmon in Tasmania.

The report by the Legislative Council Administration Committee A forms a significant input to the 10-year plan and in recognition of this, in Government's response, the consultation process on the discussion paper towards a 10-year plan has been extended to 31 August.

The actions I have described, along with many others, align closely with the inquiry recommendations. Indeed, 21 of the inquiry's 68 recommendations have either already been

implemented by the Government, have commenced, or will be considered through the development of Government's 10-year plan. Of the remaining 47 recommendations made by the committee, this Government supports 43 in principle, two in part and does not support two.

Following consideration of the inquiry report, and consistent with our principle of world's best practice through continuous improvement, the Government intends to propose a time line for introducing six new initiatives in the new 10-year salmon plan, a draft of which is being presented for community consultation later in 2022. These are:

- (1) To expand the information available on the Tasmanian Salmon Farming Data website, the Salmon Portal and other transparency measures.
- (2) To conduct a review of the Marine Farming Planning Act 1995, with the scope and terms of reference to take into account the relevant recommendations of the inquiry.
- (3) To phase flow-through systems for all freshwater salmonid fish farms over a certain size.
- (4) To develop two new additional aquaculture standards. The first is a new freshwater fish farm standard that will define performance measures for all salmonid fish farms. The second is a new wildlife interaction standard to replace and modernise the current Seal Management Framework.
- (5) To review penalties and compliance frameworks that apply to finfish farming. Such a review will be coordinated with implementation of other relevant initiatives and involve public consultation.
- (6) To update the marine debris zero tolerance policy. Significant improvements have been made by the salmon industry in tracking, monitoring and cleaning up their equipment and in complementary government processes since zero tolerance was first adopted in 2017.

With five years now past, it is timely to review and update that policy. In doing so, the Government notes that all forms of marine aquaculture and other water users can contribute to marine debris and litter.

I have tried very hard to address some of the questions that have been raised by the contributions of other members and I thank them very much for their contributions. These are not going to be in order - I apologise.

The member for Nelson identified under additional matters in Terms of Reference (3) that marine debris is a major concern and issue with zero tolerance. A zero tolerance policy approach to marine farming debris is now well entrenched and the Government, industry, and Tasmanian community are all contributing to a cleaner marine environment. There are additional compliance officers, license conditions specific to marine farming equipment, online reporting tools for the public to use and data is published on the Salmon Portal website. Compliance officers also have the power to issue infringement notices and do so. In addition, a marine farming equipment identification register is now in place for each finfish company to ensure ownership of all floating marine farming equipment can be determined.

The companies have responded too, taking measures to prevent marine debris at the source using distinctive gear, marking and colour coding of equipment for identification, installing tracking devices on significant marine farming equipment, developing debris management partnerships with community groups, environment groups and social enterprises and establishing an app and hotline for reporting marine debris.

I recently met with interest groups and was encouraged to hear from the Tasmanian Alliance for Marine Protection (TAMP) that these measures have made a considerable difference and there has been a marked reduction in observed floating marine farming debris since these measures have been implemented. Again, I note that five years has elapsed since the policy was introduced and the Government has made a commitment to update this policy in its response.

The member for Nelson also raised biosecurity. The Government is committed to implementing a new salmonid industry biosecurity program that is regulated and enforced under the Biosecurity Act 2019. The biosecurity regulations are due to be implemented by the end of 2022 and regulations will begin the implementation process of the biosecurity program. Complete implementation of the program will be ongoing into 2023 as the Government works with industry to finalise and approve site-specific and zone-specific biosecurity management plans for the purposes of the program. I also note that earlier this year, the department released a draft of the biosecurity program and regulations for public comment.

The member for Nelson also raised the review of the Marine Farming Planning Act. Through the development of the 10-year salmon plan, the Government intends to develop a timetable to conduct a review of the Marine Farming Planning Act 1995 that considers the scope and the terms of reference for the review, taking into account the relevant recommendations made by this inquiry and other relevant matters. It will consider the time frames, capacity and capability of NRE Tasmania to first deliver on the existing review underway into the Living Marine Resources Management Act 1995 and consequential white paper before making substantial progress on a review of the Marine Farming Planning Act.

It is noted that the act applies to all species including finfish, oysters, shellfish and seaweed and, accordingly, it is prudent to ensure that any proposed changes are well considered.

The member for Nelson also had some comments about clarification of the environmental standard. Feedback has been sought on a position paper outlining proposed focus areas and content to be included in an environmental standard for marine finfish farming in Tasmania. The consultation period for feedback on the position paper closed on 20 June this year. The environmental standard will build on existing requirements to ensure a contemporary monitoring and environmental management framework that is clear and robust, and fosters environmentally sustainable finfish farming practices.

The Tasmanian Government is amending the Environmental Management and Pollution Control Act 1994 (EMPCA) to enable the making of environmental standards. A public consultation process has been undertaken on the EMPCA amendment bill 2022 which aims to clarify and strengthen the independence of the EPA as well as enable the making of environmental standards. The draft bill requires the minister to undertake six weeks of consultation on draft environmental standards before tabling them in parliament as a disallowable instrument.

In line with the EMPCA amendment bill, it is proposed that a detailed draft environmental standard for marine finfish farming will be released for statutory consultation following the passing of the bill. Importantly, we have also sought to have the draft standard internationally peer-reviewed and feedback received during this process will be considered prior to the standard being finalised. The statutory consultation process for the draft environmental standard is expected later this year, 2022.

Regarding the issue of noise, the EPA is currently in the process of developing a noise management framework for marine finfish farms. Implementation of this framework will provide enhanced clarity of the expectations regarding noise emission from marine farming activities and facilitate stronger response capabilities. In the longer term, the noise management framework will be incorporated into the salmon environmental standard, which will be released for public consultation later this year. Complaints in relation to noise or light from finfish farming operations can be made to the EPA complaints hotline.

The Government is committed to amending the Environmental Management and Pollution Control Act 1994 to ensure that it is contemporary and fit for purpose for Tasmania. The Government has prepared amendments to the Environmental Management and Pollution Control Act 1994 in support of its decision to separate the EPA from the Department of Natural Resources and Environment Tasmania. The amendments are contained in the draft Environmental Management and Pollution Control Amendment Bill 2022, which was released for consultation on Saturday 30 April. Public comment closed on 3 June.

These changes cover four areas. First, strengthening the independence of the Environment Protection Authority. Secondly, expanding the powers of the Director of the EPA to make monitoring information available to the public. Thirdly, establishing processes for making environmental standards to manage activities that may affect the state's natural environment. Fourth, establishing processes for making technical standards to help implement environmental standards, State Policies, environment protection policies or national environmental protection measures. The EPA has already been created as an independent state authority under the State Service Act. This amendment is a schedule 1 of the act, and was done by order.

The member for Nelson also identified that evidence presented to the inquiry suggests an integrated approach to assessment of marine farming does not exist. This is not the case, and it is misleading. The cumulative effects of any development, whether it be salmon, seaweed or shellfish must be considered in any planning process. It is worthwhile recognising the purpose of the Marine Farming Planning Act 1995, which is to achieve well-planned, sustainable development of marine farming activities, having regard to the need to integrate marine farming activities with other marine users; minimise any adverse impact of marine farming activities; set aside areas for activities other than for marine farming activities; and take into account land uses and take account of the community's right to have an interest in those activities. Further, it is worth noting that the Marine Farming Planning Review Panel in its report on each of the Storm Bay planning processes explicitly considered potential cumulative effects of the proposals.

The member for Nelson asked whether the Government thinks the steps it is taking will resolve the community concerns and distress regarding the salmon industry. The Government is currently seeking feedback on a discussion paper to inform the development of its 10-year plan, and absolutely wants feedback from the community on steps that will support the industry

to continue to be a successful Tasmanian industry into the future, and to resolve many of the concerns that have been raised with the inquiry.

It is important to acknowledge that any industry, anywhere in Tasmania or elsewhere, will be subject to the planning and regulatory considerations that apply at the time the activity is approved. It will apply in the context of the technology and scientific knowledge available at that time and it will provide a level of certainty about the operating environment for that activity, so that business may invest and succeed.

The member for Nelson made several references to 'a clean state' and how the industry will be developed if started today. Developing the industry today, with today's technology and knowledge of the opportunity and potential the industry provides for Tasmania, may be helpful in recognising current best practice and is presently the current benchmark for legacy activities. However, it is not realistic to think that any government would extinguish existing rights, whether they relate to aquaculture or land-based activities.

[8.50 p.m.]

Ms FORREST (Murchison) - Mr President, I intend to make a relatively brief contribution on this report, bearing in mind a lot of what has been said is relevant and does not need to be repeated.

I acknowledge the work of the committee under the leadership of the Chair, the member for Nelson. It is a big body of work, not an easy area where you get competing views. So I congratulate the committee on completing that work.

I was on the committee for quite a while and heard a lot of the evidence and there were a lot of conflicting views on various aspects of this industry, that is important to the state.

I was interested in waiting until after the minister had spoken because I acknowledge the work that has been done to try to address some of these matters. It always begs the question of whether the level of the work being done would have been as great if it had not been for the work of the committee. I would say, it would not have been. That is my big call for the night, that it would not have been as well informed perhaps and actually fully considered the matters that were raised.

I do not wish to repeat a lot of what has already been said. There absolutely is a real need for robust processes for the assessment of the development of any industry in our state. We have seen in federal parliament recently, where the State of the Environment Report that was sat on by the previous government and then finally released by the new government, shows the state of our environment is not good and is getting worse. That is a horrifying thought for all Australians and that includes Tasmanians.

The current minister for the Environment, Ms Plibersek, has made it clear that the EPBC Act for example, is no longer fit for purpose. So, there is a lot of work to be done federally by states, in terms of our environmental legislation. This has been on the table for a very long time, with very little progress.

The work of this committee will feed into that process well and I hope that people feel their voices have been heard through the committee process, but also through the many consultation processes the minister outlined in her contribution.

It is an absolute fact to say there are some people living in close proximity to fish farms who have been very negatively impacted. The issue about noise and light, we know there is going to be a new noise management standard and framework established. What neighbours were being told was if they were having an issue with noise, report it to the company. The company will say, it is not that bad and they will basically just shunt it around with no recourse and no outcome.

They could not complain to the EPA - well they could but it did not get them anywhere. I note the work that the Government is doing around this because it is a very real issue and it does cause significant negative health impacts for those who are affected by it.

We balance that against the need for protein to feed the people of the world. We know that the conversion rate for salmon is much higher than it is for the amount of food that cattle need to eat to produce the same level of protein. It is an efficient source of protein production for food, but you cannot do that at a cost to the environment. There has to be a balance in all of this.

That brings me back to the need for robust, rigorous, open and transparent and accountable measures to ensure it is done in a way that does not negatively impact the environment but does produce the product that we need.

The minister also said that there is a review going on of the fees and charges for the aquaculture sector. It is high time for that. In other countries around the world they have been paying significantly more. It is a privilege to use our water. It is a privilege to use our resources and potentially wind farms should pay a royalty on the wind they use. It is a resource of a state. There is not much risk of damaging the wind by putting up a wind turbine but there is definitely a risk of damage to our waterways and our seas where you are putting a fish farm in, where the densities can be quite high.

I represent an area of this state that has some of the most disgraceful outcomes in this area. Macquarie Harbour was absolutely trashed. It was trashed by salmon industries who flouted the rules and basically ignored the EPA. Overstocked, did not remove stock when they were basically instructed to in a timely manner and one of the problems was - and this is still the case and I am happy to be corrected on this, and this is when I on the committee, this is what we heard - that there was no mass mortality plan.

With climate change a real thing in case you have not noticed what is going on around the place, rising sea levels, the risk of mortality in these fish farms grows every minute. There is no mass mortality plan so what do we do? There are millions of fish dead. This is what was happening in Macquarie Harbour and nowhere to put them. If you had to destock quickly because the dissolved oxygen has dropped and the temperatures have gone up or a combination of all of these things, they had nowhere to ship them to. It was an absolute disaster and it takes a very long time to recover.

I have said this in this place before and I will say it again, that when I had old-timers - I call them old-timers in my electorate down the west coast who are salt of the earth old-timers who you would generally consider to be quite conservative, not really environmentally aware or active if you like - tell me that the harbour was sick and that it is the fish farms that are killing it and we did not act as a collective, then we have done the Strahan

community, the west coast community and our environment a major disservice. You cannot overlook this.

The member for Mersey talked about the concerns on the north-west coast and the water movements around the north-west coast. Not only is that an issue, there are also significant wild fisheries in that area and wild fish nurseries. The people who have used and rely on the wild fishery for food also have very genuine concerns about that and they must be listened to.

The map that was produced in the first salmon plan was a red line around the state that carved out areas that were existing leases or potential leases that had already been notionally approved. There was no science and I am sure the member for Nelson can verify this, there was no science around it. It was this, 'oh well there is something going on there, there is a fish farm there', like the rest of it red. We have to do better than that.

There are places around and in Tasmania where salmon farming is not a suitable industry to place. There are especially sections on the north-west coast where that is absolutely the case and there are other areas that may be possible. I have no faith in the process at the moment in assessing that, neither do many of the people I represent. What we need is a robust process to give me confidence because if I do not have confidence, I cannot instil confidence in the people I represent.

To talk about jobs, jobs, jobs as a reason for it has no credibility whatsoever. In fact, when Tassal was sent over to King Island to propose salmon farms off the coast of King Island that would have been right off the coast of the Lavinia State Reserve, a major surf beach and a beautiful pristine beach, they were told by the Government to spruik jobs, jobs, jobs. I said to them, 'If you had talked to the local member she would have told you that is a complete nonsense.' Everyone on King Island, except for about a dozen people, are over-employed. They do not need more jobs, they need housing; they need other services; they need infrastructure. They do not need jobs, jobs, jobs. Most of the jobs would not have benefited the island.

Let us think more about what we are doing here as a state and it is only when you get robust frameworks we can do that. There are changes needed to a whole range of regulatory matters and the minister outlined a number of the areas being looked at and I commend her for leading that. It does need to be robust.

We talk about having a world-leading sustainable industry, we do need to know what that actually looks like. I understand some of the other countries like Canada and others are pulling their farms away from the so-called inshore fishery areas to protect their environments. Let us not be repeating the mistakes of the past here or other examples around the world. Let us try to understand what world-leading and sustainable actually are.

Salmon farming and aquaculture generally has an important place to play in Tasmania, in the economy and producing protein and food, but it cannot be done at any cost.

The issues of marine debris, which the minister and others spoke about, yes, it has improved, but it only takes one big black pipe in the water for a recreational boat to hit and it is not a good story. In the committee, we heard some very serious near misses and they cannot be overlooked.

If anyone wants to talk to Craig Garland about the management of seals, he will tell you a bit. He will probably put a few other words in between when he tells you about it. The way that was being dealt with and the threat posed to the wild fishery where he fishes in the north-west actually caused him some serious mental health issues. That is not okay. Absolutely not okay. To the point that he almost did something illegal, well he did sort of do something illegal but it could have been a whole lot worse if he had actually done what he wanted to do to the person with the truck.

Mr Gaffney - Just a little illegal.

Ms FORREST - Well, it was a little bit illegal. Yes. It is like being a little bit pregnant. People should not be pushed to that point when they have a very valid complaint and a very valid issue. The member for Nelson talked about - or it may have been one of the other members talked about the use of explosives and we have seen just recently in the media about the number of seals that are actually killed.

It also worries me not just about the seals that might be harmed in that, but what about all the other marine life in the area? What do these underwater explosions do to the other marine life? Do we even know? These are the things that need to be properly understood in that review of the wildlife management processes on management of seals and other marine creatures.

That is all I wanted to say, but I know there is obviously a lot more work to be done. There will be a lot more bills and other things that come before this place that will give us an opportunity to comment. I will be encouraging the people in my electorate to participate rigorously and with their own emotion, as well as their own facts into this process. We need to let people's voices be heard and if they are not heard or do not feel they are being heard, then it will be a failure. It will not work. We need to have science backing the decisions that are made, not making it up as we go, which to me it looked a bit like that over the last number of years.

I note the report and commend the work of the committee.

[9.04 p.m.]

Ms WEBB (Nelson) - Mr President, thank you to members who have made contributions and particularly to my fellow subcommittee members for the contributions they have made. We are tying off the bow at the end of a process here, the three of us, and I appreciate your thoughtful approach and the contributions we produced as a team over that long, extended period of time, something that is valuable. It has fed clearly through into some thinking and some consideration from Government already. As the member for Murchison highlighted you know, there were some clear connections through from things that were coming up and being addressed and considered in the inquiry, into activity that was being undertaken with planning to change some regulatory arrangements from within Government and in the department. That is very pleasing.

Thank you to the member for Murchison for that contribution too. It was very helpful to have your involvement earlier on in the process and you were there for the period when we were taking most of the evidence and you had a lot of insight into that, what we heard, and what we saw during that process too. It is much appreciated.

I note, and it is a telling comment from you, that under the current arrangement as it is, putting aside the Government's intention to review that Marine Farming Planning Act, the current process we have under that act is there for approving potential new areas for finfish farms. You stated quite clearly you do not have faith in that process. If we were to see things coming through under that process before a review was undertaken and updates and improvements potentially were made, that would be concerning. I also raised this in my contribution about that potential. I say it more plainly now. There is potentially a gap.

We have the moratorium, that clause in place, while the plan is being developed and it is being extended through to next year, when the plan is finalised. There is an interesting question then. We will have a plan. It is likely to point to opportunities to expand this industry and yet we will not yet have done the piece of work to review the Marine Farming Planning Act, because that is yet to come, once some other legislative reforms are done. That is down the track.

Is there a potential - and obviously, this is rhetorical, because the minister will not have a chance to address this directly here, but we will follow it up.

Is there a potential then, that we will see proposals put forward for new finfish farming areas to be dealt with under the current arrangements, under the current act, once that pause, that moratorium is lifted? If so, I would add my voice to the member for Murchison to say, I do not have faith in that process. Clearly through this inquiry process and the report, we have demonstrated there are considerable questions on the process that need to be answered. That is of concern and I hope there is not some eagerness to push things forward through before that act is reviewed.

Returning to a couple of other matters I will touch on, in relation to the minister's contribution, which I thank her for and for the Government's response across all those different areas. Clearly, consideration has been made of the report and recommendations and that is pleasing.

I did pick up on a couple of things. You mention this industry being an important part of our brand in this state and this is something I did not mention in my contribution, but picking up on that comment. It is interesting to think about where this sits in terms of our brand. We were very interested as an inquiry to look into that in more detail. It was difficult to do so because we actually could not or were not able to get somebody to come in and talk to us from Brand Tasmania or from the tourism sector. We would have liked to have heard from them.

In the Government's response, I noted you have mentioned at some point, in relation to the planned development of the new plan, there is going to be consultation with the tourism industry in the state. That is fascinating. I would love to see that documented somewhere.

It is an interesting question about how these industries sit alongside each other. The tourism industry is a big employer in this state. It is a big valuable industry to us and we did hear quite clearly, through some elements of evidence to this inquiry, there is some perceived and some experienced negative consequences to tourism, in the elements of the industry as it currently stands.

It is a definite question for contemplation when we are thinking about the future of this industry and where it sits - how it does align with our tourism and therefore also our brand overall.

Let me just check the things I wanted to make mention of. I do not need to dwell on these things. I will mention two more.

I find it interesting to have the Government lean on the idea that we approved things back in time, under what we knew, the science we had, the technology available then. We approved it. We gave these 30-year leases; it is actually a 45-year lease because it has an automatic 15-year rollover. Gosh and golly, we gave certainty to business so we cannot stop it now. We could not possibly reconsider it, apparently. I find that difficult. I find it interesting that the Government states it would not extinguish business rights. Of course, it is awkward - sovereign risk is an awkward thing to deal with. However, how astonishing that we would have industry in this state that could grow and drive its own direction with that growth - which, essentially, is what this industry has done over quite some time - and we as a state and the Government, as the people's representatives, could not have a process by which they might, if required, be able to say the industry in this particular form is not appropriate anymore; we are going to need to change and adapt and here is the plan by which we do it.

How astonishing if our Government could not take such an action on our behalf. That is quite frightening, to be honest. We should be able to and be actively considering, across time, how industries develop and grow and to what extent and where they are appropriate to exist in our community and in our state.

Ms Rattray - Through you Mr President, it happened with the forest industry.

Ms WEBB - Every industry has to change and grow over time. Change and development is a given. Some industries disappear because they are superseded by technology. Some disappear because they no longer have a product to offer. Some disappear because they lose their social licence. Some have to adapt and change. I would have thought that governments have to put the interest of their people and their communities, including their natural environments, first and foremost. It is astonishing that we would lift our hands away and say, 'we cannot do anything, because gosh, golly we gave them certainty.' That is disturbing.

The final thing I note is what I did not hear from the Government's contribution today, or in their response that was provided last week - and it is disappointing, to some extent. I did not hear the Government state, in any way, their recognition of the experience of Tasmanians who have undergone a negative impact from this industry. It is hard to begin planning to do the right thing if you have not acknowledged that, at times, the wrong thing has been done before. Mistakes have been made, flaws have existed in the system and failures have happened at times. If you cannot admit that and recognise the impact it has had on the people you represent in your community, then it is very difficult to constructively and effectively go forward.

I am disappointed and disturbed that I did not hear that. I also did not hear the Government give clear recognition that they understand that there were flaws and failures and that those are the things we are trying to rectify now with these new, constructive actions going forward. I want to hear that. Again, it is just part of moving ahead constructively together and

bringing people along; understanding the situation we find ourselves in and why it is that we are making change. That was disappointing, Mr President, but I will finish on a positive note.

I reiterate that many of the responses from Government, the indications about things being considered, actions being taken on a range of new regulatory mechanisms, are positive. I am optimistic about them. I will wait to see how they play out, because as I have said, it is not just what we do in this space in relation to this industry in our state from here forward. It is how we do it, and that is going to be very important for us to assess from the Government. Thank you, members, and I appreciate your support for the report.

Report considered and noted.

ADJOURNMENT

[9.14 p.m.]

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

That at its rising the Council does adjourn until 11.00 a.m. on Wednesday 24 August 2022.

Motion agreed to.

Mrs HISCUTT (Montgomery - Leader of the Government in the Legislative Council) - Mr President, I remind honourable members of our briefings tomorrow morning. The first one is the Family Violence Reforms Bill at 9 a.m. in Committee Room 2, followed by a departmental briefing on the draft proclamation for the Nature Conservation Act 2022 that the member for Nelson has put on the Notice Paper for disallowance.

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

That the Council do now adjourn.

Motion agreed to.

The Council adjourned at 9.15 p.m.