

PUBLIC

THE HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY SELECT COMMITTEE ON THE HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY RESTORATION BILL MET IN COMMITTEE ROOM 1, PARLIAMENT HOUSE, HOBART ON FRIDAY, 6 SEPTEMBER 2019

Mr MICHAEL BAILEY, CEO, TCCI WAS CALLED, MADE THE STATUTORY DECLARATION AND WAS EXAMINED.

CHAIR (Ms O'Connor) - Good morning, Michael, and thank you for coming to present before the inquiry. Before you begin giving your evidence I would like to ask whether you received and read the guide sent to you by the committee secretary?

Mr BAILEY - I did.

CHAIR - I need to restate some important aspects of that document. A committee hearing is a proceeding in parliament. This means it receives the protection of parliamentary privilege. This is an important legal protection that allows individuals giving evidence to a parliamentary committee to speak with complete freedom without the fear of being sued or questioned in any court or place out of parliament. It applies to ensure that parliament receives the very best information when conducting its inquiries.

It is important to be aware, Michael, that this protection is not accorded to you if statements that may be defamatory are repeated or referred to by you outside the confines of the parliamentary proceedings. This is a public hearing. It is being broadcast today. Members of the public and journalists may be present. This means your evidence may be reported. It is important that should you wish all or part of your evidence to be heard in private you must make this request and give an explanation prior to giving the relevant evidence.

That's all good with you?

Mr BAILEY - All good.

CHAIR - I might start by offering you the opportunity to make an opening statement about the Tasmanian Chamber of Commerce and Industry's position on the size of the Tasmanian Parliament and the legislation that is before the parliament.

Mr BAILEY - Certainly. The Tasmanian Chamber of Commerce and Industry has been an advocate for the restoration of parliament for some years now. I know it's dead ground, but I'd like to remind everyone that a tripartite agreement was signed in 2010, where all parties also agreed with the notion that restoring the parliament to 35 was a move that would improve democracy and improve governance of our state.

From our point of view, it is somewhat frustrating that we find ourselves presenting once again to a parliamentary inquiry looking at something that has been looked at so many times. It seems the political courage to move on is lacking. To me it is a frustration. It's a frustration too to the businesses of Tasmania. They understand that good governance is key to the good operation of a business, and the same for a parliament.

PUBLIC

I look at other states. I think New South Wales has 93 lower House members; Victoria, 88; South Australia, 47; and Western Australia, 59. I know Queensland is a different model and they have 93. We are lacking the depth in parliament to fully keep our executive honest. We lack the depth in the backbench, we lack the depth in the opposition, which is what was lost in the reduction of parliamentary size - the size of the opposition and also the backbench. I and the businesses of Tasmania believe that we lack the depth to function as we should.

From our perspective, what we saw in 1998 with the change to a smaller parliament was a proliferation of advisors. The state didn't save any money, as was the intention at the time. We also saw a reduction in the process of democracy. We seem to have advisors and, at times, department heads who are acting almost as ministers.

We believe that by restoring parliament, it would give us greater depth to ensure that first, ministers could be kept to account; and second, there would be greater work in communities by the backbenchers ensuring that the community is kept in the loop as to what is going on. We would also argue that there is potential to increase the ministry by one, but that is a different argument. We can talk about it at a different time.

CHAIR - It is in the legislation, so that is provided for.

Mr BAILEY - We certainly think that is wise. We look at the pressure on ministers, the number of portfolios that they need to try to manage. What often happens is the minister is fully reliant on department heads to essentially act as the minister. We see that playing out. We have spoken to ministers in years gone by who would say something and then a department head would say, 'The minister didn't really mean to say that. What he meant to say was ...' or 'I am sure that is not what the minister meant; she would have been saying blah blah blah', which is worrying and, in my opinion, that is not democracy working.

What can a minister be expected to do if they have three or four or five portfolios? It is an impossible workload. We support the addition of another minister, but certainly restoration of the Tasmanian Parliament is key to good governance and better democracy in the state. Again those across the table from me probably also agree with that and your parties agree with that. What we need is the intestinal fortitude to move on it.

CHAIR - Thank you, Michael. Do you think the view that you have just expressed is a view that is broadly shared throughout the business community?

Mr BAILEY - In the business community yes, because the businesses understand governance. Many have boards. Even not-for-profits understand the importance of good governance and why that makes for a better business. For the public at large why we would want to vote for more politicians is a difficult concept to understand; these politicians do not do anything for us, all that ridiculous stuff that we understand the everyday person believes. But those of us who work in industry and business understand the workload that politicians are under; they understand the incredible work that politicians do. Again, to expect 25 Tasmanians to do the job of 93 New South Welshman, or 88 Victorians, or 47 South Australians or 59 West Australians is unfair and ridiculous and does not lead to governance or good government.

CHAIR - We have a submission from the Department of Treasury and Finance which has put an estimate on the cost of restoration at somewhere between \$7 million and \$8 million. What is the TTCI's position on the extra costs associated with restoration?

PUBLIC

Mr BAILEY - In the commercial world people are paid to be board members. That is because we understand the importance of having good directors. We would see that as being a good investment in Tasmania's democracy. I would be interested to see an analysis done in the increase in advisors in 1998 and the impact on the Tasmanian budget at that time. I wonder if there would be much difference if were rationalised with an increase in the lower House.

Regardless of that, what we need is good government and good governance in our state; \$7 million is not much when you are looking at the role that you play in our state. It really is not much for good democracy; it is not much for good representation in local communities. How can a minister with four or five portfolios truly represent their community when, with a stronger backbench, that could be achieved? How can an opposition do its job properly with such low numbers? Again, with a stronger lower House that opposition could be achieved.

I don't think it is a question of money; that is a false argument. The question is: what is the best governance for our state? Businesses understand that. We pay our boards to be board members because we understand that we want the best governance of our operations and the value that gives to our businesses. What I see is the value that this would give to Tasmania and to Tasmanians.

Mrs RYLAH - Michael, I am interested in your comments about good governance. I absolutely support that from a corporate perspective in particular and how it applies to government. You are suggesting that the increase in advisors since 1998 has been because of the reduction in the size of government. What is your view on the likelihood of having a decrease in advisors? That is the flip side of what we are suggesting with an increase of parliament. Or do you think there has been a change in the corporate world where there are a whole lot more consultancies and roles where board members get consultants to do particular specialities? Isn't that a similar case? Part of the argument is: will that pro-rata number of advisors decrease or will it stay the same.

Mr BAILEY - In many ways it is probably not important. What is important is our backbench is able to put questions and pressure at times on the minister based on what they're hearing in the communities, which I think we lack at the moment. You may well be right. You may well be right; there may well not be a drop in the number of advisers. I think there will be but what we will get is a much stronger connection from the electorates to the minister, which at the moment is missed. The ministers are off being ministers and they really as much as they do on a daily basis, they are very hardworking people. They probably aren't able to cover their electorate as well as a backbencher would be able to do.

What also has to be remembered in this is the committee work done by the parliament and how difficult it is to run committees in the current structure of parliament.

CHAIR - It is bordering on dysfunctional.

Mr BAILEY - Understandably because everybody is working incredibly hard. If the people of Tasmania knew how hard you were worked they would be staggered. The time you start in the morning and the time you finish at night, the meeting after meeting, and then expecting to weave these sorts of things that are so important for democracy in our state into that time frame is impossible.

Plus, how can we blood new, talented political minds into this important role by whacking them straight into being a minister. Surely, they need time on the backbench to learn the ropes, to

PUBLIC

learn the system, to learn the committees, to then be the best possible minister for Tasmania so they do have the knowledge, so they don't need the advisers.

I don't want to mention names but we have all seen in years gone by some of the Estimates' presentations with a brand-new minister. One springs to mind who had an adviser on either side and the poor kid, who was a fresh-faced young person, was having to refer every question to an adviser because he had not had the opportunity to learn the ropes, to learn his role.

What else can you do when you have got such a lack of numbers so to me that is the issue. The advisers will decrease in time as people can build skills, as we can have secretaries in place that can support parliamentary secretaries and support that sort of function, and again a better functioning committee system. At the moment I agree, it is not performing the service it should for the Tasmanian people.

Ms DOW - I wanted to ask you from the point of view of the business community and your view on electorate composition with regards to current electoral boundaries but also the proposed increases in the number of members across electorates. Do you have a view on that and what is your position?

Mr BAILEY - The TCCI's view is simply just increase numbers by two to a seven-member electorate. Personally, I was quite interested with Julian Amos's discussion around looking at rejigging electorates and whether having seven members for each electorate is actually that useful, whether they would be tripping over each other or not. I am interested to hear more of what Julian has to say about that redistribution.

Certainly, from the TCCI's point of view, from my board's perspective, simply adding two members to each electorate would be the simplest model and probably the most palatable in the community, the easiest to understand.

CHAIR - Probably the least costly.

Mr BAILEY - I would have thought.

Ms HICKEY - I want to talk about the costly part, the presentation that has been put to us by the Government for the restoration costs includes things like the cost of moving Treasury out of the building, over here, down to somewhere else. That is an extraordinary cost, plus the fit-out of their offices, plus the fit-out backwards.

I don't know that that should be part of the equation. Yes, it has to be done but it is a huge percentage so where it was originally quoted at something like \$3 million it is now being costed out to \$8 million. There are figures in there for fitting out electorate offices of \$53 000. I can assure you my electorate office didn't get anything like \$53 000. Everything was second hand and the rest of it on a shoestring. I think there is an extraordinary exaggeration.

Mr BAILEY - I agree with that.

Ms HICKEY - I would like your opinion. I don't know if you have seen the costing?

Mr BAILEY - I have certainly seen it reported, but I haven't looked in detail at Treasury's -

PUBLIC

Ms HICKEY - I've taken it up to the Treasurer and said, 'this is hysterical nonsense'.

CHAIR - Of course you have.

Mr BAILEY - I was staggered to see the number that was presented. I don't believe Tasmanian politicians are paid anywhere near enough for the work they do.

CHAIR - Hear, hear.

Mr BAILEY - Also I don't believe the addition of a handful of parliamentarians is going to break the Tasmanian budget.

What it will do is improve governance, improve the checks, improve the connection with communities, improve committee work. It is such a small investment in a robust budget in an economy that is going well. It is the perfect time now to move on this. We have a good economy, we have the budget in a good position. It's a small cost, a very small cost.

I would argue the restoration of our parliament is not an increase in parliament; we are simply restoring our parliament to what it should be. So, it is not an increase, it's a restoration. It was a mistake to change parliament in 1998. What we achieved simply was a reduction in democracy. We received a lack of depth in our parliament. We received committee work falling by the wayside because there's just not time. What we got from that bad decision in 1998 isn't what we hoped to achieve. So, we are simply restoring parliament back to what it should be.

Mrs PETRUSMA - Michael, I thought your comments were very interesting in regards to good corporate governance, and even for the not-for-profits, and they too understand the importance of boards.

Getting back to the costs, because we will be seeing Treasury later on today, say if it is the \$7.2 million ongoing, of course not-for-profits are asking for more money for housing and everything else. I suppose it is a two-pronged question. What should the narrative be that should be used against not-for-profits, that \$7.2 million that could go to housing, or the most vulnerable, is still a good allocation of funding. How do we change the narrative of the importance of parliamentarians? I don't like using the term 'politician' because I think it is a demeaning term. It's to try to get the importance of being a parliamentarian out, to the narrative, because you see the things that are written about politicians -

CHAIR - It's almost like a curse word.

Mr BAILEY - And CEOs, so don't worry I'm in the same boat. You are right. The not-for-profits that I speak to, they fully understand good governance. Every not-for-profit in Tasmania is having to modify its business practice. The NDIS, for example, is absolutely driving good business practices, good governance, contemporary business models. They understand they need good governance. I think the narratives are simply around that. This is better governance for the state, better connection for your organisation with your local parliamentarian, and better access to ministers. To me, that's the discussion. The restoration of parliament is all about that.

I don't think that any not-for-profit would see, even if it was a \$7 million expense as being a burden on our budget, when we spend similar amounts of money on AFL, for example, which I also think is a good investment. It's not a lot of money and not-for-profits will understand that. Yes, there will be those in the community who will say, 'Well look, that's how many nurses, that's how

PUBLIC

many teachers?' which they will say about anything, whether it be buying another boat, whether it be an AFL team, whether it be any project. You can always mount that argument.

Government is about a whole range of purposes, a whole range of functions, and a whole range of funding models. Yes, there will always be negativities for anything that you do, and you are well in tune with that. It doesn't matter.

What is important here is again improving our democracy and improving our governance in our state. That's the argument to mount. We will stand behind you with our flag waving, as will many not-for-profits who understand the importance of this move too. Again, in the business sector, and even in the not-for-profits, I can't think of anyone I have spoken to who thinks the restoration of parliament is a bad idea.

Mrs PETRUSMA - We might have to speak off the record about that one.

Mr BAILEY - That's right. I'm sure there will be many who will call me now, but again, I've run many updates to my members about this issue. We have a Friday update that's our most read execution and I've only had positive comments about it, which is unusual because many others they'll be quite happy to let me know if I've said something silly.

I understand the pressure that will be on. I understand it is probably the reason that various governments haven't made this move before because of the perceived pressure of the community. That's not the reason to make this sort of decision.

CHAIR - Do you sense the mood has potentially shifted, given that people have had enough time now to look at the consequences of the 1998 reduction in numbers, and some of those problems associated with that are so bleeding obvious?

My sense is that there is almost a resigned acceptance in the community that this is a step that needs to be taken.

Mr BAILEY - I think people know that it is necessary. I really do. When you have some of our, even someone like Brian Carlton, who is running a radio show in the north of Tasmania that is reasonably conservative, if you have Brian Carlton supporting, you know you have probably got the community on-side. He does, and when you talk to people and explain why restoration is important people understand it. They understand the rationale behind it. In this world, where governance is so important, as I was saying, the NDIS, look at the aged care sector and the business nature of that sector compared to what it was 10 years ago, people understand the importance of good governance and good management.

Ms HICKEY - I have quite a fear that we have had yet another inquiry and everybody, bar one person who is yet to come before this committee, has supported this and they are all experts in governance or in their field. As you have said, this comes down to political courage and there are two major parties that have publicly stated they won't be supporting it. For organisations like yours, how do you deal with that? If this committee finds, hypothetically, that it is necessary to restore the size of the parliament, yet, for pure politics, courage goes out the window, how do you think all of you who have presented, yet again, before another committee, are going to react, because this will be the last lost opportunity?

PUBLIC

Mr BAILEY - I agree. We can only do what we've always done, which is to scream from the sidelines. We can't effect the change. The change has to come from parliament.

Ms HICKEY - Can you not lobby individual politicians? You need to start now.

Mr BAILEY - We will and we do. At any opportunity with any politician of any side that I talk to, I talk of the importance of restoration. I am not sure I have had any politician say it is a bad idea. What I hear is the fear of what the community will say and that is not the right reason to make this sort of decision.

Ms HICKEY - No. Parliamentarians are making decisions about the lives and deaths and livelihoods of the people we represent and we should be making it based on those outcomes rather than on fear.

Mr BAILEY - I think you're right and it is the perfect time to act now. The economy is going well. The budget can afford it. It is not much when you look at the scale of the Tasmanian budget, even if it is \$7 million, which I doubt. It is not much to have the restoration of our democracy.

Ms HICKEY - It would be a much stronger outcome if it was tripartisan.

Mr BAILEY - I agree. The frustration for the business community is that it was achieved in 2010 but, due to politicking, people stepped back from it.

Ms HICKEY - Is an organisation like yours not able to get the three heads of parties together in one room with influential people and bash them into submission?

Mr BAILEY - We can certainly try that.

Mrs RYLAH - We received a late submission from Bruce Neil[TBC]. Bruce puts up the suggestion that, until we reduce the number of sizes of councils in Tasmania, we shouldn't increase the size of parliament. I know you haven't had any time to think about that but it is an interesting concept. Would you be able to make some comment?

Mr BAILEY - Even though the TCCI is very supportive of the rationalisation of councils in Tasmania we do see this as being a separate issue. I don't think one is intrinsically tied to the other. I think the restoration of our parliament is a really pressing issue that sits beside that. The review of local government, I believe, should happen in review of the State Service but not the state parliament. Our view is the restoration of parliament is a separate issue.

Ms DOW - You have been a rather strong advocate for local government amalgamation. You talk about increasing the opportunity for democracy through the restoration of the lower House and have shared your take on council amalgamations. Looking at reducing democracy at a local level, where councils are far closer to the people and perhaps influence change in a more positive way or an easier way than state governments ever can, could you expand on that? There is a difference between the operations of a council and the elected representatives.

Mr BAILEY - Without a doubt. This is clearly off topic but, in the mind of business, it does not seem ideal having a centre like Launceston broken into five councils where planning cannot occur in a way that is sensible for an entire community, having Hobart broken in four or five council areas where, again, overarching planning can't occur. When I have spoken to general managers of

PUBLIC

councils who have said they need to look at certain areas for housing but they can't look outside their municipality, you say, if you could look at the whole municipality, would you choose a different housing policy? They would say, absolutely, we wouldn't build there, we would build over there but we can't because that is not our municipality.

We see the issues of our current system of local government because our local government areas, the ones that manage that housing strategy manage that planning strategy for their regions and you can't carve Tasmania into 29 council areas, all looking inward, and achieve sensible planning and economic outcomes. Our argument is much more around the planning and economy side and building local council areas based on the economic drivers of the community rather than the historic chop up of where things would be, which has led to me living into Trevallyn: I hear the town clock, I walk down the road to your park, I walk to the aquatic centre, I live in West Tamar, I pay nothing towards those at all.

Ms HADDAD - Touching on two of the previous things we have talked about, one is tripartite agreement for an increase in the size of parliament, restoration, and what you were saying about your membership being generally supportive. The community may be feeling, we say community but the community is made up of people -

Mr BAILEY - Of course.

Ms HADDAD - A tripartite agreement would remove the big 'p' politics from this debate because no party would be using it to criticise another one, to put it bluntly.

Mr BAILEY - Yes.

Ms HADDAD - That is one way to remove politics. The way I prefer to remove politics is to have the community come along to want a decision to be made so that it is not the community saying it's not something they want, it's something that is accepted by the community because it has almost come from the grassroots up as a demand of government and of parliament to do better. What strategies would you recommend if we were to try to do it that, perhaps more laborious, way of trying to have a community that is demanding this change?

Mr BAILEY - I think you are getting a community that is engaged in politics demanding the change, so the community is there. The problem is the vast majority of people are not engaged in politics. If I talk to someone walking down the street and ask who the premier of Tasmania is, they probably won't know. It is not important to them. For the community that is engaged in politics, I reckon 98 per cent support restoration.

It is probably a little bit crass but New South Wales was the first state to bring in drink-driving laws. When they touted it to the community, 78 per cent of people were against those laws. The government showed huge courage, they brought in the legislation, six months later it was around about the same that were supportive of the change in laws because they saw the benefit to the community once those laws were brought in. If the government had sat with public opinion it would never have come in, but they were brave and they made a decision that was the right thing for their community. That is where we are. This is much simpler legislation than that.

You have the support of the politically engaged people in Tasmania. Those that aren't are always going to say politicians are lazy, politicians are drinking from the trough, all that sort of

PUBLIC

rubbish, you are never going to change it, just like saying CEOs are dragging money from the workers, all that sort of stuff. You need to be politically courageous.

I do think a tripartite agreement is the way to go because, as you said, no-one can then get political mileage out of this because everybody behind the scenes agrees it is the right thing to do.

CHAIR - That is true. I haven't spoken to a single one of my colleagues about this issue over the years and heard that it's not something that they would like to see happen.

Mr BAILEY - I congratulate the Greens too, Ms O'Connor, on being brave enough to stick with this when others have fallen by the wayside.

CHAIR - Thank you, Mr Bailey. I am interested in your thoughts on the quality of legislation and policy that might be possible if we restore the parliament, have a robust backbench, one more minister. How do you see that playing out in terms of what comes out of parliament?

Mr BAILEY - It's a terrific question. Talking to some of our Legislative Councillors, they lament the days when legislation would pass to them in a way that was robust and not needing to be modified, tweaked and changed. They would argue, because of the lack of committees and the lack of time to spend massaging legislation, that's the case. I think we would see an improvement in legislation. I think we would see an improvement in policies because there would be a greater connection to our communities through our backbenchers working more effectively and the opposition working more effectively.

Fundamentally, I believe that legislation going to the Legislative Council would be much tidier by the time it got there than we are currently seeing because there are more people and more time to spend making sure that it's actually robust before it goes there.

CHAIR - I sometimes wonder if it's not in some ways easier for the government of the day to deal with a smaller parliament because they don't have those noisy backbenchers agitating for a different way of doing things.

Mrs RYLAH - You would be surprised.

CHAIR - I am sure, Mrs Rylah. In fact, across both party rooms it is the backbenchers who are there are agitating.

Can you see that for the government of the day, potentially, it's easier to deal with smaller numbers?

Mr BAILEY - Maybe. I believe in a robust democracy, and robust democracy requires robust debate. As a CEO, it would be lovely to have a board that agrees with everything the CEO says as well - but that's not the board that I want. I want a board that challenges and a board that puts forward different ideas, and a board that wants to drill down into the things I'm thinking about. That builds a better TCCI and a better organisation, and that's what we'll find here.

I want to have good questions from the opposition. I want to have a backbench that is agitating its executive to make sure that they are getting the best outcome. I want a smart parliament in that way. I don't want to have a rubber-stamp parliament that then throws things up to the upper House to try to fix.

PUBLIC

Ms HICKEY - When I don't have my Speaker hat on, I'm basically a backbencher. I am in a very busy electorate and I see an incredible lot of dysfunction and disadvantage, and disconnection to government services. I am constantly, as you can imagine, advocating, sending out letters, et cetera. It's very hard to effect change when the ministers - and this is not a reflection on anyone's talent - are so, so busy. You can't get to them even if you're in the government. You get sent along to some bureaucrats who tell you Adult Education can't be done until 2022. Ludicrous things. Whereas, when I do get face-to-face and I give absolute examples of what I'm witnessing where there is a disconnect between one government service and another, that is having a huge impact on people.

My point of view is, if there were more backbenchers able to be out in the trenches, we would have a better government and a better system, regardless of its colour. I think the backbenchers are the difficult thing.

If I can speak on behalf of Mrs Petrusma, I think you're on six committees, are you?

Mrs PETRUSMA - Nine.

Ms HICKEY - Nine - that's what I'm saying. For this committee to meet about this decision, we could not get dates. We couldn't get backbenchers.

Mr BAILEY - It's so hard. Look at your electorate office and the number of people who come through your office. The times I've been there it's a revolving door of people coming in.

Ms HICKEY - It's getting worse.

Mr BAILEY - It's great. That's democracy in action. That's people coming in to talk to their local member to try to find a solution. Again, if the minister has three, four or five portfolios, they haven't got time to do that. They're going to try, but -

Ms HICKEY - They can't go to the committee meetings. They can't have the people come into their office, or it's being fed through an overworked electorate officer. Having a face-to-face with individuals is really life-changing and could put a different perspective on government policy.

Mr BAILEY - I absolutely agree.

Mrs RYLAH - Michael, on your comment regarding the backbench and the need to challenge policy within government: really, that's not about the backbench per se; it's about the function of committees. Committees are far more important, I think, than what we are seeing. Would you agree with that?

Mr BAILEY - I do, absolutely, committees are critical. I agree that the committee system is not working well at the moment, but there is also a benefit to having a strong and aggressive backbench - which we have and no disrespect to current backbenchers - with those talented and hungry for ministerial roles on the backbench who are keeping the minister in check. They know they have this group of people behind them who can probably do their job as well as they can do it, and it forces a level of performance that you would expect from a state.

PUBLIC

I say that with no disrespect to our current members of parliament at all, that is not my intention, but I think it can be better. The quality of the opposition is equally important as well. What we saw with the reduction of numbers in parliament wasn't simply a reduction in the opposition but a reduction on the backbench.

Mrs RYLAH - I would like to challenge you on that in terms of quality sitting on the backbench.

Mr BAILEY - True, and Mrs Rylah, my apologies, no disrespect was intended at all.

Mrs RYLAH - I actually think it is the disproportionate balance between the size of the Executive and the size of the backbench, so your scale is very much this way instead of this way.

Mr BAILEY - I would agree with that completely.

CHAIR - Or it is balanced nicely.

Mr BAILEY - I completely agree with that. Again, harking back to the size of other parliaments, there are 93 in New South Wales, 88 in Victoria, 47 in South Australia, 59 in Western Australia; I think that scale is so much more sensible. The connection to community is so much more sensible. You are doing the same amount of work: we are a state that has responsibilities and requirements of its parliament; how can we do it with 25? It's insane.

CHAIR - It is very much in the business community's interests for there to be a level of stability about the way parliament works. What is the TCCI's view, or your view, on how restoring the numbers might make for not only a more functional and robust parliament, but potentially a more stable parliament because there is a greater breadth of people, for example, for the premier of the day to choose from, for the ministry? What are your thoughts on that?

Mr BAILEY - It was either Richard Eccleston or Richard Herr who did research into what the last election would have been if we had a 35-strong parliament. I think there was a two-seat majority to the government, so straight away it is a more secure parliament. There have been those who have said that what would happen is that it would give the Greens more power again. My view on that is, it is up to the people of Tasmania who they vote for. It is not up to us to try to manipulate parliament to achieve an outcome. That is not democracy.

Mrs RYLAH - That sounds a lot like a gerrymander.

Mr BAILEY - Doesn't it. My view is, let the people of Tasmania choose. Interestingly, what I would have seen as a very clear win to the Government at the last election would have been a more secure win under a restored parliament.

CHAIR - It's interesting because at the moment we are in a situation where in the electorate of Lyons, for example, for the Government it is all hanging on the health and wellbeing of the newly elected Lyons member, Mr Tucker. Should Mr Tucker change his mind after a little while in the parliament and decide he doesn't want to do it, there is nowhere really for the Government to go once that seat is lost, so it is precarious.

PUBLIC

Mr BAILEY - Or the individual who, at times, may need to leave parliament for a variety of reasons - health reasons, personal reasons or whatever - and feels that they can't, they have to hold on for the good of Tasmania. It's not a good system when you think about it.

Mrs PETRUSMA - Getting back to the business community, we have had a submission by one business person who said that we already have enough members of parliament and if you look at one member of parliament, we are only going to end up with about 6000 constituents each or something versus 44 000 in other states. How do you counteract that argument then?

Mr BAILEY - It is the function of parliaments. To have ministers who are providing a function to the people of Tasmania, you clearly need to have a backbench that is big enough to keep them in check, as with an opposition, et cetera. To me, it is the same old discussion that we face in Tasmania of our size. We still need to function. If we are going to have a parliament in Tasmania, which I think everyone agrees we need, then we need to have a parliament that can perform the way we need it to perform. Yes, there might be smaller numbers in the electorates that need to achieve for a quota but the function and business of parliament does not change. Whether it is here, New South Wales or Victoria, I mean it is essentially the same function, essentially the same ministers.

To me, it comes down to that question: do we want to have a parliament that can perform or not? Yes, we do. Yes, we are smaller so if you look at the quota required here compared to New South Wales yes, it is different but we still need a treasurer, we still need a premier, we still need a minister for education, we still need - you know, it doesn't change. So, to me it is all about again governance and good business.

CHAIR - There is also some interesting work that has been done on the relativities of population size and the size of parliament. In the second reading speech that I put before the parliament on this legislation, of the 75 bicameral parliaments across the globe, Tasmania has the third smallest lower House, beaten only by two states in the USA - the Northern Mariana Islands and American Samoa. These states have lower Houses of 20 and 21 seats respectively and populations of 54 000 and 56 000 respectively. So, in terms of population and relativities of parliament we are clearly, you would agree, well behind.

Mr BAILEY - Clearly, I absolutely agree and in mind again it is an irrelevant argument. The argument is, what business do we require the parliament to perform and we can we currently do it? And no, we can't.

CHAIR - Thank you. Are there any further questions before we release Mr Bailey from our care?

Mr BAILEY - Thank you so much.

CHAIR - Thank you for your evidence. Before you leave I just need to say a few words for the formalities. As I advised you at the commencement of your evidence what you have said to us here today is protected by parliamentary privilege. Once you leave the table you need to be aware that privilege does not attach to comments you may make to anyone, including the media, even if you are just repeating what you have said to us. Thank you, Mr Bailey. Have a lovely day out there and thank you so much for your evidence.

THE WITNESS WITHDREW.

PUBLIC

Dr JULIAN AMOS WAS CALLED, MADE THE STATUTORY DECLARATION AND WAS EXAMINED.

CHAIR - Dr Amos, I would like to ask whether you received and read the guides sent to you by the committee secretary?

Dr AMOS - I did.

CHAIR - I do need to reiterate some of the points made in that document. A committee hearing is a proceeding in parliament. This means it receives the protection of parliamentary privilege. This is an important legal protection that allows individuals giving evidence to a parliamentary committee to speak with complete freedom without the fear of being sued or questioned in any court or place out of parliament. It applies to ensure that parliament receives the very best information when conducting its inquiries. It is important to be aware, Dr Amos, that this protection is not accorded to you for statements that maybe defamatory or repeated or referred to you by outside the confines of the parliamentary proceedings.

This is a public hearing. It is being broadcast today. Members of the public and journalists may be present and this means your evidence may be reported. It is important that should you wish all or part of your evidence to be heard in private you must make this request and give an explanation prior to giving the relevant evidence. Is that all good with you?

Dr AMOS - All good with me.

CHAIR - Thank you. Dr Amos we have before us a series of points that you have provided to the committee. Perhaps as part of your opening presentation you would like to speak to your points.

Dr AMOS - Thank you, Chair, and thank you for inviting me to attend at all because I did not put in a submission at the appropriate time. I did not even know you were sitting. Isn't that terrible?

At a very late stage I put in a note to you to reflect on some matters that might be of relevance and then you have invited me to come and talk to you. So I thought I would put down some thoughts to explain my thinking about the things that have been said to you and the concept of the restoration of parliament. In doing that, I have provided a one-page speaker's notes to you, which has just been tabled. I can either go through those ad seriatum or I could handle them as you so wish. Maybe if I start ad seriatum and then you can pick me up from time to time.

First of all, the fundamental issue is the primacy of parliament. Parliament is more important than government and parliament must be in control of the government. If government controls the numbers in the parliament by virtue of it being a government - not by being members of a political party but by being ministers - then the role of parliament is totally subsumed. It doesn't have the opportunity to question or query government. These points are being made to you strongly by academics such as Richard Herr, Peter Boyce, Richard Eccleston, and so on. I'm not going to spend any time on that argument. I think that has been well and truly put to you in the past.

The issue that has been raised with you is the issue of whether government is being overworked or not, and what we need to do about government. In the good old days, and I'm sure you'll ask me some questions about the good old days, we had 10 ministers. Although there are 33 portfolios now that ministers manage, in my view there are 10 fundamental areas of government responsibility,

PUBLIC

and therefore the argument for having 10 ministers is a pretty strong one. Whether they are being overworked or not depends on the way in which they manage themselves in many respects.

I don't believe that they need to be overworked; it's a matter of delegation. It's a matter of trust in your own people, and what have you. That is what they are getting paid to do - to be responsible and to manage themselves responsibly.

I can go through the 10 areas, if you wish, just for the record: premier, treasurer and attorney-general - they are the three fundamental things that government does. There are four areas of service provision in education, health, community services and police and emergency services; they are services that are being run by government. Then there are three areas which I call land management - planning; environment; heritage; national parks, resources like mining, water, et cetera; and then industry and infrastructure. That is, 10 fundamental, and you can say, separate areas.

If you start to argue about the need for a minister for advanced manufacturing and defence industries, well that's not really a portfolio. That's infrastructure and industry. I think those 33 can be boiled down reasonably to the 10.

Where do these ministers come from? Well, they shouldn't be coming from the Legislative Council because the Legislative Council properly is a house of review and needs to be reviewing the actions of the lower House and of the government. If they've got members of the government in the upper House, then it becomes a dysfunction to be a review house. I would be arguing against finding my 10 from the Legislative Council.

I've put down Next Issues - the issues surrounding where we are at the moment. The present problem is that there's inadequate representation. I think you all recognise that. There's too shallow a talent pool and that has been put to you strongly. There is no government backbench to keep the government to account.

I've heard, Joan, you talking about some of these arguments about the role of the backbench. In former times when there was a government of 10 and a political party of 18, there were eight on the backbench, and those eight were querying government all the time, and the government was coming to them to seek their advice all the time.

I would say to you, for example, being a backbench of one or two, that in reality how many times are they coming to you to seek your advice about political matters, about legislative matters, and what have you? It is not, I suspect, that common and certainly wouldn't have been as common as it was when there was a stronger, more vibrant backbench. I say that by virtue of numbers, not by virtue of personalities. The government recognised its responsibility to its backbench, and therefore recognised its responsibility to parliament, because they are members of parliament first and foremost.

People don't vote for government. People vote for parliament. It's the parliament that then appoints the government. Political parties make that a more automatic arrangement. I think I am voting for a government, but actually I am voting for parliamentarians.

So, what do we need to do? One argument has been to bring everything into a single House so it is Legislative Council and House of Assembly together, a bit like Queensland. But you'd lose the house of review circumstance. Therefore, I would argue strongly against it. Parliament needs to review government activity, and the Legislative Council is a proper mechanism to do so.

PUBLIC

The restoration of parliament is reasonable. Therefore, 25 is far too small. It is a corruption of the parliamentary process, pure and simple. What would the proper number be? All of these figures, in a sense, are arbitrary, aren't they? We could reduce the parliament to 22. We could increase it to 55. What is the right figure? In many respects, there is no such thing as a 'right' figure, but the restoration to 35 is something we all recognise and can all support. As a mechanism for improving the status of parliament, the move to increase it back to its original number to 35 is sensible.

I believe it would have a degree of community support, as Michael Bailey said to you earlier today. The realpolitik is that you wouldn't be able to get more than 35 anyway, even if you wanted to, so there is not much point in spending time arguing it from a pragmatic point of view.

What are the options if we are going to restore the parliament to 35? The simplest is to increase the number of members in each electorate from five to seven. That is the simplest and probably will be the thing that happens, if it happens at all.

My argument against that, is two things.

The first is that it tends to be an overkill. I have lived in an environment of seven members in an electorate. It is an overkill in the sense of seven members going to the same functions; seven people being lobbied by the same group. There would be a contest amongst yourselves within a political party to get the best deal from the Glenorchy Football Club, or whatever, to get the highest level of recognition, and so it goes on. It becomes a wasted effort. It is a duplicated effort, and it is an effort that, in my view, tends to lower the standing of parliamentarians in the community because 'I am better than you'.

Although seven is the more likely outcome, I think it is an overkill. It reduces the quota from 16 and two-thirds per cent, to 12.5 per cent. Everybody likes a reduced quota because it means a greater ability to get back in.

At the same time, the subliminal view, which is never really expressed overtly, is that we don't want to make it too easy for minor parties to get in. The major parties like the idea of having control. Therefore, there will be a level of detachment from the argument to decrease the quota to 12.5 per cent. I state that as a matter of fact. You reflect on the 1998 circumstance where the quota was increased, and therefore made it harder for minor parties to get representation

CHAIR - Or independents as well.

Dr AMOS - Yes, minor parties, independents, not major party members.

I have been arguing for some time, that if the parliament is to be restored to 35, that can also be done by having seven electorates of five members, as distinct from five electorates of seven members. Why would I argue that? I argue that it makes a smaller electorate for the individual member and therefore they can service that electorate better.

I argue it in the sense that the electorate itself has a greater community of interest or better community of interest than they have at moment. If I said to you, Chair, Howrah versus Huonville, what is the community of interest there? O Austin Ferry versus Taroona, what is the interest there or Smithtown versus Latrobe, what is the interest there?

PUBLIC

It is disparate, to say the least, whereas under a seven-electorate system you will find when you draw those boundaries that those communities of interest become much clearer, much more logical. What issue about that would you would say no to? An argument of cost is associated with it, which has been raised in the past, but my argument is that no other state runs its parliament on the basis of federal boundaries; there is absolutely no reason why we should. It is not a novel idea to run your own boundaries.

As far as the cost is concerned, from the Electoral Commission's point of view, it is the press of a button to use postcodes to organise the electorates much easier, so that wouldn't be a cost. I guess the only cost would be in publishing the new electorate roles, but you do that for the Legislative Council, you do that for local government, you do it for federal electorates. It's no great cost and no great effort to do.

I think that is the essence of my argument, and I am open to questions. I have thrown the thought to you at the very end that if you increase the House of Assembly to 35, you will probably reflect a little on what you might do with the Legislative Council because the argument is Legislative Council is half the size of the House of Assembly. As I suggested, because of the nature of the Aboriginal story overall you could create two positions in the Legislative Council. The Legislative Council is a House of review place where it would be relevant for the Aboriginal argument for them to be involved rather than making legislation in the House of Assembly. I am not pushing it, but I think it is something to reflect on; I think it would be a wise thing to do.

CHAIR - Thank you, Dr Amos. Anyone who wants to asks questions, put your hand up, but I might start.

Dr Amos, thank you for your fascinating contribution. You have brought to the table ideas we haven't tested here before. I am interested in your thoughts: on balance what is the best outcome? Before us, we have legislation - the House of Assembly Restoration Bill 2018 - so in a way we are in the bill's Committee stage because we are exploring the bill. You are proposing we rethink our whole approach potentially, and move to seven electorates and five members.

Dr AMOS - Yes, changing five to seven and seven to five - that is all you need to do in the bill.

Ms HADDAD - You have to deal with boundaries as well.

Dr AMOS - You would have that as a schedule to the bill provided by the Electoral Commission based on postcodes. The exercise is a simple one; the will is the issue, not the exercise.

CHAIR - We already have a will problem in dealing with the bill before us.

Dr AMOS - Before answering your question, I am not quite sure I fully understand the issue of balance. I will test that and play with it, but in terms of getting the message out to people and getting the story such that the parliamentarians' major political parties will respond, I believe that if *The Mercury* ran the case as it is running the case for the AFL team, you would have it in droves.

CHAIR - You'd have what in droves?

Dr AMOS - You would have the support in droves. The media can play a very strong part; you have the media onside, I believe, but they are essentially quiet on it. If they decided to run a

PUBLIC

campaign on it, as you heard earlier, business would be prepared to lend its weight and its name to the case. If the *Examiner*, the *Mercury* and the *Advocate* were running editorials you would have a mood for change.

CHAIR - We have already seen two editorials from the *Mercury's* editor supporting the restoration of numbers. My question relating to balance was more about we have a scenario we are dealing with, which is the legislation. Your presentation is an acknowledgement a 25-seat house is too small?

Dr AMOS - Indeed.

CHAIR - So, how you get to restoration, is the issue. Whether it is through seven electorates of five members, or five electorates of seven members, do you agree the ultimate outcome which is the restoration of the House, whatever it looks like, is important?

Dr AMOS - Absolutely. My whole case to you is predicated on the fact parliament should have supremacy over government and therefore the government has to be responsible to its own backbench as well as to the remainder of the parliament. It does not really have a backbench. The numbers of the backbench are so low the government can quite happily ignore them if they wish to. In a circumstance where there is a larger backbench they cannot do that at will. In my time, when I was in a similar circumstance, we found members of the government were interested in hearing our views.

Mrs PETRUSMA - Dr Amos, you said no other state follows the federal boundaries. What do other states do? How do they determine their boundaries? Is that something the Electoral Commission determines based on what they did with the Legislative Council? We already have an example in Tasmania where the Legislative Council boundaries do not follow any federal boundaries, so it would be a similar sort of process? They look at seven electorates and work it out.

Dr AMOS - Yes, absolutely. The Electoral Commission will work it out as the commission does in Victoria or New South Wales, Queensland, or anywhere else. It is not rocket science to nut out something along that line and there is no cost in doing so.

Mrs PETRUSMA - You would suggest the Legislative Council would have 15 seats, plus two seats to represent Aboriginal Tasmanians to make that a 17-seat house?

Dr AMOS - I have not gone into any details. It is something that has come up before you in your committee and I have seen, read and reflected on it and come up with my thoughts about what it could look like.

As you know, the Aboriginal community of itself is not a unitary organisation, a unitary body. There are different elements and thought processes within that community and both have a legitimate right for their views to be reflected. I would see it as being a separate roll. They can either choose to or not choose to be a member. An individual can choose to be on the Aboriginal roll or on the normal Legislative Council roll. If they were on the Aboriginal roll then they vote for those two seats and that vote would need to be at the same time. You cannot have one and then next year another because otherwise the dominant faction gets in each time.

As far as the House of Assembly is concerned they are members of the general electorate for the purposes of voting. It is matter of running a separate roll.

PUBLIC

Mrs PETRUSMA - You were a member of parliament for many years and understand why it is a hard message for any political party, whether in opposition or in government to sell the message. You suggested getting the media on side, but how do you convince people an increase of about \$7.2 million per year for extra members of parliament is a better worthy spend than investing into housing or health for example?

Dr AMOS - First of all I take the previous witnesses comment to you about what happened in New South Wales and the drink driving circumstance where the government or parliament led from the front. Tim Fischer, an extraordinary brave man in the gun control laws, led from the front against the issues of his party

CHAIR - Hear, hear.

Dr AMOS - But, it is now accepted practice within the general community. You might suffer a week of criticism and then people will move onto the next issue. It is a matter of biting that bullet and doing it, otherwise you will wallow in the shallows for the rest of your days in terms of these sorts of issues. Lead from the front and you will be surprised the number of people that will come behind and back you.

Mrs RYLAH - From your postulation you have put forward to us, backbenchers may not be able to have the sway to bring about a change such as the restoration of parliament. I would suggest to you most pressure within the parliament is in fact on the backbenchers and not on the ministers. Because of the amount of work and time you are sitting inside parliament you have to be across all of the portfolios. Trying to be a jack of all trades, the master of none. So, what is the compelling scenario or argument everyday people will accept who do not grasp or have the perspective of the backbench because that is not what is promoted. You are very good at putting argument, what do you think is the compelling argument that would get this over the line?

Dr AMOS - From a backbencher's point of view?

Mrs RYLAH - No, from the everyday person.

Dr AMOS - Everybody who has been before you recognise the work a parliamentarian does. I might have mentioned in my initial comment to you about Bass, where the Government has no backbench in Bass. Therefore, Bass is actually being ignored by the Government in terms of its parliamentarian role. It is strong in terms of a government role, but in terms of a backbench role and parliamentarian role and representing its electorate role it is failing in Bass because the numbers are so small in the parliament and everybody from that particular electorate are made ministers. Therefore, the right thing as parliamentarians is not being done for that particular electorate. I can work on making a stronger argument, but that is the essence of the argument. The point you make about having to be over every portfolio well, no you do not. You need to concentrate on those things which are your strengths. I never concentrated particularly on community services but concentrated a lot on resources. That was my skill base and I used my skill to best advantage. Not that it got me all that far for all that long.

Ms HICKEY - Dr Amos you have a very distinguished career, you are very aware of the obligations of parliament, you are very aware of the understandings of politics. We have this unique period in time where I believe change is possible. However, what we have instead of the 25 of us taking our responsibilities as parliamentarians first, our political allegiances in some cases mean

PUBLIC

pretty well half the parliament say no because the public will not like it, it is going to cost too much and the other half say no because we do not want to be seen to be going against it. It is not popular and is going to end up with a very poor outcome. How do we inspire all of those parliamentarians to consider the moral position, the integrity, the good governance they are going to leave for future generations. These decisions are going to impact this parliament. If this doesn't get up this time, I would pretty much say it is not going to.

CHAIR - I am not certain about that.

Ms HICKEY - Well, unless we get tripartisan support and show some real bravery from this parliament - this particular parliament - as we have had people presenting here for us, quite annoyed they are back here again. When are we going to listen, and how do we inspire 25 people to stand up and be accountable, rather than be fearful of public backlash, or taking a political side when this should be a moral argument?

Dr AMOS - I guess the issue is that the horse named Self-Interest is always running in the race, isn't it? Therefore, you have to play to the self-interest.

So, what is the self-interest? The self-interest from government is to be a better government, as a result of a greater talent pool, a stronger backbench, better representation in the electorate. As far as the opposition is concerned, it is a larger number therefore greater skill-base in terms of keeping the government to account. That is as a parliamentarian and as a member of a political party I think the argument is so strong, from a self-interest point-of-view to be arguing the case. If it is an issue of money, an issue of backlash, well, goodness me, you have just got to fight that.

That is why you are leaders of the community, because you are leading from the front, you are not leading from behind. I must follow them, for I am their leader. It is a bit of a nonsense argument, isn't it?

Ms HICKEY - How do we kill the politics and put the parliament first?

Dr AMOS - The major political parties have to be persuaded that it is in their self-interest to argue the case for change and for restoration. Where is that going to come from? It is going to come from the public. People like the TCCI are going to be pushing the case. The *Mercury*, pushing the case; *Examiner*, pushing the case. How are you going to get the *Mercury* and the *Examiner* to be pushing that case? There is an activation exercise that needs to be involved here.

I know Ella, you talk about it from the ground up, as being a case for political change. Sometimes it has to be, bang, in the face as well.

Ms HICKEY - What about the heroes of the past, talking to the current parties? You guys lived through it. You know the destruction. You know the outcome.

Dr AMOS - I don't think present politicians listen particularly to past politicians.

Ms HICKEY - That's sad.

Dr AMOS - None of them. You see it in the John Howards and the Paul Keatings who are trying to influence the major parties: 'It is very nice of you, Paul, to be giving of your advice'.

PUBLIC

CHAIR - Telling us how you feel.

Dr AMOS - That's right. But at the end of the day it is us that who are making the decision.

Let me come to the issue of cost, because you raised that, and you have the Treasury coming in later. Michael Polley reminded me, and he will develop this theme much longer than me, let me just make the case. If it is \$7.8 million, or whatever, how many kilometres of road does that entail? Michael has the figure. Michael will give you the figure. It is not an issue of an overwhelming cost. If you compared how much money is being spent on AFL football teams and which is more important for the governance of the state - an AFL football team or a properly working parliament? - the argument of cost doesn't really hold up.

Anyway, does it necessarily have to be a zero-sum game? I save here to spend there. I think that the issue of governance and the primacy of parliament is the overwhelming issue, that needs confronting, needs stating; not, 'Oh, it is going to cost too much'.

Ms HADDAD - What are your reflections, but we are running out of time.

CHAIR - Yes, we are definitely running out of time. We really only have one question time available.

Ms DOW - Mine was in relation to your previous experiences and a lot of the people who have presented to this committee have spoken about their view on the reduction of cost, if there were fewer advisers to ministers and the like. Do you see that the proposed change would, in fact, lead to that outcome?

Dr AMOS - I note that somebody has talked to you in the past about ministerial officers. I think that is what you are referring to now? In my time, and I don't think it necessarily needs to change, there was an administrative head of the office who managed cabinet papers and such, there was a political adviser not paid a fortune, there was a diary officer seconded from the department, there was a filing officer seconded from the department, and a receptionist.

The numbers weren't great but, as I said to you earlier, minister take on responsibility for being a minister. They don't fall back and hide behind high powered political advisers. You are the political operator as a minister. The political advice you have is just another point of view; it is not the point of view. That was just the way ministers should be running their offices and, at that particular point in time, it was government policy that ministerial offices be structured in that way. It is a matter of will from the point of view of the government policy.

CHAIR - Dr Amos, personally I could listen to you talk about this for much longer but we have run out of time. Before we release you from our care, I need to just read a few words a statement after evidence. As I advised you at the commencement of your evidence what you have said to us here today is protected by parliamentary privilege. Once you leave the table you need to be aware that privilege is not attached to comments you may make to anyone including the media even if you are just repeating what you have said us. Is that all good with you?

Dr AMOS - All good with me.

CHAIR - Thank you.

PUBLIC

Dr AMOS - Thank you, panel.

THE WITNESS WITHDREW.

PUBLIC

Mr TONY FERRALL, SECRETARY, AND **Mr DAVID BAILEY**, DEPARTMENT OF TREASURY AND FINANCE, WERE CALLED, MADE THE STATUTORY DECLARATION AND WERE EXAMINED.

CHAIR - Welcome gentlemen. Before you being giving your evidence, I need to ask whether you received and read the guide sent to you by the committee secretary?

WITNESSES - Yes.

CHAIR - Regrettably, I also have to restate some important aspects of that document you have read. A committee hearing is a proceeding of parliament. This means it receives the protection of parliamentary privilege. This is an important legal protection that allows individuals giving evidence to a parliamentary committee to speak with complete freedom without the fear of being sued or questioned in any court or place out of parliament. It applies to ensure that parliament receives the very best information when conducting its inquiries. It is important to be aware that this protection is not accorded to you if statements that may be defamatory are repeated or referred by you outside the confines of the parliamentary proceedings.

This is a public hearing. Members of the public and journalists may be present, and this means your evidence may be reported. It is important that should you wish all or part of your evidence to be heard in private, you need to make this request and give an explanation prior to giving the relevant evidence.

Is that all good with you?

WITNESSES - Yes, thank you.

CHAIR - Would you like to make an opening presentation and speak to the attachment?

Mr FERRALL - I would like to make a couple of comments. Thank you for the opportunity to address the committee.

I note that the information that was provided in March this year on the potential cost of the implementation of the provisions of the bill, the Premier stated at the time that the estimates had been prepared by Treasury and they were based on information provided by a number of government departments, and they were indicative in nature.

They were based on an interpretation of the specific requirements of the bill at that point, and they have a range of assumptions that go behind them which may, or may not, prove correct when the ultimate decision is or isn't made.

It is also fair to say that there are some costs, or some indicative assumptions of cost, that could be higher or lower than the indicative figures we have provided. Since we provided that information to the committee, we have continued to revise those costs and look at them in a different manner, and that has included seeking additional information and clarification from the entities that provided the base starter that we worked the cost up on.

We have also reviewed the methodology, and I will talk to that in a moment, and the overall analysis and also some of the assumptions. We have also looked at a different way of presenting

PUBLIC

the information - and I will provide you with that in a moment - which may help the committee in terms of stepping through how we got to the costs and why we believe they are as they are.

If the committee is happy with that, Chair, I am quite comfortable to provide some revised figures which, as I said, I have prepared in a slightly different manner. They are of a similar order in total magnitude as we provided before but they are slightly lower but they also step out in a slightly different way how we have got to the estimated cost.

I am happy to table those.

CHAIR - It would be good to have a look at them before we start asking questions.

Mr FERRALL - I would like to emphasise a couple of points before we start to go through those. As I said at the start, the estimates are indicative only and they can be nothing other than indicative, given where we are at.

A number of the assumptions that we have previously made around factors such as office space, the number of opposition and minority party members, the number of members taking vehicles, office staffing, carparking - all those are quite variable. So, we have had to pick a set of numbers and say, 'There's a base set of assumptions'.

A number of the costs are also based on recent year averages. We have looked at some things and said, 'What have they cost over the last couple of years?', and used those as averages. Again, that doesn't mean they will be exactly as they may play out in a year or two, or three, when a decision may be made.

There are also some other costs which we may not have included. So, there are potential knock-on impacts of the change that we may not have been able to pick up or we may not have picked up yet. An example of that might be some impacts on Legislature-General that we have not necessarily factored in. Again, we have still relied on information from both Treasury but also from Premier and Cabinet in relation to existing costs around ministerial and parliamentary support, and also data from the House of Assembly.

The key differences between the previous indicative estimates and these updated estimates is that rather than focus on the administrative cost centres, such as the House of Assembly, and ministerial and parliamentary support, the updated estimates are presented on the basis of the major elements of the bill, such as the increase in the number of members of the House of Assembly and an additional member, together with the associated parliamentary and agency costs. So, it is a different cross-section of costing. We have presented them on a nominal basis; that is, they are in current day dollars. Obviously, due to the uncertainty over the timing of any potential change, then there is an escalation in costs potential if it was, say, to occur in 2022 or 2023, but we have not attempted to factor that in as we did in the previous estimates.

We have also reviewed the additional space that may be required in Parliament Square to potentially accommodate 10 additional members. From working on that, we have actually reduced the estimate that we had in the previous figures. That again is a little bit of, 'how long is a piece of string?', because although we have reduced it from approximately 1400 square metres to about 1000 square metres you could physically put the people in a much smaller space or it could be a much larger space, depending on the nature of the offices and the accommodation that people actually settle on or are required.

PUBLIC

As a consequence of the further work on the potential costs it is now estimated that one-off cost would be approximately \$5.9 million and the additional recurrent costs would be approximately \$6.4 million. So, they are both lower than the previous estimates that were provided in March.

In terms of recurrent costs in the 2019-20 Budget papers, the operating appropriation for ministerial and parliamentary support is about \$22.8 million and \$9.9 million for the House of Assembly. Combined, the operating appropriation is roughly \$32.7 million, so the estimated recurrent cost of \$6.4 million represents an increase of just slightly under 20 per cent on those figures and again, over a typical budget and forward Estimates period of say four years, if you take the one-off costs and you take the additional recurrent cost - not including any indexation - you are looking at a total cost of about \$31.5 million for the proposed increase.

Again, I do not want to overemphasise it, but these are very indicative. At the outset, we are quite happy to assist the committee on any modelling that the committee might have, or might require, in terms of different underlying assumptions or different views as to we might cost. There is no perfectly right answer in this space and so we are happy if the committee had any further questions post this meeting, or you wanted additional information, we are happy to provide that.

CHAIR - Thank you. Can we assume, Mr Ferrall, that you are happy for this revised costing document to be tabled?

Mr FERRALL - Yes.

CHAIR - Thank you, we will do that. Mr Ferrall what is the total state budget this year?

Mr FERRALL - Approximately \$6 billion.

CHAIR - I am not a mathematician but what per centage of \$6 billion is \$6.4 million? Is it 0.01 per cent?

Mr FERRALL - It is very small yes. I can do the calculation if you want but I am not going to do calculations on the run.

CHAIR - No, I am just looking for a comparative. So, a \$6 billion budget and an estimated recurrent cost of restoration, including an increase in the ministry, is the total estimated recurrent cost \$6.4 million? With all those comments and qualifiers you made earlier, that's the total estimate of the recurrent cost to the state budget.

Mr FERRALL - Under the revised figures, it's about \$6.157 million.

Mrs PETRUSMA - You mentioned \$6.4 million. Is that based on increases between now and 2022?

Mr BAILEY - It should be \$6.2 million.

Mr FERRALL - Yes.

Mrs PETRUSMA - Is the \$31.5 million over a four-year budget cycle?

PUBLIC

Mr FERRALL - It's a little less than that but it's of that sort of order. When you look at the costing, the drivers of the costs, some of them are quite significant and discrete. When you look at things like that additional accommodation or space, that's a fairly significant driver of the costs. Assumptions around how much a fit-out may cost can move those numbers significantly in the one-off space but also the square meterage cost, which is pretty easy to estimate, you have the other driver, which is how many square metres might be required.

CHAIR - I'm interested in the fit-out cost estimates because the previous assessment had fit-out for MPs' offices sitting at around \$50 000 to \$53 000 per office and we are given a one-off allocation of \$10 000 each for fit-out. I was wondering where numbers like that came from.

Mr FERRALL - Those fit-out costs have come from actual costs we have seen in the past. I accept the allocation is much lower but the real or actual cost has been much higher. They also vary. There's no standard that you could say every fit-out will cost x -dollars.

CHAIR - In your experience, has the cost of political advisors increased in recent years - the salaries paid to advisors? I ask this question because when we were in government, for example, my head of office was paid around \$110 000 to \$115 000 a year. You now have heads of office routinely being paid \$160 000, \$180 000 or \$220 000 per year. Is it fair to assume that the cost of advisors' salaries has increased substantially in recent years?

Mr FERRALL - I think it would be reasonable to say there has been an increase. I couldn't tell you whether that increase is commensurate with other increases for similar positions because we haven't done that analysis. I agree with your general statement that the cost of advisors has gone up a significant amount, but whether that is commensurate with other equivalent positions across the state sector, I couldn't comment on. We haven't done that work.

CHAIR - Okay, thank you.

Ms HICKEY - I still have incredible issues with the lease cost. I don't know about anyone else at this table but I was stuck with a \$25 000 lease and no more. That really limits your choice and the suitability of your accommodation. This is stating the fit-out cost is \$50 000. Where does it list the lease? Here, \$35 000, yes. Almost \$100 000 doesn't seem to fit with what we are being told or experiencing. I can probably accept the staff because they are beyond costs.

The 30 car parking spaces - are they planning to take away all the car parks at the front? At the moment we can all park there if we have cars, but we could move some of parliamentary staff and put 35 cars there, which I don't believe has been costed. This is assuming all those cars are going to go into the other building.

Mr FERRALL - That's an assumption. If your assumption is free car parking, then you can say there's no additional cost. Part of the Parliament Square development, ultimately, was to remove the parking from the front of parliament. That's why we based the assumption on the parking -

Ms HICKEY - That was going to happen regardless of whether we increase the size of parliament.

Mr FERRALL - Yes.

PUBLIC

Mrs PETRUSMA - That's a cost that could be taken off.

Ms HICKEY - It's an ambit one, I think.

Mr FERRALL - There has to be a cost. There is a cost for parking somewhere.

Ms HICKEY - The fit-out of the electorate offices, I don't know about the other members - yours is nice but you have sacrificed other things - but a lot of it was second-hand and, even for the printing, second-hand printers came from someone's else's office, we had second-hand computers, we had second-hand desks, we had second-hand chairs; they were just out of the storerooms. I supplemented a lot of it with my own furniture from my old office.

CHAIR - It sounds like you got special treatment, Ms Hickey.

Ms HICKEY - Second hand, it was lovely. It was beautiful and I am not unhappy with my office, don't get me wrong, but to say we are getting \$26 000 in ICT set-up costs, with some of that coming out of our \$10 000 allowance; if you buy a shredder it comes out of that, if you have to buy a new printer for a staff member, it comes out of that. It is almost a double-up and the fit-out costs I find hysterical, somebody is getting a lot more than the rest of us.

Mr FERRALL - The most recent request we have seen for a fit-out for an electorate office is \$50 000.

Ms HICKEY - We would love to know who that was.

Ms HADDAD - We could go and bunk in with them.

Ms HICKEY - That is probably skewing it because that is one person opposed to reality.

Mr FERRALL - I can't comment on individual offices in terms of what you may have been provided. We have worked that up off average costs we have seen. In cases where you have been given a set of second-hand furniture, we don't see any of that; what we see at the Treasury end is where there is a request for a costed fit-out and a fit-out gets delivered, and that indicative cost reflects what we are seeing.

Ms HICKEY - That's preferential treatment. Mine was so ridiculous that I ended up with three lots of furniture from three different offices out of the pool. I think we ended up with something like 35 chairs, and we had about 10 desks and a few other things which then had to be picked up and sent back because we couldn't walk into the office.

Mr FERRALL - In providing an indicative cost to the committee, I am putting it forward on the basis of what we see as averages. I am not making any comment about whether, across the spectrum, some people may have a much lower cost because they haven't had an adequate fit-out.

Ms HICKEY - Or preferential treatment.

Mr FERRALL - It's not for me to comment on what is preferential.

PUBLIC

Ms HICKEY - That's okay. Would you be prepared to say that there could be flexibility of up to 10 per cent in this when you are hearing what actually happens as opposed to what the latest figures in the assumptions you are making?

Mr FERRALL - If, in the final decision, parliament agrees it is going to increase its members and restore the numbers, if that were the case and there was a decision that said we are only going to allow \$2000 or \$5000 per fit-out, whatever it might be, that would drive a different cost outcome. At this time I can only go on the averages we see have been spent.

Ms HICKEY - We could call this a worst-case scenario?

Mr FERRALL - It's a case scenario. As has been seen over different periods with members who might have a greater desire for better furniture and better fittings, you could end up with a higher cost.

CHAIR - There are potential offsets to restoring the numbers through other savings measures that could be applied, should the numbers be restored. Offsets, for example a Treasurer's Instruction or fit-out allocations and other entitlements, potentially.

Mr FERRALL - There could be a set of instructions along those lines; it is a matter for the government of the day or for parliament to make those decisions, and that would drive a different set of costs. Similarly, parliament could make a set of decisions whether an electorate office exists. Whether members have a day office and parliament office. There is a whole range of things that could be made which would give different cost outcomes. We cannot presume or make allowances for those.

CHAIR - Thank you, Mr Ferrall.

Mrs RYLAH - Tony, what I am looking for is the change in the average number and to make sure my maths is right. I have taken total recurrent costs and called that Line 1. Then I have added total ministerial office costs, down the bottom of the page. I have called that Line 2. And for the existing scenario, added One plus Two in recurrent costs. Ignoring new set-up costs.

CHAIR - You are ignoring one-off establishment costs.

Mrs RYLAH - Yes. Then I have \$5.4 million divided by 25 which is \$216 680. To compare that One plus Two and then added Three - which is under other parliamentary costs and is 598. That makes \$6 million and 15. I have divided that sum by 35. What I get is, if my logic is right, the average cost with a 25-member parliament is \$216 680 and under a 35-seat parliament it is \$171 857. Does that sound right? In other words, a lower cost when we go to 35 per member than it is on 25. Or am I missing something here?

Mr FERRALL - Again, I am going to try and do maths on the run.

CHAIR - I thought you travelled everywhere with a calculator.

Mr FERRALL - If we have to. But depending on how you have put that calculation together. There are obviously fixed costs or non-variable costs which you are spreading over a larger number, which would then potentially give you a lower per member, or per unit, cost.

PUBLIC

Mr BAILEY - These costs are the incremental costs of those additional 10 members. Dividing them by the current number of member or the increased number of members is not logically sound. What you need to do is divide the total current cost of Parliament, of the House of Assembly, by the 25. Add on the additional costs to do with the 10 members to give you a new total cost and divide that by the 35 members. The recurrent costs in here are just the additional costs associated with the 10 members. If you said, okay the additional recurrent costs are \$6.1 million divided by the 10 additional members it is an additional cost of about \$610 000 per member.

Mrs RYLAH - Chair, could I put a question on notice?

Could we obtain what is the current average cost per member and what, using this scenario, for a 25-member House? What would then be the average cost per member for a 35-member House, so we are comparing the numbers, excluding the set-up costs to go to?

Is that a possibility?

Mr FERRALL - We can certainly calculate that.

Mrs PETRUSMA - Isn't this what the cost estimation details is based on at the moment?

Mr FERRALL - No, it is slightly different. It may not lead to any sort of valid conclusion because when you say what is the current cost? Even if there were no members, in an extreme scenario, there would be a cost of maintaining the building and a whole range of things. There is a fixed component embedded in the current number. We can do the calculation, but in comparing the two you are not going to have something which says it is cheaper or more expensive for 35 versus 25 on a per unit basis.

CHAIR - Even if you made the comparison in today's dollars?

Mr FERRALL - You are spreading a set of fixed costs over a higher number or a lower number.

Mrs RYLAH - That is my point. There are fixed costs and while there are new members, it is still a fixed cost that sits behind all this. The operation of parliament and all the things that go with it, bells and whistles. Apart from the additional new cost, there is this benefit of averaging. I would like to have a sense of what that quantum is to compare.

Mr FERRALL - As I said, we are very happy to do the calculation. It is a question of what you can conclude from that ultimately.

Mrs RYLAH - Thank you.

Ms DOW - That will detail the fixed cost and then there will be two scenarios? I think that is what Joan is asking, to have a better understanding of what that cost is.

Mr FERRALL - All we could come up with is what is the current total cost to the extent we know it, divide by 25 and that will give you a number. Then we can take that total current cost. We can add our estimates of what it would be under a 35 scenario and then divide by 35. We can easily complete the calculation. But what the comparison of the two numbers really indicates or means I am not really sure. In some ways an easier question for us would be, what are you trying

PUBLIC

to analyse? What are you trying to identify? Then we might be able to help you find a way of how you calculate it.

Mrs RYLAH - What I am trying to identify here is, we know there is very easily accountable one-off costs and can be seen as an impediment to getting better governance. What I am trying to understand is if we set that aside what is a comparative cost? I suspect the quantum is not so great when we compare a 35-member house as it may appear if we only compare the one-off costs. I am trying to gain an understanding of how they fit together. Have you any suggestions of a better way of doing that?

Mr FERRALL - A one-off of the change?

Mrs RYLAH - Of the change, yes.

Mr FERRALL - The one-off of the change is identified in this separately and then there is the recurrent cost of the change.

Mrs RYLAH - I am trying to get it relative.

Ms HICKEY - If I can help? Women think differently, we are from Venus, not Mars. What if we had this figure and then next to it what the current figure is for a 25-seat house and beside each column is divisible by 35. Well, not divisible by 35, but divisible by 25, so much per person. This extra 10. We have struggles with you basing this figure on what the latest fit-out of an office was. In reality we do not see that at all.

Mrs PETRUSMA - The leases, for example, where it has average cost of \$35 000. Quite a few of us here know ours is not \$35 000.

Ms HICKEY - Between \$17 000 and \$25 000.

Mrs PETRUSMA - Yes. What are these leases at the moment for our electorate offices? Nothing else. What are the actual lease costs and operating costs for 25 electorate offices?

CHAIR - Can we be really clear so we are not sending Mr Ferrall and Mr Bailey away with a task that is an exercise in confusion and futility? What exactly are we asking for in terms of extra information that may be of use to the committee? Would you like to interpret for us?

Mr FERRALL - Can I try to help? Would it be of assistance to the committee if we gave the committee some greater detail of the underlying assumptions and why or how they have been calculated in the particular manner. Where, for example, the cost of a vehicle is at \$23 000, we can tell you how we have come up with that assumption based on the existing and current costs of vehicles for members, using that as an example.

CHAIR - You sort of explained in your introduction to the committee that there is a number of underlying assumptions and in the numbers that have put to the committee. What members are looking for is a comparative cost of the 25-seat parliament to the 35-seat parliament. Today's costs relative to these costs and why there is a difference and what assumptions have been made, apart from having 10 extra members.

PUBLIC

Ms HICKEY - The current true costs. In other words, if you have an office in Latrobe it is probably \$15 000 to \$17 000 rent and whoever has this \$50 000 dollar one is a lucky girl or boy. Can I ask one more question?

CHAIR - Mrs Petrusma has been waiting to ask a question for a while.

Mrs PETRUSMA - In regards to the Parliament Square offices, I know you said there are going to be different sizes. You measured on the current size of members who are in Parliament Square at the moment, both the backbench and the Greens are and the ministers. They are all rectangular boxes, so is that the current size you are looking at?

Mr FERRALL - The previous estimate that we used was approximately a size required of about 1400 square metres. We used that on the basis that that is currently where Revenue and Gaming staff are located. So, we assumed that if parliament took that space then we would not be able to leave Revenue and Gaming staff in the same area and that whole area would need to be for parliament. Looking at it subsequently we have said, okay, you don't really need 1400 square metres. No doubt people can expand to whatever space is available. It is much closer to 1000 square metres. So we have said, actually the podium space is closer to 1000 square metres. We have said, okay, working assumption, parliament would expand into the podium and would need 1000 square metres and that would still give a dedicated space with no other parties.

Mrs PETRUSMA - This is going to be a new building that is going to be built between now and then. So, it will still be close enough to parliament that if the bells ring they have three minutes, they can still run into parliament in time?

Mr FERRALL - Depends on how fast they run.

Mrs PETRUSMA - The other factor is going to be how close they are.

Mr FERRALL - We have not tried to design how parliament operates either, quite obviously. The original proposal around Parliament Square was that members would not need an office in parliament and they would be able to utilise the offices in Parliament Square. There would be potentially adjustments to the operating protocols within parliament that might make allowance for that. Now that did not happen and that is a matter for parliament. I am not critical of that in any way, but those sorts of things make a difference to how much space and how many offices you might need.

In terms of changes the Chair was indicating might occur into the future which could mitigate some of these costs, there are some things like that, that possibly could occur and you might need less space.

CHAIR - Ms Haddad has a follow-up question.

Ms HADDAD - Following on from what Mrs Petrusma was asking, first of all, what sprang to mind when you said about planning the operations of parliament, my recollection is that we did do that for a time when there were members' offices in 10 Murray Street before it got demolished. The bells rang for longer, but that was a little tidbit of information for the committee that that can happen in terms of parliamentary procedure.

PUBLIC

I was just going to ask about that assumptions that all 10 new members, should they exist in future, were housed in the Parliament Square building. On the current make-up of parliament, if we imagined a scenario where six of those new members might be government members, there could be two more Greens, two more Labor and, on the current make-up, presumably they would be housed in the existing opposition rooms or in the existing rooms that the Greens are in. It might just reduce the number of offices that were needed. All 10 might not be needed.

Mrs PETRUSMA - That's a good point. There are two spare, for example, in the government backbench offices, and there's a few spare in the opposition.

CHAIR - The opposition offices operated at time when we had a 35-seat parliament and accommodated all opposition members.

Ms HADDAD - We're pretty squished, but we'd squish more in if we had more members, no doubt. We would share.

CHAIR - Have you got another question, Ms Haddad, or has that been clarified?

Ms HADDAD - No.

Ms HICKEY - That leads me into an issue that I raised. Once I became Speaker and responsible for the position of all of the parliamentarians, I was appalled at the living quarters of the Opposition and put in a big case to the Government as to why they should be given equitable offices. I fought really hard on that, believing that the way they were sitting on each other, and those stairs down there, and all the rest of it. As it turned out, the Opposition said, no they were quite happy there and didn't want to be inflicting any pain on the budget, et cetera, so I've let it drop. Does this assumption mean that all parliamentarians will move to the new building?

Mr FERRALL - No, it is not really based on that.

Ms HICKEY - So, you are only going to move 10 which could be -

Ms HADDAD - It could be less than 10.

Mr BAILEY - It assumes that the new minister's office is there. It assumes that there's 10 parliamentary offices for the new members and it assumes that there's a little bit of space as well essentially for the opposition and minority -

CHAIR - Cross-bench parties.

Mr BAILEY - Sorry, cross-bench parties.

Ms HICKEY - How many offices all up are we talking?

Mr BAILEY - The actual number of offices hasn't been calculated, but that's what it's assumed can fit in there: 10 sitting-day offices, a ministerial suite and the cross-bench party and opposition additional space.

CHAIR - We already have cross-bench offices that were set up clearly with the possibility of five cross-bench members, so we have five offices in our suite.

PUBLIC

Mr BAILEY - It's assumed to be able to be accommodated within the space, so whether that 1050 is all used just for one particular purpose, or for all three purposes, that's still to be sorted out.

Mr FERRALL - We haven't got to the point of designing offices. At the start, we've made some base-level assumptions. They're not even predictive. If the parliament was restored to 35, or restored to 30, if you want restoration because it has been 30. I'm not making any assumption as to what the makeup of that is going to be, but we've had to put something down as a base.

Ms HICKEY - This \$1.9 million one-off establishment cost, fit-out of new premises following relocation. Have you taken away the costs now of moving Treasury and Treasury's fit-out into their new premises because that was in the first one?

Mr FERRALL - At the moment the podium is being completed and will be occupied by the Department of Justice, that's the current plan. That will be completed by early 2020. The intention is that they will be occupied probably by June/July 2020. Again, in a predictive sense, if the Department of Justice is in that space and parliament is restored at a date subsequent, those people need to move somewhere and we've assumed there will be a cost of a fit-out where they move to. That's what the \$1.8 million on the basis of that; I can't move people and not have a fit-out, generally.

CHAIR - Final question.

Ms HICKEY - If this was approved, hypothetically, tomorrow, parliament's going to restore, you wouldn't be moving Treasury in the first place? You'd leave it open?

Ms DOW - Or put it off for two years?

Ms HICKEY - Yes. It's only next year, 2020.

Mr FERRALL - You might. You'd do a -

Ms HICKEY - Cost-benefit analysis?

Mr FERRALL - Yes, and work out what does it make sense to do. That is the underpinning assumption, the position now is Justice will be in that space. Where is the most logical space if parliament is to be restored to be utilised? Yes, it would be in Parliament Square and we would need to move the people out and there would be a cost associated. If we did not put the additional members of parliament into Parliament Square if there was some other space, then there is another set of costs.

I cannot predict the multitude of possible scenarios we just have to pick one and say it is indicative and reasonable.

CHAIR - Mr Ferrall, there is a significant difference between the costings provided in March and the ones tabled today, and unless we called Treasury before the committee, I am not sure we would have had these revised downward costs. I am not casting any aspersion on you, but am struggling to understand why there is such a world of difference - \$1 million.

PUBLIC

Mr FERRALL - There are two drivers to them. One is the original set of costs had an assumption around indexation over time. We had assumed effectively three years' worth of indexation and, again, for the purposes of us putting forward a set of costings, we do not know when this is going to occur.

CHAIR - 2022 is the legislation.

Mr FERRALL - And we do not know what the indexation really maybe of costs over those three years. For a comparative purpose when we revised this, we thought by putting in indexation it is probably in some ways creating a comparative point which is higher and if people are comparing a cost today you probably want today's dollars. That is not uncommon for us but it will cost more than these estimates in 2022, because there will be a set of costs rises between now and that point.

CHAIR - Assuming there are no offsets.

Mr FERRALL - Assuming there are no offsets, so we have taken that out. The second component driver relates to the amount of space. Again, by using Parliament Square as the anchor point there are limitation in terms of floor configuration and floors. An underlying assumption is that members would not want shared space. That is an assumption. Therefore, when we originally did it the most logical one to move would probably be the Treasury staff. Subsequently looking at this and a possible smaller configuration and the podium coming online - if it close to 1000 square metres - we can squeeze people into that different space then that is a reasonable assumption.

CHAIR - I am wondering if we would have got these revised costings if we had not asked for you to present to the committee.

Mr FERRALL - I think the answer would probably be no, because we prepared a set of costings some time ago. If I prepared another set of costings with a different set of assumptions in a week's time, if the committee has some variations in terms in how it might like to see things, the number will be different. The only time we will ever know what the cost is post of the event if you measure it historically. That is the only time we will be sure and will depend if we have members want better accommodation than we have assumed it will cost more, if as some members have indicated there might be satisfaction with lower quality outcomes then it could cost less.

CHAIR - Is there an allocation in the state budget for infrastructure of about \$1.4 billion. Do you know what is the average cost of a kilometre of road?

Mr FERRALL - No, I do not know off the top of my head. We have attempted to put some figures together like that for costing of election commitments. A kilometre of road is a very challenging one in terms of there are roads and there are roads. If you talk to State Growth they would not be happy with an average.

CHAIR - A kilometre of the Midland Highway.

Mr FERRALL - Offhand I do not know.

CHAIR - This morning, Michael Bailey from the Tasmanian Chamber of Commerce and Industry was here. He had a very strong view he put forward on behalf of the business community that restoration of the numbers is essential for good governance in Tasmania and the business

PUBLIC

community strongly supports a restored parliament. Does Treasury accept there is value in restoring the numbers if it increases business confidence in the functioning of the parliament and cabinet?

Mr FERRALL - I do not think Treasury is in a position to argue for or against restoration of parliament. It is ultimately a matter for parliament. We have not and it would almost be impossible to attempt calculations as to what it might mean if there was an improvement in business confidence or business sentiment on the back of this. From a Treasury perspective, I could not really turn around and say it is valuable or not because we have calculated on this basis.

CHAIR - It is intangible.

Mr FERRALL - Yes, so we do not have a position on parliament should be restored or not and is not a matter for Treasury.

CHAIR - Thank you. Do we have any final pressing questions from committee members?

Mrs RYLAH - Can I confirm we will have some figures back in regard to the average costs 25 plus 35.

Mr FERRALL - I am very happy to provide and hope we interpret the request correctly and happy to provide any information anyone wants.

CHAIR - Thank you very much for coming and presenting for us. Before we release you from our care I need to read a statement. As I advised you at the commencement of your evidence what you have said to us here today is protected by parliamentary privilege, once you leave the table you need to be aware that privilege does not attach to comments you may make to anyone including the media even if you are just repeating what you have said to us. Is that all good.

Mr FERRALL - Thank you.

CHAIR - Thank you.

THE WITNESSES WITHDREW.

PUBLIC

Mr MICHAEL POLLEY WAS CALLED, MADE THE STATUTORY DECLARATION AND WAS EXAMINED.

CHAIR - Did you receive and read the committee guide sent to you by the secretary? If so, I need to reiterate some important aspects of that document. A committee hearing is a proceeding in parliament. This means it receives the protection of parliamentary privilege. This is an important legal protection that allows individuals giving evidence to a parliamentary committee to speak with complete freedom without the fear of being sued or questioned in any court or place out of parliament. It applies to ensure that parliament receives the very best information when conducting its inquiries.

It is important to be aware that this protection is not accorded to you if statements that may be defamatory are repeated or referred to by you outside the confines of the parliamentary proceedings. Mr Polley, as you know, this is a public hearing. It is being broadcast today. Members of the public and journalists may be present and this means your evidence may be reported. It is important that should you wish all or part of your evidence to be heard in private you need to make this request and give an explanation prior to giving the relevant evidence. Is that all clear for you?

Mr POLLEY - It is so.

CHAIR - Mr Polley, we are so pleased that you have come before the committee to present. We know you have unique experience and insight and that you've worked in both a 35-seat parliament and a 25-seat parliament. Would you like to make some opening comments to the committee about the matter before the inquiry?

Mr POLLEY - I would hope that when the committee gives its report that it can all agree on a way forward, then it would be left up to the various political parties to determine whether they intend to support the bill. It is important if the committee can come out with a really good report because it is very essential that we do increase the size of parliament.

You would note that during my time as Speaker I restored the parliamentary building itself, the actual Chamber, because it was absolutely butchered in the 1970s. When I came in here it was the original Chamber, Art Deco, and I was the only person left that knew what it looked like. During my time as Speaker I had it restored and, at that time, there was a will to find the money. We were going through similar problems that governments are always going through, and you have to list your priorities. I think the cost of restoring the parliament was about \$6 million because it not only had to have the cameras put in, we had to have a control room put in and so on and so on. All the work that has been done in the parliament to restore it was done by local craftsmen. I restored it back to a 35-seat House even though at the time we had gone to a 25-seat House. I believe that it was essential, and I still think it is essential to go back to a 35-seat House.

When I was elected to parliament in 1972, I was elected for a five-year term. It used to be five-year terms in parliament, then they went back to a four-year term. People have been chopping and changing how parliaments are elected for a long time. In my first term we actually served four and a half years and then went to an election again. When Labor came to office in 1972 we won 21 seats out of 35, but the opposition still won 14 so the opposition still had a sizeable opposition. At the next election we won by only one seat. The government had 18 seats and the opposition had 17 seats.

PUBLIC

The actual dynamics of having 35 seats is very, very important. For instance, when I first came in as a very young man, the position of Whip was hotly contested. The reason it was hotly contested is that you had 10 ministers and it was a way to get close to the premier of the day, sitting behind, a way to progress your way forward. It was hotly contested within the caucus because you were competing. You had a large backbench who wanted to be noticed. The first person to be elected Speaker was Hedley Farquhar, who then subsequently went on to become the minister for Health after about two and a half years. Then, guess what? I was the next one to be elected and I went on to become a minister at the age of 27 in 1976. Again, that was unusual in a way because the average wait to go into the ministry was about seven to eight years because you had a caucus, whether you were a Liberal government or a Labor government, no less than about 18 and if you had a few in the upper House you would have almost a permanent caucus of over 20. The competition was very brisk and the talent tended to bubble to the top.

We have a situation at the moment where they are having a review of the Local Government Act. One of the things they put in the Local Government Act in this review is that they are trying to say that anyone seeking a seat in a local council will need to do a special course before they nominate. That is one of the recommendations. Yet, here we have the House of Assembly back to 25 seats and, sometimes, you find yourself forming government with ministers coming straight off the street, managing a portfolio of millions with no basic experience. There is a little bit of inconsistency there.

In my time I was returned to the House on 12 different occasions over 42 years. We had a situation in the previous government prior to the present Government coming into office where there was 10 opposition, 10 government, and the balance of power with the Greens party. When you sat down and you found that you had nine ministries to fill and - whoever were to form government at that time, and both were competing to get it - people asked, why did you put two Greens in Cabinet? It was not my choice; it was the premier's choice. When you sat and thought, how do we get the experience together to form an administration? The Governor commissioned the Labor Party at that time to form the government. The outgoing premier offered his resignation. The Liberal Party then went to the Governor but was not able to convince him to form a stable majority, and so it was left up to the new government to be sworn in.

You expect every person who is elected to have the experience, and indeed sometimes the talent to be able to take on those responsibilities. It's really going to be up to the political parties and the crossbench to have the will to bite the bullet on this. It will happen one day, eventually. I hope it happens in my lifetime.

There should never have been a situation where the parliament and the numbers were reduced. It came about after a combination of a minority government, of Labor-Greens government, then a majority Liberal government, then a minority Liberal-Greens government. Part of this problem started in 1986. The then Liberal Party had won the election in 1982 in a landslide. They were going to win the election in 1986 in a landslide, but the premier of the day said, 'We're going to freeze parliamentary salaries'. They froze the parliamentary salaries for the next 10-odd years.

A theory was put forward that it was to try to restrict the access to parliament by smaller groups, but I think it was also a combination of the backlash of the 40 per cent increase at the same time, coupled with that, and the heat coming on the members of parliament that made it easier for that occur. It was the worst thing that could have ever happened.

PUBLIC

Apart from local government, my other role is to chair the Catholic Education Commission. We have occasion to meet with the Minister for Education about every three months. He is Deputy Premier with many portfolios, and a very competent minister. We have a terrific relationship with him. Every time you can see that pressure is in that office all the time, with people waiting to see the minister, and so on. It was pointed out by a previous witness that there are three Cabinet ministers in Bass. How do you get to those ministers? If you're a government backbencher, that's the track to try to get to a minister's office. Ministers are so busy. People always go to a government member first, and an opposition member second.

For all those reasons, we have to do something about bringing back the 35 seats. I ask you to make it simple. I can see some of Dr Amos's logic. Really, that is very hard to sell to the people. What you really need to do is bring back a good report, put it on the table. Hopefully, the powers that be can convince the media to get behind it, to do what they're doing for football and all the major political parties agreed to carry it out. Unless that happens, I can't see this happening in my lifetime. I'd hope to be around for a decade or two yet.

CHAIR - Hear, hear, at least.

Thank you, Mr Polley. In calling for submissions, I have to admit that part of me worried that we would be flooded with submissions from members of the public saying, 'You are kidding, right? Ten more politicians'. You're a person who has deep connection into your community and particularly now in local government. Is it your sense that the public mood has changed about restoration, or do you think there's a level of ambivalence, or hostility?

Mr POLLEY - People are so busy getting on with their lives that they don't put much thought into it really. They're busy trying to raise their families, get their income, and so on. I think it would be a five-minute wonder once it happens. It's just getting through that barrier, to get people to go running through the barrier, the Liberal Party, the Greens - and currently that's all we can talk about - and the Labor Party. Because, once it's over, it's over. People move on, and they will move on. It worries me that it is happening midway through the term, when it would have been better at the beginning of the term.

CHAIR - We tried that.

Mr POLLEY - Even if this committee does its job, and even if it doesn't happen this term, this report should be so good that it stands the test of time for political parties to be able to put themselves in the position, at least after the next election.

CHAIR - Why would it be any different then, Mr Polley? With respect.

Mr POLLEY - It is a matter of getting to an agreement. One of the problems is that everybody is frightened at the moment about wearing the blame of the amount of money involved. The amount of money is insignificant compared to the overall budget. It is about the quality of the outcome. It is about the money saved.

Again, in my role with Catholic Education, we are constantly mandatory reporting. I feel sorry for the minister responsible for childcare. I think there are something like 35 000 to 40 000, I stand corrected on the exact numbers, of reports every year. How can a minister get across which of those are the most crucial? How do you keep on top of that alone? My first portfolio back in the 1970s

PUBLIC

was welfare minister. I know even then what the problems were, let alone what it is now, and we didn't have mandatory reporting at that time.

How does a minister ever have time to sit back and think about the way forward, or policy development when they are constantly under pressure all the time to just administer? When the Government decided on the restoration of the parliament chamber, they found \$6 million. I know that was a one-off. The actual ongoing costs to restoring this is nothing compared to the savings we have made overall, and better policy outcome for the people of Tasmania.

CHAIR - You suggested that we make this report so compelling that it is very difficult for our colleagues to ignore its recommendations. We haven't heard any evidence from anyone that is strongly against restoring the numbers. As you would be aware, there have been three state-instigated independent investigation into restoration, including the Ogilvy Report, the Mohring [TBC] Report, and Emeritus Professor Peter Boyce in 2009-2010.

Do you agree this is a question of political courage, as was put to us by Michael Bailey from the Tasmanian Chamber of Commerce and Industry, this morning? If parliament is to do its job, then we need to take this inquiry report seriously, and not put it on the shelf along with all the other reports that have been done on the need to restore the numbers.

Mr POLLEY - Absolutely. You need the parliament and the parliamentarians to show the necessary courage to do it. After all, they showed that courage in 1958. You have to remember that up until 1958 it was a 30-member house. If you look up along the row of Speakers, you will notice that in the 1950s, there were two Liberal Party Speakers, even though Labor was in government.

The old system used to be 30 members. Quite often the election result would be 15-15. The state constitution said in that case, they would count the votes of the entire state and determine which party got the biggest percentage of votes across the whole state. Then, under the constitution, the opposition had to provide the Speaker and Chairman of Committees by law. They had no choice. That is what used to happen. Even though Labor governed for 35 years, some were hung parliaments. As result, they took it to 35, which is a good number. A member of the Legislative Council, who will remain nameless, said to me recently, 'It would be more palatable to have 30'. Bunkum. It creates a problem in not getting outcomes. In the future, whether we like it or not, more and more independents are going to be elected and, possibly, more and more hung parliaments.

You have the best and the fairest and most democratic electoral system. There is no safe havens in that system. There is no safe place. If you work the Hare-Clark system, you have to be working. If you are not working, you are not going to get your share of the vote in your party ticket. It is the best outcome for the constituents. It is the best outcome for democracy. The design was to prop up independents and minor parties. That has happened quite often. As I said in the 35 years of Labor rule quite a number of them. After they changed the act in 1958, the next Labor government was kept in power by an independent. I think his name was Billy Wedd and a member for Denison. Then Labor got a majority in 1964 and then lost the government in 1969.

Mrs PETRUSMA - Mr Polley, you would have been in parliament then when there were 10 ministers versus nine ministers. What do you see is the advantage? Do you believe we need 10 ministers, because that is part of this bill? Do you believe 10 ministers is better than nine?

PUBLIC

Mr POLLEY - Yes, because it spreads the load and it allows for policy development. My first caucus the backbench outweighed the cabinet. This was a good thing because cabinet was made to explain their bills and be answerable to the backbench. You had that extra layer of scrutiny. Both parties now have members in the upper House, so if you went back to 35 and a Liberal government was elected you would finish up with 10 ministers and probably two or possibly three upper House members added to the 18 gives you 21. That exact situation used to happen in the larger parliament with Labor. We often had two or three members in the upper House who would then join the caucus, which took your 18. In the Lowe government we had 20 seats. That way you are getting added pressure and competition because there were a lot of people who came into parliament at that time who never made the ministry for one reason or another.

Mrs PETRUSMA - You are the Chair of Catholic Education and many of the community sector organisations see a lot of need out there. We are told today the average cost is going to be \$6.2 million recurrent costs, how do you think we argue the cost argument when there is so much need. You have been there, you were the previous minister for welfare, so how do you argue that recurrent?

Mr POLLEY - You have to go out and perhaps compare it. On the Midlands Highway question, I do not have the exact figures, but think it is somewhere between \$4 million to \$5 million per kilometre, and that is without any huge fill in construction. That is about what you are looking at. You have to go out and say this is a necessity to get better outcomes. There is an ideal model you get to and that is how do you have a competent Speaker, Chairman of Committees, how do you have a committee system, be able to pick the best of the crop to be in the ministry? The cost savings would be enormous over a period of years because of better outcomes and better policy. The present government eventually will lose. All governments eventually lose and probably on the way out you may lose and have a minority and then the decision has to be made by the Governor as to whether you form a government or not. You may be trying to form a government under the present model. We were at the end of our 12 years of majority government, then in the minority and had to form a government. The best way to form a government whether you like it or not was to have a competent ministry. When you are sitting there with only 9 or 10 of you and under the Constitution you have to provide a Speaker, a Chairman of Committees as well as ministers, you are going to have to form an arrangement with some other group.

Ms HICKEY - Which is what is happening around the world a lot more.

Mr POLLEY - It is. Nationally, look after the last federal election. It was very close in the lower House.

CHAIR - Not close enough, Mr Polley.

Mr POLLEY - Of course. Obviously I am a bit biased that way, yes.

Ms HADDAD - I had two short questions, Michael, about ministries. Early on you spoke about the average wait to get into the ministry was seven or eight years. I worked for two Labor ministers who were ministers in their first term. You touched on that and the difficulties in terms of administering a portfolio. Those two members also went on to lose their seats after that first and only term they each held in the state parliament. I wondered if you had any comments about the added difficulties electorally to people being made ministers in their first term in addition to the comments you made about the difficulties of running a portfolio in your first term. Also, I was interested in your views in seeking ministers from the upper House.

PUBLIC

Mr POLLEY - In the present system to obtain ministers we scrape them up for the simple reason that there are not enough people. The great benefit I had when I was elected when I was 22 when I came into parliament and we had members here on both sides who had been here since 1946. Eric Reece and Fagan and Angus Bethune and many others in the 1950s. When I left the parliament a lot of the memory left. I had been in the chair 16 years so most of the members had never heard me speak on the floor of the House and I had a whole career before that.

One of the problems, with due respects to the present Speaker, when I came to the chair I had almost 20 years' experience and so a huge loss to the parliament having people here who have memories of both sides of procedure and the traditions to be a good parliamentarian. You are right, Brian Wightman was a very competent minister and the person had one term.

Ms HADDAD - He was one of the ministers I was talking about.

Mr POLLEY - He was an elected to a position where he got paid less than when he came in here and, unfortunately, his superannuation was affected by being a public servant that cannot go back. Another problem in the future is to be able to encourage people to come into the parliament of any political party and yet they need to have a good career path ahead of them to be able to do that and stability.

Ms HADDAD - And upper House ministers?

Mr POLLEY - Not a problem there. I think there has always been minister from the upper House going back over 30 or 40 years. If you have a good person in the upper House you should use them in the ministry.

Mrs RYLAH - I am interested in the engagement with parliament. The argument about restoring parliament for me is about getting the community engaged in the conversation about being engaged with parliament. We do not seem to have that conversation anymore. It is not a conversation you hear in the media - the benefits of being engaging with parliament. On the other hand, when you have people visit us from interstate they cannot believe how close we are as members of parliament with our constituents. We are all nodding, so how do you see those two things because they are telling us different answers to this issue about restoration? What are your thoughts?

Mr POLLEY - First of all, people do not think you are working unless they are seeing you. In the seven seats I served in in the electorate of Lyons earlier today someone said, oh well, you have five and six people turning up at the function. That is great. People love that. Not only do they like it, also you note if you did not respond to the request coming from a Labor voter they had in most of my terms, three others to go to. You did your darndest they never left you, and they did the same and the same with the Liberal Party.

There is an expectation in the community that people want to engage with their members and the present system of five is not adequate enough. It certainly isn't in the big electorates of Braddon and Lyons. I do not think we should go back to single person electorate system because if you do many of you in this room would never had been pre-selected, including myself, because the various groups within the parties would have control. I certainly at 21 would not have been pre-selected and elected at 22. I was put on the bottom end of the ticket.

PUBLIC

The great value of our ticket is you have to get to know your constituents because there are no how to vote cards, and that is a great thing. It also protects you as members, because no one ever gets de-preselected once you get elected. You have to be culled out.

Ms HICKEY - Be a time coming.

Mr POLLEY - I cannot speak for present company but I hope not. Does that answer your question?

Mrs RYLAH - In part. It is more about this side of that equation which is getting a conversation up about engaging and the opportunity to engage in parliament, because we've got to sell this idea to the constituency of Tasmania to be engaged. How do we do that?

Mr POLLEY - It's very difficult. I think you just have to bite the bullet and do it. If you get the media behind you and the newspapers - it's almost like, for instance, one of things that has grown, particularly in my electorate, is the perception - and it's probably still there now - that because back 100-odd years ago only the wealthy came to parliament, in fact before they brought the Hare-Clark system in and then before they started paying members, they virtually paid members nothing. When the Labor Party was formed, they had to take up a levy to pay the members. There was actually a big resistance to paying members because the club used to control the place, the wealthier people. So there was always a perception that a member should be sponsoring this and sponsoring that; it still there today, where they expect you to pay for trophies and all sorts and it really harks back to the old society. That's how they used to featherbed their electorates and so on. On this occasion, you are just going to have to bite the bullet and get the press behind you. It'll go like that. I always remember the great controversy over the pay increase that should never have been allowed to happen. It was only the 2 per cent and 3 per cent that everybody else had got over the previous decade, but when we finally got an increase it was a 40 per cent increase.

Ms HADDAD - People still have those stickers on their cars.

Mr POLLEY - They still have them and they still voted members in and most of the members at the next election got re-elected. It should never have been allowed to happen. So whatever you do, it's like being a mayor and freezing rates: eventually somebody has to increase them.

CHAIR - Mr Polley, your advice to parties and to members is to bite the bullet and restore the numbers. I am sure you understand the politics here, where we have two major parties basically playing chicken with each other on restoration. I can say that with great confidence, given the conversations that I've had with people and also my experience on this committee. How do you break through that? Would you support, for example, the Chamber of Commerce and Industry going to the political party leaders and seeking their agreement in a tripartisan way to restore the numbers? Can you understand why we are in this situation where, apparently, the two major parties are playing chicken with each other because one is afraid that if it supports restoration then the other will go to the next election attacking them? What is your advice to the leaders?

Mr POLLEY - I think you've got to go to the chamber of commerce; they've got to come out and campaign for it. It is all right for the editorials in the papers, but that is not enough. Who reads the editorials? People like me do, but not everybody. You need to have that momentum, like the one that is building up at the moment for a statewide football team, and the rest will eventually take care of itself. Other than that, I can understand each of the political parties because that has been down through the ages unfortunately, leaving themselves open to some form of attack. I think

PUBLIC

nationally, both major parties, at the previous federal election over Medicare and this last one over massive reform in relation to taxation and what have you, you do leave yourself open to attack from your opposition - that's the name of the game. The only way you are going to get over that is have a momentum, pretty much external, building up from the political parties, in my view.

CHAIR - Thank you. We have had the Aboriginal community leaders come before the committee and there is a proposal - which I am sure you are aware of - for two dedicated seats in the Tasmanian Parliament for the Aboriginal communities as in the parliament at the moment they really do not have a voice, even though we have one member of the current parliament who is a pakana woman but operating within the Labor Party. What is your view on a dedicated Aboriginal representation and potentially, as Dr Amos put this morning, in the upper House?

Mr POLLEY - If you look at it nationally, that is already emerging, both in the lower House and the Senate. My advice to this committee is not to confuse it with what you are looking at here and perhaps look at it down the track with another committee. If there was ever to be a voice added, it ought to be in the House of review, but that should be kept separate. If you are trying to overcome this problem, you can't confuse it with too many arguments going at once because if you do, it just becomes too convoluted. I've never really given it a lot of thought, but I think what Dr Amos said, if ever it were to happen, it would be in the Legislative Council. In the lower House you can change the whole balance of the outcome of an election. I've never given it enough thought, except I think it should be kept separate from what you are doing at the moment because you want to be able to have a concise, easy, simple change from five to seven and restoring parliament back to what it should be, to 35. Anything else just confuses the argument and there are too many balls in the air. That is my political view. I can see that in the future there may be a case made for that in the Legislative Council, but certainly not in the lower House.

CHAIR - You would agree there is something approaching a moral imperative, isn't there, on the Tasmanian Parliament, upper and lower Houses, to address the fact that there is no Aboriginal representation in the parliament?

Mr POLLEY - There has been in the past, since I was here.

CHAIR - Yes. There have been members elected who are Tasmanian Aboriginal people, but in terms of a voice for Aboriginal people, it has not been there in the parliament in the past. There probably is a moral argument for addressing that.

Mr POLLEY - That is something you should look at in the future.

CHAIR - Is there anything you would like to say before we release you?

Mr POLLEY - No. It's a first for me to sit on this side after 42 years and I wish you all the best with your deliberations. I just hope you are successful. You won't believe yourself when you get back to 35, believe me, as to how - a totally different world. It all happened because, really, it was never designed to happen; it happened because of circumstances of events which was a mixed thing about majority government, where no-one looked at the minority governments of the previous 30 or 40 years prior to that.

Mrs RYLAH - And the pay freeze. I thought that was a really fascinating point - an unexpected outcome.

PUBLIC

CHAIR - Interestingly, if we had gone to the last election on a 35-seat House, the numbers that we have been presented with is that there would be a fatter majority for the Liberal Government.

Mr POLLEY - Oh yes, absolutely. I have seen it where we have polled pretty well and just come back with a one-seat majority, but overall, you would have been in a two- or three-seat majority if it had occurred at the last election.

CHAIR - Thank you. Mr Polley, before you go, as I advised you at the commencement of your evidence, what you said to us here today is protected by parliamentary privilege. Once you leave this table, I am sure you are aware that privilege does not attach to comments you make to anyone, including the media even if you are just repeating what you said to us.

Mr POLLEY - Thank you very much.

CHAIR - Thank you so much.

THE WITNESS WITHDREW.

PUBLIC

Ms KYM GOODES, CEO TASCROSS, WAS CALLED, MADE THE STATUTORY DECLARATION AND WAS EXAMINED.

CHAIR - Welcome, Ms Goodes. Thank you so much for coming to present to the committee.

Just before you begin your giving your evidence, have you received and read the guide sent to you by the committee secretary?

Ms GOODES - Yes, I have.

CHAIR - I still have to reiterate some of the points in that document.

A committee hearing is a proceeding in parliament. This means it receives the protection of parliamentary privilege. This is an important legal protection that allows committees and individuals giving evidence to a parliamentary committee to speak with complete freedom without the fear of being sued or questioned in any court or place out of parliament. It applies to ensure that parliament receives the best information when conducting its inquiries.

It is important to be aware that this protection is not accorded to your statements that may be defamatory, are repeated or are referred to by you outside the confines of these proceedings. This is a public hearing. It is being broadcast today. Members of the public and journalists may be present, and this means your evidence may be recorded. It is important that should you wish all, or part, of your evidence, to be heard in private, you need to make this request and give an explanation prior to giving the relevant evidence.

Is that all good with you?

Ms GOODES - Yes.

CHAIR - Thank you, Ms Goodes. I am sure you know everyone at this table quite well, given your passionate advocacy for the community sector.

What we have been saying to witnesses who come before the committee is that you have an opportunity before we start asking you questions to present some of your case from TasCOSS's point of view.

Ms GOODES - Thank you. TasCOSS didn't put in a written submission, not because we didn't consider this to be an important area to be investigated and discussed. It was a capacity issue for us at the time, to be blunt. We had quite a few other submissions we were working on, so we didn't feel we had to capacity, but that is not an indication that we do not consider it to be very important. Despite what I will probably just talk about, I want to say, in the broadest sense, we would support the restoration of the parliament to its previous level.

In saying that, I guess one of the things we really want to highlight is: What is the problem that we are trying to solve? Is that the only way of solving that problem? We think it is one element of that.

The purpose of government is to ensure that citizens have access to the most essential services they need to live a good life, and our advocacy is all about how we ensure all Tasmanians have the opportunity to live a good life.

PUBLIC

The role of the parliament is to provide the legislative framework and other instruments that are required in order for those essential services to be able to be delivered to the citizens of this state.

If that is the role of the government, the role of the parliament, how did we get to the point we are at where it feels like that is the last part of what the role of the parliament and government might be focused on, day to day? While we agree that workloads, and a range of other factors, mean that it is really challenging to be able to meet those requirements, sitting around that are a whole range of systems, behaviours, and attitudes that we believe are getting in the way of getting a good outcome for Tasmanians.

What we would say as a civil society organisation, which is TasCOSS's role, is please think broadly, think beyond numbers and think that form follows function. What functions do we need to work effectively and efficiently on before we think about the numbers we need to then deliver them? We believe there is a greater need, and it is part of a bigger conversation about what our society expects of its government, and, therefore, its parliament?

CHAIR - Thank you, Kym. Committee members will have a range of questions, but I'll start.

Michael Bailey from the Tasmanian Chamber of Commerce and Industry presented to the inquiry this morning, and he made a very strong case on behalf of business for restoration. His arguments related to governance, stability and representation. He talked about the importance in a democracy of having members of parliament who are able to represent and connect with their constituents and how difficult it is for ministers.

When we talk about what is the problem, one of the recurrent themes that's come through submissions is the problem of adequate representation of communities. What's your response to that?

Ms GOODES - I would absolutely endorse and agree with Michael's comments. In thinking through what is good governance, one key element about good governance is that people have a voice in that. In that regard, public participation in the process of self-democracy, both at parliamentary level, but also at in community level. Our observation is that ministers, particularly because of workloads, the other pressures and factors that fill their days and the lack of backbenchers, who previously would have done a lot of grassroots constituent work in communities, are now strained because the number of people available to do that is very limited.

From a community perspective, while there are still a range of ways the public can participate in the parliament and in democracy, with the communities we're working in and the people we work with day to day, that is often not seen as clear pathway for them.

Unless there are particular functions that members of parliament are attending, and community cabinet I know is held at particular points around the state, there are very few open forums available to people in the Tasmanian community to connect with their elected members across the three tiers of government, not just the state but equally at a state level, which is the level that impacts day to day in people's lives and decision-making. The ability for Tasmanians to have firsthand input into decision-making is reasonably limited in many communities.

PUBLIC

I absolutely support and endorse the positions put forward by the Aboriginal community to this committee, and TasCOSS agrees that the need to have dedicated Aboriginal representation in the parliament is well and truly overdue. We look at democracies, and we look to New Zealand or Canada where we are starting to see improved outcomes for First Nation peoples in democracies where they have directly elected members of the parliament. On every measure you might want to look at, Tasmanian Aboriginal people are not currently, through lack of voice, performing and having access to the outcomes the general population does. I don't think we'll ever achieve a true treaty. We'll never achieve a truly inclusive and equitable parliament until we give a voice directly to those Tasmanian Aboriginal people.

CHAIR - Thank you, Kym. I was just reflecting on what you said then about the limited opportunities for Tasmanians to have direct input into policy-making. We often hear, as elected representatives, that people appreciate the intimacy of Tasmanian politics, particularly people who come here from other countries. They can't quite believe how easy it is to access members of parliament, and indeed ministers.

Do you think this is more an issue of regional and rural equity, rather than something necessarily structurally wrong with the way the system works now?

Ms GOODES - It's a bit of both, I think. Having spent up until the last four years my entire life living in Launceston, my engagement with decision-makers at ministerial level was pretty hit-and-miss unless I sought them out myself for a particular issue, or we crossed paths at functions. It was not as it is now that I live in Hobart.

Obviously in my role I engage more closely anyway, but outside my day-to-day working hours I still have a greater opportunity to engage more closely with people at ministerial and decision-making level because predominantly they spend more of their time in Hobart even when they are from other parts of the state. I don't think I truly understood that inequity myself until I moved to Hobart. I assumed, when I lived in Launceston, that I had good access to decision-makers when and if I chose to, but I now realise that wasn't the case at a regional level.

I also think it's at a level where, if you're not working, if you're not employed in a role that brings you into close association, if you're not participating in a particular part of a community where often you will get ministers to come and open things or attend functions, if you are not engaged in the day-to-day parts of community, which many Tasmanians aren't - purely because of poverty they are very socially isolated and very excluded - then you don't have the opportunity to have your voice heard unless organisations like Neighbourhood Houses or community organisations try to bring those voices forward.

We have just spent the past fortnight not listening to but scribing the stories of people on Newstart. We weren't there to hear their stories; we were there to help them tell their stories to the Senate inquiry into the increase of Newstart. The most dominant theme was social isolation. People had no idea they could have a voice directly to decision-makers through any part of their community processes. It was only through them being linked through social media, Neighbourhood Houses or other means that they could come forward and either phone us or meet us face to face. We went into the prison and listened to people's stories about what it felt like coming in and out of prison and having to come off and on Newstart.

PUBLIC

How do those voices come to this parliament on state issues? I think we still don't have a structure that allows us to get deeply into communities to hear the voices of those people whose voices we often don't hear.

CHAIR - That's an interesting take on things. As a local member, I have frequent contact with people who are living on the margins or have been shut out of housing or can't afford to feed their families or who have mental health challenges and are coming up against service obstacles. I guess conversely I would argue that local members who are not having to carry heavy portfolios have a unique opportunity and responsibility in relation to those marginalised communities. One of the problems we heard about this morning is that, for example, in Bass you have three government members who are ministers so they can't get out and about enough, and two Labor members. Those opportunities for the community to speak to representatives are limited and partly that's a function of a smaller parliament, I would argue.

Ms GOODES - I absolutely agree with that and I understand that people can bring issues forward when they need to. I think what we are lacking at the moment is - people can only and often and only do come forward when there's a problem, when there's a reason. If we only ever formulate public policy and the positions of parties based on fixing issues because people are coming to talk about their housing problem or whatever - which is obviously critical, don't get me wrong - we don't ask the bigger questions of what is a good society and what is a good life in Tasmania. We don't ask those questions at times when people aren't in need but actually it's part of feeding into the democratic process. The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development - OECD - measures what they call 'How's life?' so if we just go out and ask people, 'How's life?' and we give people the opportunity to come and talk in communities about 'How's life?', we don't lead them on those issues, we let them bring up the issues that are important.

We also then capture what's good about life in Tasmania and I think that's the part we don't see any formal structures around. Don't get me wrong; I'm not saying that I don't think there's great engagement by our elected members with the general public because there absolutely is. If a person needs to contact their local member, they can walk into their office and be supported, but good public policy is about more than just fixing the problems coming through the door - not the people but the problems they present with. It is about understanding how we want to make Tasmania the best place to live for Tasmanians, how we listen to what that looks like for the average person in the street who may not turn up with an issue or a need, but still would like to have a voice in democracy beyond their vote.

CHAIR - I guess it raises also the question of how we measure that, what kind of datasets do we have now, what are the gaps, and so you can get that finer grain.

Ms GOODES - The OECD, across a range of developed countries including Australia, has a measure called 'How's Life?' and that measures what people say they think their life is like and then, based on averaging that out, what would be a better life. They are the goals for government, how do you make sure there is a better life for many people whose lives currently are not providing what we would call a good living standard? We see that now in other parts of the world. I know a lot of people talk about the New Zealand model of wellbeing. Their budget is now measured not just in economic terms but also in the wellbeing of the community. They are the areas we need to think differently about in terms of the voice coming to a parliament, and that is why we would support the increase in the number of people elected to do that. It means the capacity to do that is greater, but if that is all we do, if we just elect two more people per electorate or a similar model but don't change what is sitting around the current system that may prevent voices from coming in, or it may

PUBLIC

not take a proactive and visionary approach to what we want the future of our state to look like, all we will be doing is increasing the numbers but not tackling where efficiencies or effectiveness of government and governance may or may not currently be needed.

CHAIR - We are dealing with legislation that is not about increasing the numbers; it is about restoring the numbers to the 1998 level. There is very limited capacity within our brief to solve those bigger social and economic issues. Can you see there is an argument for a stronger backbench so that you could have that representation of community concerns and potentially also greater diversity within the parliament that is created by a restored House?

Ms GOODES - I can. Whether the general public will see it that way I think is another question because the current perception of parliament, its functions and its influence on the outcomes of people's lives is quite disconnected from the average citizen, no matter how much local contact they may or may not have. What people see going on in the parliament is quite disconnected from their day-to-day lives. If all they are hearing is that this is a bill to increase the number of people who will participate in a process that they don't necessarily have much faith in currently and you couldn't answer the question 'Will someone's life be better because of it?', it is a very hard argument to sell to the general public even though those immersed in it every day can see absolutely that an increased backbench would mean the increased capacity for a greater voice of community to come in and a greater diversity of the kinds of people sitting in the parliament. How you take that out to a general public I think is a big challenge at the moment when - not just in Tasmania, not just in Australia, but all over the world - people are questioning whether the current form of parliaments and democracy is delivering for citizens.

CHAIR - Do we have other questions?

Mrs RYLAH - I am interested in the OECD question on 'How's Life?', and your comment in regard to the form and forum are two words that I picked up. In what forum does the OECD ask that question, 'How's Life?' Is that online - do you know how they do it?

Ms GOODES - It varies country by country. In part, they go out and do that directly with communities across particular nations; in part, they look at data that is already coming through recognised institutions, for example in Australia the Australian Institute for Health and Wellbeing et cetera. They have a range of ways to measure 'How's Life?' in each country, some of which are qualitative and some quantitative. Then they look at what they consider to be a better life that you should expect as a basic level of living standards in any nation. They measure where countries are or are not coming up to a level of what would be considered acceptable living standards. I can't quote them all off the top of my head, but they measure health and education outcomes. One of the things, which is quite relevant to this discussion, they measure is civic participation in decision-making and democracy, and they measure the level of representation of that.

Back to the question of the needs for Tasmanian Aboriginal people. We would be measured quite low as a country and as a state in that regard. They do their measures at a whole nation-level, not at a state level. They look at the environment, the way people can engage in their communities, all those things are measured as part of a How's Life measurement.

Mrs RYLAH - You said their tradition is being questioned in other parts of the world. Traditionally, parliament has been the forum in which people participate. I don't want to put words in anyone else's mouth, but I don't think any of us would disagree with the fact that the role of

PUBLIC

parliament as an everyday person's space to have a forum is not like it might have been in the days of the Roman Empire.

CHAIR - People had very little voice in the Roman Empire.

Mrs RYLAH - I don't know where that image comes from. What forums do you see that we need to create? We can't sell it on restoring the numbers.

Ms GOODES - I think there are models in other parts of Australia and internationally. One of them is a citizens' jury model where you take a very carefully selected cross-section of a community and you test a particular important issue for a state with that group of citizens. They are quite structured -

Mrs RYLAH - Like a focus group?

Ms GOODES - Yes and no. A citizens' jury model is quite a structured process. There are governments in Australia using this. The New South Wales Liberal government regularly convenes citizens' juries for controversial issues to help local communities hear all the evidence on a community need. To ensure it is 100 per cent representative and not in any way tainted by party politics or particular strong interest groups, they select a random group from the population using a particular method. Around 22 people sit on the jury and everyone relating to that issue presents evidence.

This is a hypothetical. It might be on the raise in Newstart. TasCOSS, for example, would present evidence on what that would mean in Tasmania for those people who are impacted. A government may come and present what they think it means in terms of legislative frameworks, all the way through to a regulatory environment - what would need to change. You truly hear from the voice of a community once they have heard all the evidence, the data, the information they require, what they think is the way forward.

Governments don't then have to do what the citizens say, but they are well informed by local people on local issues that are going to impact their lives. That is quite a formal model all the way through to a more regular tour around a state like Tasmania just holding open forums with people.

Mrs RYLAH - Thank you, I really appreciate it. I know I have taken the committee off from its main focus.

CHAIR - No, it's an interesting point of discussion.

Ms GOODES - What would more backbenchers do? There are examples of ways you could actually be quite targeted in what they did in restoring the numbers.

Mrs PETRUSMA - Kym, it's good to hear that within the right sort of parameters that TasCOSS would support a restoration. Do all your members believe that? Or a good percentage of them?

Ms GOODES - It would be something we would want to take out to our members and talk more deeply about. In the general sense, TasCOSS represents our community service organisations. We also provide a voice to people in communities who don't have a voice. In all those discussions and the ways we go out and consult really regularly, one of the most common themes we hear is,

PUBLIC

'We don't get to have input into local decisions. How could we have more of a voice in local decision-making?' For the general community voices, we often bring up to decision-makers through our submissions processes. I sit here today probably representing that voice more than the member organisations of TasCOSS, which could potentially have a range of views on this. We didn't put in a submission in part because we did not have the time or the capacity to go out and ask our membership their varying views on this and then do some analysis. I don't want to speak on behalf of our members.

Mrs PETRUSMA - The community sector as an employer has about 10 000?

Ms GOODES - Just a bit over 12 000 now.

Mrs PETRUSMA - A bit over 12 000; it is a big employer in this state. About 12 000 employees are quite conscious of the fact you are representing them here today as well. Today Treasury has told us it is going to be about \$6.15 million, it might be a bit less, in any year. Keeping in mind the organisations that TasCOSS represents, how do you think they will see that \$6.15 million being spent on the restoration of parliamentarians or restoration versus housing or mental health or other issues?

CHAIR - We are asking for your subjective opinion on this question.

Ms GOODES - I think that comes back to what would look different if the numbers were increased. What is the value-for-money proposition wrapped around \$6.15 million? What value will that bring back to people in the Tasmanian communities our members work with? Equally, often it is challenging at times to get in front of the minister we need to get in front of in a timely way because they are managing multiple portfolios. I think our sector would see that a range of advantages in doing that, but I would equally say that you would want to see good and improved public policy responses.

One of the areas of good governance is that good governance is responsive. How would the parliament, the ministers and the layers that sit around a ministerial team be more responsive to the needs of the community sector and therefore the community? I think 'How would we see a more responsive policy coming out of government if the numbers were increased?' would be the question they would want answered.

Mrs PETRUSMA - One element of the bill is to go from nine ministers to 10 ministers, would you also support that as being one of the reforms through this bill?

Ms GOODES - Again, I think without further definition of it, it would be hard to answer that question. Would the ministerial portfolios be better aligned with the current agencies within the public service? I know at the moment we have secretaries we have brought into three, four, five ministers. While you are talking about restoring, what does that mean to everyone who sits around that?

I think one of the challenges for all of us is the highly politicised nature of ministerial officers now relative to what they might have been at the time when the parliament was reduced. My observation is that there was a higher level of subject matter expertise in ministers' offices than there is today. How does that impact on the roles and the portfolios that ministers take on? What machinery would sit around that additional minister's role and the broader group of ministers and their portfolios?

PUBLIC

It is very hard to answer your question without having that deeper sense and confidence that there would also be an examination of that at a bureaucratic level. The role of advisers, the way that flows, where would that emphasis be? What would that mean for the community services organisations? As you know, we have recently had a change of secretary; we have had some changes in ministerial responsibilities. It takes a lot of time to go back to ground zero, where you were before those changes happened. It is not just about what happens in parliament but also what filters out into bureaucracy.

Mrs PETRUSMA - From what we have heard in the past more advisors came from the department, which might have led to different advice being given to the minister. Do you have any comment in regards to what happened? You made a comment about it in the past that was more qualified.

Ms GOODES - Again, not only in Tasmania. We have seen nationally a move away from the more traditional role the public service used to play into ministers' offices. In about the early to mid-1990s that started to shift, with more and more advisors working directly with ministers coming from political party backgrounds as opposed to coming from the bureaucracy.

CHAIR - Policy backgrounds?

Ms GOODES - They are not policy backgrounds and it is not taking away from the important careers those people come from, but public policy is a discrete area. It is like an area of science. Social science is deeply steeped in research and is evidence-based. If we are not actually using our public service in those roles as key advisors anymore, in part this leads to the increased workloads of those ministers.

The other thing we see, and I can say this because I am getting older, is that we have forgotten what happened before. More and more now I see ministers and the layers sitting around ministers thinking of something as if it is brand new, as if we have never done that before. In terms of public policy, there are multiple examples. The Youth at Risk strategy we talked about a couple of years ago, we are reinventing over and over again. Things we know worked, we dismantled. Things we know did not work, we are now putting back on the ground.

I argue in part that is because we do not have a resource sitting around ministers and decision-makers that necessarily has the deep subject matter expertise to be able to give that frank and fearless advice. Other parts of our system of government outside the executive arm heavily impact on the ability for the executive arm to function.

CHAIR - We had the three witnesses who came before this morning - the Chamber of Commerce and Industry, former speaker Michael Polley, and Dr Julian Amos, former Labor member and minister, all of whom put the case that you are more likely to have better public policy outcomes if you have an active backbench agitating the ministers and keeping the pressure on them to perform at a very high standard.

Would you agree we are likely to see better representation of communities? As long as we have the structures in place to do that, but also potentially better public policy outcomes with a backbench keeping the ministry on its toes?

PUBLIC

Ms GOODES - Absolutely. It is a missing link in Tasmania now. We see nationally the backbench of the National Party and the backbench of the Liberal Party having a heavy influence on decision-making and the retraction of decision-making because they have tested it out in their community and can see that it is not going to hit home with their local electorate. At the moment that is a huge gap for Tassie.

I can say as a representative of an organisation that advocates strongly, it is a gap for us. We can only really access directly into ministerial offices. That is not a terrible thing, don't get me wrong, but there is no testing on the ground across a range of different backbenchers. Our only avenue is through our members and others as opposed to backbenchers, also in the party room, having that really robust discussion about well, we make that decision, here is what I know my community is going to say.

The Bass example, because that is where I come from and know well, I think that's felt out there at the moment. I go home most weekends and I hear and see that.

Ms HICKEY - When you were talking about the trade-off, what would be the plus side? In my backbencher role, I was absolutely blown away by the disconnection with people to government services and then how difficult it was being in the government to find those services. Having more backbenchers in electorate offices is a plus because people can go to a local member. It is very difficult for a minister to do that.

For example, take Clark. The other Liberal member is absolutely flat chat with goodness knows how many portfolios and it does give me a lot of freedom. What is happening now is that people are having to make appointments three and four weeks away, which is awful because their need might be immediate. Whilst my staff try to deal with it, sometimes I might need to put it up the food chain.

It would get a few more backbenchers in each of the communities. It gives us more opportunity if someone who has a massive portfolio, be it health or whatever, would have somebody who could be another voice for organisations like yourself or a person from the community could go to. I have found on certain issues by being a backbencher and constantly advocating for stuff I see at ground level that I have been able to create little changes. If there were more of us more available to do this, it would have a huge impact, because the ministers would take on board what was being said with real life examples, not just myth. I find that political layer tends to be out of touch.

They do not know these people as we do and having an opportunity for parliamentary secretaries to the huge portfolios would be a better way of doing things.

CHAIR - Is that a question?

Ms HICKEY - More statement really.

CHAIR - Of course.

Ms HICKEY - Put a question mark after 'Can you say yes or no?'

Ms GOODES - I agree. At the end of the day politics is local, and the local and deep understanding of how government funding and decisions are impacting on local people is best known at a local constituent office level or electorate office level. I would also say if we have -

PUBLIC

which we do - politicians with three or four weeks wait for appointments, can you imagine what it is like in our sector? The lack of resourcing to meet the needs of the current population is seen clearly through their eyes and also seen through the doors of electorate offices, but still we cannot get a response. That is why I am saying if you have more backbenchers to hear more people's needs, what will change on the frontline is people's lives.

Ms HICKEY - That is where I am getting at, too. Obviously, if somebody is in crisis, we will jiggle everything to get it fixed but.

Mrs RYLAH - I have heard you say today, Kym - the role of the bureaucracy has changed. We have had evidence from other witnesses who say this, and that over time not only here in Tasmania but also more broadly, certainly in the Australian Parliament but in the US as well. I received the comment that the political advisers who sit around have proliferated and effectively for a constituent can appear as a wall as opposed to a helpful contribution.

One of the things argued about in reducing the size of the Tasmanian Parliament is the exacerbated pro rata and the number of advisers we have. I think we agree with that, so you can confirm that or not. We have also lost the experience of our public servants, which is a much nicer way of saying it. Public servants with many years of experience and expertise in particular areas are separated. Is that a fair assessment of what we are seeing? I will let you make that comment and then I will ask another question.

Ms GOODES - I think what I am trying to say is ministers and members of parliament are more likely to have a higher number of people in their offices coming from their party-political backgrounds than they have staff with subject matter expertise backgrounds. If the public service input into a minister's role, office, functions and decision-making was at least equal if not greater - as it was in Tasmania when parliament was at the size we are talking about restoring it to - would the role of the ministers then also be more effective, because actually what they are getting is subject matter expertise from public servants? The ministers don't have to hope their advisors, who don't necessarily have that level of expertise, are giving them good advice about public policy, not just about the politics of the policy because that is what we see more and more. What would be the politics if we did that as opposed to what is the right thing to do for the Tasmanian community? How will we manage the politics around that and not the other way around?

I have gradually seen, having worked as a public servant myself for many years and then worked in private industry and now in this role, fewer and fewer public servants with no political affiliations advising ministers, and more and more people from other backgrounds who don't have public policy backgrounds. That is why I am saying that if the restoration were to occur, there would be other parts that I think would make a minister's role and its impact to its community more efficient, and the general public would see that as a much more effective way to run parliament and government in Tasmania.

I will add that I am not in any way making a judgment on people currently in those advisory roles because many of them are incredibly clever and bright people who understand but they aren't public servants and their advice isn't purely objective.

Mrs RYLAH - I understand that. I really liked the words you used - that it is not about the politics of a decision or a choice, it is about the public policy. What I see coming from that is concern about centralisation of power. It then becomes even harder, with a reduced parliament, if a reduced number of ministers has a group of people that it might be difficult for the ordinary

PUBLIC

constituent to get through to; we would then see an even higher concentration of power. Is that what you are saying?

Ms GOODES - Absolutely, that is exactly what I am saying. It comes back to the point you made earlier, Ms O'Connor - it also shrinks the diversity of the people at the decision-making level. One of the greatest advantages if the size of parliament were to be restored is that there would be a greater chance of stability for the parliament. At the moment, on any given day, it hangs on a knife edge and the community, the population, the business community and, in this case, our sector, and the people want to see a stable government and they want to see that stability -

CHAIR - And functionality.

Ms GOODES - and functionality, that's right.

Mrs PETRUSMA - In regard to the diversity, because your sector represents a lot of diverse Tasmanians, whether it is Tasmanian Aboriginals, our growing multicultural communities or people with disabilities, some evidence we have had put forward to us is that, with the smaller percentage of the vote to get to a 35-seat House, a more diverse parliament would be elected. Do your members appreciate that sort of angle as well?

Ms GOODES - Yes, definitely - you are spot on. We see all faces of Tasmania in the work the community sector does across Tasmania and the opportunity to increase that diversity in the parliament would be really welcomed.

CHAIR - A healthy democracy demands representation by citizens, for citizens and of citizens.

I go back to your opening statement - if you are talking to the community sector, it is probably worth noting this. The average size of a lower House for states around the world with a population between 400 000 and 600 000 is 45 members. Of the 75 bicameral state parliaments across the globe, Tasmania has the third-smallest lower House, beaten only by two states in the United States with populations around 55 000 each. Tasmania has the seventh-smallest combined legislature of the 75 bicameral state parliaments across the globe and all but one of these has a smaller population. Notwithstanding some of the significant social structural challenges we have as a community, it is important we make sure we are representing people who are marginalised. Would you agree it is quite a logical extension that if you have a stronger backbench, people more closely connected to their communities and therefore a stronger democracy, we will have a better chance of representing people who are marginalised or in rural and regional communities?

MR GOODES - I would. The principles of what you are saying are absolutely right. I agree with them, 100 per cent. It is the execution of that in the parliament, and the behaviours, attitudes and politics that sit around that, where in the eyes of the general public, the citizens, it falls over, but the principles you just described are absolutely sound.

CHAIR - Some of us sitting in there, too, feel that way sometimes.

Ms DOW - One of the ideas put forward to this committee is the creation of seven electorates with five members, looking at smaller electorates across the state and changing the boundaries of electorates. I note that much of what you spoke about today is about equity of access to elected people, it is about regionality - a lot of things are centralised in the south - and better access to your

PUBLIC

elected representatives. Is that something you have given thought to as an individual or an organisation? What would be your view of that?

MRS GOODES - Not as an organisation, no. The only thing I would say is it would be very challenging to have a lack of alignment with our federal electorates in Tasmanian electorates. I do not pretend to have any understanding of the way that could be tackled. I think it would be very challenging but, putting aside the smaller electorates like Bass, Braddon and Clark, particularly Lyons is a challenge for local people to be able to access local members. They are some of the challenges that sit in that mix, but I haven't any expertise or ability to reshape the way it might look.

CHAIR - Ms Goodes, thank you very much for coming before the committee. I have to say a few words before we release you. As I advised you at the commencement of your evidence, what you have said to us here today is protected by privilege. Once you leave the table, you need to be aware that parliamentary privilege is not attached to comments you may make to anyone, including the media, even if you are just repeating what you said to us. Does that sit comfortably with you?

MS GOODES - Absolutely.

CHAIR - Thank you.

THE WITNESS WITHDREW.

PUBLIC

Ms JESSICA MUNDAY, SECRETARY, UNIONS TASMANIA, WAS CALLED, MADE THE STATUTORY DECLARATION AND WAS EXAMINED.

CHAIR - Welcome, Ms Munday. Before you begin giving your evidence, I need to ask whether you received and read the guides sent to you by the committee secretary. I have to reiterate some important aspects of that document. A committee hearing is a proceeding in parliament. This means it received the protection of parliamentary privilege. This is an important legal protection that allows individuals giving evidence to a parliamentary committee to speak with complete freedom without the fear of being sued or questioned in any court or place out of parliament. It applies to ensure that parliament receives the very best information when conducting its inquiries.

It is important to be aware that this protection is not accorded to you if statements that may be defamatory are repeated or referred to by you outside the confines of parliamentary proceedings. This is a public hearing. It is being broadcasted today. Members of the public and journalists may be present and this means your evidence may be reported. It is important that should you wish all or part of your evidence to be heard in private, you must make this request and give an explanation prior to giving the relevant evidence. Is that all clear with you?

Ms MUNDAY - Yes.

CHAIR - Thank you. Would you like to make some opening comments on behalf of Unions Tasmania to the inquiry in relation to our reference?

Ms MUNDAY - Thank you very much for inviting me here today. We represent working people, about 50 000 of them across the public sector and private sector. They are not unaware of the conversation around governance in this state, I think, broadly, but also increasing the numbers of the House.

I would say that the question for us is probably not so much whether there are good reasons to restore the size of the House, but whether those reasons balance up against all other services that are currently in rather desperate and immediate need of proper resourcing - whether measured up against that - that is the need that comes out on top. At this point, we don't think it is, and I can't -

CHAIR - Have you surveyed members on this issue?

Ms MUNDAY - We haven't surveyed them. We have had lots of conversations with various members. It comes up. It is part of the debate. But surveying, as in the tick-box survey, is not the only way we get feedback from our members.

I look at some of the costs estimated for restoring the House, and whether you take it to be on the \$3 million to \$4 million, or the \$7 million or \$8 million, I can't help but reflect on some of the calls for funding our members are looking for now. I particularly think of the Family Violence Counselling and Support Service. You could double the funding of that organisation which has less than 10 people in it taking about 6000 referrals versus the 10 it had 10 years ago when it was only taking 2000. You could double it for \$1.2 million.

It is hard to escape those sorts of comparisons. You could get 50 paramedics and 35 brand spanking new ambulances. It is not that we don't think that government shouldn't be able to do more than one thing at a time. They absolutely should. A very strong tenor of feedback we are

PUBLIC

getting from our members on this issue is around the fact that we can't even fund our essential public services to the level that they need.

It is no secret that politicians are not the most popular sometimes when it comes to funding. When you weigh those things up, that is a really hard proposition to escape.

There has been some feedback; I spoke to some of my public sector unions which have made some comments around, particularly, ministerial portfolios. If we are talking about better utilising public sector staff within existing frameworks, it would be really helpful to have a minister whose portfolios were all in one agency.

You don't increase people on the front line by having lots of departmental secretaries and lots of departmental liaisons and lots of multiple briefings of ministers, which we all know takes a fair bit of time to prepare for.

From a governance perspective, there is probably some benefit in looking at that, but at the moment, with the state of our public services, we can't say, even if there were 40 great reasons to do it, do they trump all the other things?

CHAIR - Thank you, Jess. It's interesting you talking about those various other services that are manifestly underfunded, or under-resourced. Michael Bailey from the Tasmanian Chamber of Commerce and Industry came before us earlier today, and he said, 'Oh, it is very easy to run an argument that we need more ambulances, and we need more staff in hospitals, or we need more housing'. He said all those needs, and I am paraphrasing him, are real but he basically said that it is an unrelated argument because of the sums we are talking about here.

We have just had advice from Treasury, which has revised the costings down to around \$6.1 million recurrent, which is about 0.01 per cent of the state budget.

What Michael Bailey said is, 'What price democracy, and what price good governance?'

Is Unions Tasmania not concerned that there are governance issues here, where you have ministers loaded up with too many portfolios and no backbench to put pressure on the ministry?

Ms MUNDAY - I'm probably more concerned that I've nurses and paramedics loaded up with the safety and health of Tasmanians and they can't get any relief. I think if we're looking to reflect some of the views of our members, we can't have an academic conversation about it. We can't have a conversation about it in a bubble. Government is about priorities and it speaks to priorities when you say this is potentially more important than that.

CHAIR - No-one is saying that having a parliament restored to what it was before 1998, when the population was about 150 000 less than it is now, is a higher priority than making sure public services are well funded. No-one's saying that.

Ms MUNDAY - It probably would be perceived that way.

CHAIR - You're making very subjective statement, and a lot of assumptions, I'd say, without having surveyed your members.

PUBLIC

Ms MUNDAY - I don't think we need to take a tick-box survey to get a read on the pulse of what our members are thinking. There are many ways we talk to them - in person, via our social media channels, by our emails. I don't go and survey every member with a yes/no question every time I need to reflect their views. It's why we have a peak body. It's why we have regular meetings and decision-making forums and contact with our members so we can get a read on that stuff.

CHAIR - We had a former speaker, Michael Polley, in earlier and also Dr Julian Amos, who was a Labor member for Clark and a minister. One of the points they made about why you'll end up, in their view, with better legislative and policy outcomes, is that you'd have a backbench that would keep the ministry on its toes and be connected to the community in a way that ministers can't be now.

In the case of Bass, for example, you have three Liberal elected members who are all ministers and so they are not able to connect with their communities. Do you agree with that take on things?

Ms MUNDAY - I think the issue of local member connection with the community is multifaceted. I think there's generally an issue with people's disconnection with politics. Our members, by and large, have a really cynical view of political representation and how connected it is to their lives. That's been reflected to us, even in this debate and at various times, because we're talking about what they see an internal - it's talking about us instead of talking about the issues.

I think there are lots of ways for local members to be engaged, whether they're a minister or not: social media and other channels, and good local members who know their community. We don't sit a lot of the time. They're out there, they're doing that. You're doing that. I know some of you are doing that. I don't think it's necessarily that the connection stuff is just going to be solved by having more members.

Ms HICKEY - Can I put to you, on that basis, my electorate office is extremely -

CHAIR - Oh, you actually want to ask a question. That's good. It's all right, I'm just talking to Ms Haddad.

Ms HADDAD - That's really rude, Cassy.

CHAIR - Sorry about that.

Ms HADDAD - I've asked questions of every witness except Kym; that's really unfair.

CHAIR - Okay.

Ms HADDAD - Are you chairing this committee or are you giving a commentary on my performance?

CHAIR - I'm not commenting on your performance. There has just been relative level of disinterest from Labor members on this committee throughout the hearings.

Ms HADDAD - Are you chairing this committee, Cassy, or are we in the parliamentary debate?

Ms HICKEY - Sorry, have I taken over your question? I'm happy to let you go first.

PUBLIC

Ms HADDAD - No, you haven't, Sue. I just wasn't really fond of Cassy's quip about me not having asked questions, which I have.

Ms HICKEY - I was about to say that I have an extremely busy electorate office and I'm trying to do my best to connect people to services. Sometimes I get frustrated because we're having to put appointments out to three weeks. Whereas, if I could share that load, I'd like to see people connected much faster.

I'm also wondering what you think about - your members don't want more politicians. Totally understand that. The general public doesn't. What do they feel about things like spending the money on football as opposed to on nurses? If we had more people who could fight different arguments, we might not say that roads and bridges were more important than nurses and hospitals. I don't think we have the diversity in the parliament to argue some of these issues efficiently, and because we don't have a backbench, we really struggled to get this committee together. That's how ridiculous it is.

You made a statement that we sit around talking about ourselves - I'm paraphrasing - and the fact is, we couldn't even get together to sit down and talk about ourselves.

We are looking for ways for this to be a far more dynamic parliament and to get better results. I think you have a few more options when there is a stronger backbench that can serve the needs of the public - such as connecting them to the services. It's very hard, even when you are in government, to find out how to connect this person with Centrelink and all these bodies that might affect their outcome.

I am thinking diversity of opinion, fresh blood, more opportunity for people to come through and change the thinking and dynamics of an organisation. What do you think about that? I am seeing that football has got tripartisan support while increasing the size of the House doesn't have tripartisan support, which might have a better outcome.

Ms MUNDAY - I guess I'd probably say your electorate wouldn't be so overloaded if the services weren't so overloaded. I think that is part of it. We have a number of vulnerable people in Tasmania who are struggling with various levels of disadvantage. You've just had Kym Goodes here so you don't need me to say that. I would say the issue is not so much that this is a terrible idea that nobody could ever support; I think it's a question of, with everything we are dealing with now and with the pressure on our existing services, whether this is now the time to increase the size of parliament.

In part, it is looking at what the incredible pressures are on. We have just had a \$450 million efficiency dividend levelled across the public sector, across all agencies apparently - that has just broken the hearts of my members in the public sector who are already struggling. Even though it might be a small amount to potentially increase for some payoff, I don't know that now is the right time to do that.

CHAIR - When would be the right time if now is not the right time?

Ms MUNDAY - I think that's a very good question. I'm not going to say it's when the budget is in surplus because we have apparently had surplus budgets and still have these problems. It's about priorities and I just think that those other things are more of a priority.

PUBLIC

CHAIR - I will hand over to Ms Haddad, with my sincere apologies for being snappy before. We have evidence that has come to the committee that basically, as Mr Polley said, one kilometre of the Midland Highway is what the cost of restoring the numbers to the pre-1998 levels would be.

If I could just explain myself, the reason I am disillusioned at this table is that it would appear now that the unions have arrived and we have Labor refusing to take a position on restoration. That is why I made that comment before, and it just feels like you are prepping the committee for Labor swooping on restoration.

Ms MUNDAY - I think that is a really unfair call. Labor can do what Labor can do. Most of my unions, especially the large ones are not affiliated with the ALP. I am not here to do the ALP's bidding in this forum or any other, and I think that is really disrespectful to my members. I represent my members.

Ms DOW - We're going through point of order. We are going through a parliamentary process and a work of the committee, so I don't think that is even appropriate to raise here.

Ms HADDAD - I acknowledge that tempers are raised here because we all feel passionately about the governance of this state, but before I ask my question, I think it is really unfair for you to give such a politically charged assessment on one person appearing before this committee when you have been nothing but respectful to every other witness who has appeared before this committee across three or four days of hearings. I will ask my question.

Ms Munday, I wanted to ask you about your reflections on the changes in the public sector. One thing raised by a number of other witnesses to this committee has been comments about increasing numbers of political staffers and also changing dynamics within the public sector, specifically more people on SES contracts. I am not disparaging anybody on SES contracts - there are amazing public sector workers across all levels of Tasmania public sector - but some questions have been raised about the ability of the public sector to be as frank and fearless as it once was when the parliament was larger, when there was an increase in casualisation and contract-based SES staff as opposed to permanent jobs in the public sector.

Ms MUNDAY - I think the issue around the independence of the public sector's ability to give frank and fearless advice has been increasing for some time. It has come about because of commentary around what public servants can and can't say and can and can't do. It is without a doubt that insecure work places particular pressures on people, whether you earn a lot of money or whether you don't. Certainly, that would be an element of concern.

I suggest nearly all public servants are there because they care about the public; they like their jobs; they want to serve - much like you. I'm not sure necessarily that's the biggest issue right now.

Ms DOW - One argument put by a previous presenter was that they felt, as you have outlined, that there is need for greater investment in essential services in Tasmania. This representative was from the coalface and represents people delivering those services that are currently underfunded. They expressed that if there were some way of highlighting that a greater investment in governance in Tasmania could illustrate that there would be greater benefits to service delivery and the like. From your point of view, I want to understand what you think your members would like to see. Would there be that opportunity? What would that have to look like for that to be palatable?

PUBLIC

Ms MUNDAY - If you're talking about whether there is the chance to make a case and to convince people and show them this is actually what it would deliver for you, I think that would be a very good community conversation to have. My reflection is that it would be best if everybody were on the same page on that issue because you would be able to push that out. I genuinely think we are all suffering, at state and federal levels, from people's lack of engagement and disappointment with politics. It's bad for our governance. We often have conversations that workers don't see the parliament as a place to make change anymore.

CHAIR - They don't see it connected to them, either.

Ms MUNDAY - No. I think there is a real conversation for us to have around that good governance and probably there is a broader conversation around local government and its connection to the state parliament. Some Tasmanians who are pretty educated get the Hare-Clark system, others don't. It's really confusing. I think people would like that, but we have to get over the disenchantment and disenfranchisement people have with the political system and the process. I feel we are losing them. We have many conversations as an organisation about politics because laws for workers are made in parliaments. It is increasingly difficult to convince them that's a positive avenue for change and that the people in parliament - and I don't mean to be disparaging - are on their side and are looking to fix the issues they have. Perhaps in this case, our primary thesis around the service delivery issues we have in Tasmania and the massive cuts are actually not divorced from the broader question of whether we have taken people along on this journey and what we are doing to rebuild their confidence.

Mrs RYLAH - I am interested in your comments on some evidence we have received. One of the effective ways Mr Polley reminded us of today, and we as backbenchers probably know inherently from what we do, for a constituent to get an issue through to a minister is via a backbencher, because we actually get there faster and we know the pathway.

I hear you and take great concern from your comments about cynicism, disenfranchisement - you used a number of words talking about a separation, an unhappiness with our current parliamentary system. Can I ask directly - and I am not trying to be party political here, but it is hard - does the union movement see a way, and would you recommend your members go via, seeing the government is currently not a Labor government - I am trying not to make this political - some other members so they can get their view heard and to a minister more quickly? If there were a wider ranging of backbenchers, would you see this as an avenue you would recommend to your members, or are we too divided on the political division? Is it about the efficacy of giving issues up for members that is of concern?

Ms MUNDAY - Yes, absolutely, we would tell our members to access their local representative whoever they are no matter what their political colours. Our primary job as unions is to help our members with whatever their issue might be or to advocate for them in various ways.

I have no problem, and neither do I work with anyone who would not say, 'Well, the best local member for you is this person. It is the beauty of Hare-Clark that you actually have a choice of local members, so if you have no luck, with you, go to Cassy'. We have no problem n doing that and it is actually a strength of the current system that if you just don't go to Julie Collins in Franklin and she does not help you, you have nowhere to go. There are different avenues through different political parties, different people and skills, so we would not have a problem.

Mrs RYLAH - Do you advocate for that, Jessica?

PUBLIC

Ms MUNDAY - It depends on what it is; because we generally deal with industrial issues, our way of resolution will be their relevant employer, or an industrial tribunal.

Mrs RYLAH - So it is not for Commonwealth members?

Ms MUNDAY - They are the same group. You have a Senate team in Tasmania; if our local member cannot help you, can a senator help you?

Mrs RYLAH - What I am trying to get at is: if we had more members, does that give you more availability because, at the moment, the first thing you raised was you were not supporting this restoration because of the cost issue. I have quickly done the sums - the \$450 million of efficiency dividend is 0.5 per cent of the budget, the number for this increase is about \$7.1 million.

CHAIR - According to Treasury's figures this morning.

Mrs RYLAH - Sorry, I used 7.1, so these figures are slightly out. It is 0.008 per cent of the state budget which is the cost of the increase on those numbers I did, so it is slightly less than that of increasing parliament but it gives your members greater opportunity to get to us, to get those changes they need. Do you not see value in that?

Ms MUNDAY - I do not think it is cost alone - \$6 million does not sound like a great deal in the scheme of a government budget, but to many of the people I represent, it would be more money than they could ever dream of or earn in their lifetime.

CHAIR - It is the message.

Ms MUNDAY - It is, and it is not just that the \$6 million potential investment in good governance is astronomical - it is weighed against other things that are critical priorities for so many of my members and the community they serve.

Mrs RYLAH - To take a specific example. Let us say you have a nurse who is very upset there is not enough people and demand has increased so much and we are not increasing fast enough because the demand is increasing more quickly. If we had more members, wouldn't it give that person the opportunity to be directed to their member to bring about the change they see as important?

Ms MUNDAY - It is possible. I would be really disappointed in the Hare-Clark system if a constituent was unable to get any assistance from five members out of an electorate, though.

Mrs RYLAH - Already, at the moment, so you think -

Ms MUNDAY - I think there are options. It's not like there is no governance and no-one to be reached. I think the point is about time to get in there. I also think there are also political realities in that sometimes some issues are paid attention to and others aren't, and that's the difficulty in getting them on the agenda, not actually getting to meet a member of parliament but getting to meet someone who understands the system or cares enough about their issue to really push it.

Mrs PETRUSMA - One of the potential benefits put to us about the restoration of numbers is that as the percentage of the vote required is a lot lower, you can have more diversity in the

PUBLIC

parliament. You talk about the great services that your members provide to some of our most vulnerable Tasmanians but what's been put to us is that if it's a lot less to get voted in, it is more likely that people from those vulnerable cohorts could get in as well to represent people with disability, people from multicultural backgrounds or Aboriginal Tasmanians, for example. You said we might have to look at the messaging. Is that one message that would resonate?

Ms MUNDAY - There is still a bit of work you'd have to do convincing people that was the more pressing investment right now than the other. I know I keep harping on, but I think that is the question. That is more pressing than the other need. There are bigger problems with vulnerable people accessing any systems of power like politics that's deeper than the number of representatives. There are lots of barriers that vulnerable people have in accessing you as representatives, whether it be transport, literacy or just general confidence that politics is a space for them. I think those barriers are going to exist whether there are five or seven members. I think they need lots of work and we need to do a lot more. I think the key is probably investment in public services. I'm a public sector unionist at heart and I've got a bit constituency there. To wrap those services around people and lift them out of disadvantage is where my focus is.

CHAIR - That's a national and a global problem too, isn't it?

Ms MUNDAY - It is.

CHAIR - Along with the cynicism about politics and the -

Ms MUNDAY - That's global, too.

CHAIR - That's global, that's right, and the lack of attachment in some way to democratic structures is eroded as well now, wouldn't you agree?

Ms MUNDAY - The ongoing behaviour in parliament, the ongoing attacks on press freedom and climate change denial and attacks on academic institutions, science, media and parliament. These are all really critical pillars to our democracy and they are being eroded. It's definitely our interest to see them supported because we fundamentally believe in a democracy where everybody can participate and those pillars are critical. It is no small problem for you to deal with, members.

CHAIR - A huge problem for us. In terms of sizing, we've done some analysis of different jurisdictions and the average size of a lower House for states with a population in our range, between 400 000 and 600 000, is 45 members. Of the 75 bicameral state parliaments across the globe, Tasmania has the third-smallest lower House, beaten only by two states in the US with populations of around 55 000 each. When you look at the numbers, our population is growing but the parliament is still sitting at 25. Does Unions Tasmania have a position? If the argument is not now, the question is: What is important here? Do you need to have a strong, viable democracy and a healthy backbench in order to make sure we respond to the needs of your members and the people they serve?

Ms MUNDAY - I take your point about the numbers and, again, not saying that there are not good reasons people have articulated that you should consider it. I don't think our democracy is so badly crumbling around our ears; I give you much more credit than that. I think that the problems we have discussed are local, global and national, but I still think it really is a question of priorities right now.

PUBLIC

Ms HICKEY - What are the union's views on the priority of football because it is going to be a hell of an investment?

Ms MUNDAY - We haven't taken a position on football.

Ms HICKEY - I suspect that is going to be much costlier than restoring the size of the parliament.

Ms MUNDAY - We would probably ask the government to consider that as well. I will go back to my original point where I said we think government should be able to do various things. What is the point of life if you cannot enjoy art and sport and other things? It is a question of balancing priorities. For us, the priorities right now are really stark. I don't want to talk to any more paramedics who say, 'I have a priority 0 call on my radio and I hear no response.' Priority 0 is 'Need a response in eight minutes, threat to life'. I don't want to hear that anymore.

I am sorry if I am too forthright in advocating for public services over other things that could potentially have some benefit for our democracy but I actually think people are dying unnecessarily. I work with public sector workers across the education sphere, across the health sphere in parks and wildlife, and I can't say that is the priority over those things right now.

CHAIR - Again, I'll restate: we are not saying that either because every day of our working lives, whichever party we come from, is dedicated to trying to help people, I would argue. Ms Munday, I am not going to let myself get away from the table without genuinely apologising to you on the *Hansard*. I am sorry about that; I snapped unnecessarily, I am genuinely sorry. It has been a long and grinding week in there, and I was suffering from nicotine withdrawal. Is there anything you would like to say before we release you?

Ms MUNDAY - I think my views are clear. Thank you for your time.

CHAIR - Thank you. As I advised you at the commencement of your evidence, what you have said to us here today is protected by parliamentary privilege. Once you leave the table, you need to be aware that privilege does not attach to comments you may make to anyone, including the media, even if you are just repeating what you said to us. Is that all clear?

Ms MUNDAY - Very clear. Thank you.

THE WITNESS WITHDREW.