



PARLIAMENT OF TASMANIA

HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY

REPORT OF DEBATES

Tuesday 5 September 2023

REVISED EDITION

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Tuesday 5 September 2023

The Speaker, **Mr Shelton**, took the Chair at 10 a.m., acknowledged the Traditional People, and read Prayers.

STATEMENT BY PREMIER

**Commission of Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse in Government Institutions -
Tabling of Report and Implementation of Recommendations**

[10.01 a.m.]

Mr ROCKLIFF (Braddon - Premier) - Mr Speaker, on indulgence, I acknowledge the conclusion of the Commission of Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse in Government Institutions. I thank all those who contributed - the victims and survivors, and their families and loved ones, who have courageously engaged with the commission and shared their lived experience of abuse. I say to them we are listening and we are learning.

My commitment to Tasmanians - and that commitment is shared by all members of the Tasmanian parliament - is that strong action will be taken to ensure that Tasmanian children and young people are safe and well and that the horrors of the past will never be repeated.

The next few weeks and months will again be a very difficult time for those who have experienced abuse, those who have engaged in the commission's processes, and for our Tasmanian community as a whole.

To ensure the community continues to be informed, we have established the Keeping Children Safe website containing information including: supports available to people impacted by abuse; processes and timeline for the release of the report; how to report if you believe a child is at risk of harm; and actions already under way to improve how we protect children in our care. This will also be the site where our Government provides details of its plan for implementing all the commission of inquiry's 191 recommendations later this year.

We want all Tasmanians, especially victims and survivors, to know that we will treat this report with the care and respect it deserves and they deserve. I appreciate that the time frame leading up to the commission of inquiry report being tabled is difficult for victims/survivors. The Governor and Executive Council will consider the report before it is tabled and the Governor will approve any redactions, acting on the advice of the Executive Council. Our Government has made a commitment that redactions will not be used to hide the truth or obscure the failures of the state. This is not about protecting state servants: it is about protecting the integrity of criminal proceedings and honouring the wishes of victims/survivors who do not want to be identified. Any redactions will be clearly marked with an indication as to why the redaction has been made.

I reiterate my commitment to table the final report to the House of Assembly on 26 September and to implementing the recommendations. The report will be published on the commission's website immediately after it has been tabled. Arrangements are being made for additional support for victims/survivors on that day.

As I have said before, we stand by the victims and survivors who have shared their lived experiences with the commission of inquiry. I make this very clear: we will not let you down, we will do what is right for those who have suffered and those who continue to suffer, and to ensure that this never happens again.

[10.05 a.m.]

Ms WHITE (Lyons - Leader of the Opposition) - Mr Speaker, Tasmanian Labor thanks the Commission of Inquiry into the Tasmanian Government's Responses to Child Sexual Abuse in Institutional Settings for the vital work it has undertaken since being established in March 2021. We also thank the people who have bravely come forward and shared their traumatic experiences so that necessary change can occur, particularly victims/survivors. We also acknowledge victims/survivors who did not engage with the commission.

Too many Tasmanian children have been let down by those who should have been keeping them safe. It is vital that these people are now listened to by decision-makers in full and without delay.

The president of the commission, Marcia Neave AO, was unequivocal in her expectation that the report be published in full, other than restricted publication orders made by the commission itself. Tasmanian Labor urges the Premier to uphold this and make no further redactions.

It is clear that there is an enormous body of work ahead to ensure that Tasmanian children are safe in government institutions and that the horrific events of the past can never be allowed to happen again. Labor is committed to supporting the Government to implement the 191 recommendations of the commission in full and as quickly as possible to help those who have suffered in the past and to prevent any future institutional abuse. Tasmanians need to be given confidence that the traumatic and distressing work of the last two-and-a-half years will not be in vain and that we will work together to prevent such abuses ever occurring again.

[10.06 a.m.]

Dr WOODRUFF (Franklin - Leader of the Greens) - Mr Speaker, I attended the closing session of the commission of inquiry and was deeply moved.

It was first announced in response to a range of shocking allegations of abuse in government institutions, particularly the Launceston General Hospital, then Ashley Youth Detention Centre and, subsequently, others. The commission was tasked with looking at what had occurred, the failures to respond and what needs to be done to make sure children in future will always be safe. Over the two years, the commission heard from many victims/survivors about the terrible abuse inflicted upon them and the Government's appalling failures to believe them and to respond. We acknowledge the hardship, isolation and pain of all those who suffered child sex abuse in state institutions. We acknowledge the strength of the victims/survivors who gave evidence and the enduring impact of those who lived with related trauma every day.

On behalf of the Greens, I thank the commissioners and the staff of the commission who worked tirelessly to create a safe, respectful, just and victim/survivor-centred process. It was a painful and exhausting time for many of those who gave evidence. However, the manner in which the inquiry was conducted has been remarkable. The compassion, care, diligence,

insight and hard work shown by the commissioners and staff has given the community confidence in the evidence-gathering thus far and in the commission's findings.

Commission president, Marcia Neave, said it is her hope and expectation that the only redactions from the report will be those the commission of inquiry has suggested. It is now the responsibility of the Government and the parliament to bring about the necessary changes to the laws, rules, culture and behaviour of Tasmanian institutions to ensure that all children are safe into the future.

The commission of inquiry report is the biggest thing that will happen in this term of parliament. It is certainly the biggest thing that will happen in my career as a member of parliament. Therefore, we commit our full focus and heart to following through the work of implementing every single one of the commission's 191 recommendations for as long as it takes.

RECOGNITION OF VISITORS

Mr SPEAKER - Honourable members, I welcome members of the public in the gallery, and the year 7 students from OneSchool Global.

Members - Hear, hear.

LEAVE OF ABSENCE

Member for Clark - Ms Ogilvie

[10.09 a.m.]

Mr ROCKLIFF (Braddon - Premier) - Mr Speaker, I inform the House that Ms Ogilvie is absent from question time today due to illness. I will be taking Ms Ogilvie's questions for the ministerial portfolios of Small Business, Advanced Manufacturing and Defence Industries, Science and Technology, Heritage, and Women and the Prevention of Violence.

REFLECTION ON THE SPEAKER

Apology to Speaker

[10.10 a.m.]

Mr BAYLEY (Clark) - Mr Speaker, on indulgence, I have sought the call to make an apology in response to a letter I received from the Speaker on 22 August. The letter is brief so I will read it into *Hansard* so that all those listening or reading can have the context:

Dear Mr Bayley,

I refer to your post on Twitter on 18 August 2023, which states:

'How is it that in the highest level of governance in the state, the principles of conflict of interest that would apply in any other club or community organisation don't apply, the Speaker presides and votes to protect himself?'

It is a fundamental tenet of parliamentary practice that any Speaker's actions may only be criticised by a substantive motion being moved in the House. Any reflection on the character or actions of the Speaker inside or outside the House is highly disorderly and may only be questioned or considered by the House by way of substantive motion.

Accordingly, I call on you at the first opportunity available to you in the House to unreservedly withdraw the comments and apologise.

Yours sincerely,

Honourable Mark Shelton MP

Speaker

Mr Speaker, I was unaware of the tenet at the time. I will bear it in mind in the future. I have deleted the tweet. I withdraw the comments and I apologise.

QUESTIONS

Energy Developments - Cost Estimates and Potential Breach of Confidentiality

Ms WHITE question to MINISTER for ENERGY and RENEWABLES, Mr BARNETT

[10.11 a.m.]

A fortnight ago you were adamant that you could not reveal cost estimates for Marinus Link, the North West Transmission developments or the Battery of the Nation project because they were all subject to a live procurement process. You said that the order from the House for you to reveal the cost was:

Absolutely mad ... mind-boggling ... dreadful ... absolutely irresponsible ... reprehensible ... reckless ... shameful ... a sovereign risk to the state would have serious intended consequences for the future of Tasmania and would force the Government to essentially break the law.

More than that, you said that revealing the cost would require you to breach contracts, to breach confidentiality arrangements, to breach probity rules and to breach non-disclosure agreements. On Sunday you announced the new cost estimate for Marinus through a press release. Clearly, none of those earlier statements were true. You could have easily complied with the order of the House. Can you explain how you are not in contempt of parliament and have not misled the House on more than a dozen occasions?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, I thank the member for her question. Everything I said in the recent parliamentary sitting is true and accurate. The process has gone through a process and it has now been finalised. I will have more to say very shortly in the ministerial statement.

Matter of Privilege

Request for Referral to Privileges and Conduct Committee - Minister for Energy and Renewables

[10.13 a.m.]

Ms WHITE - Mr Speaker, I raise a question of privilege in accordance with Standing Order 81. I move -

That the Minister for Energy and Renewables, the Hon. Guy Barnett MP,
having been ordered by the House to -

- (1) Outline to the House before 6 p.m. on 16 August 2023 the latest
cost estimates for -

Mr Ferguson - The Speaker gave you the opportunity last sitting day and you did not take it.

Ms WHITE - You are involved in this too, mate.

- (a) Marinus Link;
- (b) North West Transmission Developments; and
- (c) Battery of the Nation projects.

He failed to do so, and therefore this House refers the minister to the Privileges and Conduct Committee.

Members interjecting.

Mr SPEAKER - Order.

Ms ARCHER - Point of order, Mr Speaker. You have to sit down.

Ms White - I do not have to sit down when you are standing.

Ms ARCHER - Yes, you do.

Ms White - No, I don't.

Mr SPEAKER - Order, please. There has been a point of order raised. I need to take the point of order.

Ms ARCHER - Mr Speaker, on a point of order, a member should take their seat when another member is standing and has the call.

Ms White - I have to take my seat if the Speaker is standing. You are not the Speaker.

Ms ARCHER - No, if I have been given the call, you do.

Mr SPEAKER - You will both resume your seats. There has been a point of order made. I need to take the point of order.

Ms ARCHER - Thank you, Mr Speaker. I ask that the member familiarises herself with the Standing Orders next time.

On a point of order, the member referred to the Deputy Premier as 'mate'.

Ms White - What standing order?

Mr SPEAKER - Order.

Ms ARCHER - I ask the member to withdraw her unparliamentary language.

Mr SPEAKER - I will accept the point of order. We will refer to each other by title or by electorate.

Ms WHITE - Mr Speaker, if the member takes offence that I called them 'mate', I withdraw. They are not my mate.

Mr Speaker, I move -

That the minister be sent to the Privileges and Conduct Committee because he has clearly misled this House and the matter should be referred to the Privileges and Conduct Committee as a matter of breach of privilege.

There was a press release issued in the minister's own name in which it outlined that the cost for the Marinus project has now been estimated to be between \$3 billion and \$3.3 billion. It also went on to talk about the cost to Tasmania being estimated between \$106 million and \$117 million. There is no explanation -

Mr SPEAKER - Standing order 81 has been raised again. I will give the call back to the Leader of the Opposition at the end of question time. We are in question time now and I will allow question time to continue.

Alleged Contempt of Parliament by Ministers

Ms WHITE question to PREMIER, Mr ROCKLIFF

[10.16 a.m.]

Your Energy minister is clearly in contempt of parliament. He failed to comply with an order of the House and justified his outrageous actions by claiming that adhering to the order would require him to breach contracts, to breach confidentiality agreements, to breach probity

rules and to breach non-disclosure agreements. Your Deputy Premier even went so far as to claim that legally your Government was not able to comply with the order. None of this was true, as Sunday's press release showed. They have both clearly misled the parliament and the original order of the House still has not been complied with.

What does it say about your leadership and the standards that you set for your ministers that two of your most senior colleagues think they can get away with such a blatant case of contempt of parliament? What does it say about your lack of respect that they have for you and for this parliament that they feel they can say things they know to be categorically untrue? How can you have confidence in either of them after their performance a fortnight ago?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, I thank the member for Lyons for her question. I have full confidence in the Energy minister and the Deputy Premier. The Energy minister and I have been working very diligently and collaboratively over the course of the last six or seven weeks - and longer, frankly - with the federal Labor government to secure what is a tremendous opportunity for Tasmania.

I am very proud of the achievements of our Energy minister because we have secured Tasmania's energy future. We have secured a great deal when it comes to Marinus. We drew a line in the sand and we had to, but the result of drawing that line in the sand is that through consultation and collaboration with the federal government, the deal is very firmly on our side of the line.

I am proud of the achievements of the Minister for Energy and Renewables. I reflect that in the prior parliamentary session there were strict probity and procurement issues relating to disclosure of certain estimates. We must act in the best interests of Tasmania and be aware that actions to undermine the confidence of doing business with the Government will cause significant sovereign risk issues.

Dr Broad - Really? You stick it out on a press release and that's fine.

Mr SPEAKER - Order.

Mr ROCKLIFF - Dear, oh dear, Dr Broad. I know that the federal minister also shared our position at the time. Now that those procurement processes have progressed to a stage we can share further details with Tasmanians -

Opposition members interjecting.

Mr SPEAKER - Order.

Mr ROCKLIFF - I was not able to capture minister Chris Bowen's interview on radio today but clearly he is a believer in renewable energy and renewable energy investment. The minister for Energy is also a believer in renewable energy investment and in Marinus and \$3.3 billion potentially of investment, unlocking \$2 billion of economic activity, 1400 jobs, securing Tasmania's energy future, ensuring as well that Tasmania will remain among the lowest when it comes to power prices.

We will not destroy our energy future by slogans and price caps -

Mr Winter - I have not checked your website lately. Is it still there?

Mr ROCKLIFF - You are obsessed by our Liberal website. Obsessed by it. I think the only research you do, Mr Winter, is research into the Liberal Party website, based on your comments.

We had a joint media release on the weekend with minister Collins, minister Bowen, myself as Premier and the Energy minister. I do not know if this is a smokescreen -

Mr SPEAKER - I need to remind the Premier that time has expired.

Time expired.

Ashley Youth Detention Centre

Ms WOODRUFF question to PREMIER, Mr ROCKLIFF

[10.21 a.m.]

Despite your minister's claims, Ashley Youth Detention Centre (AYDC) continues to be a source of trauma and devastation for the young people sent there. In July, the Commissioner for Children and Young People revealed that children incarcerated at Ashley have been subjected to restrictive practices every day since June last year. Two months later, this appalling streak continues unbroken. Even worse, Ms McLean said recently the only children in Ashley now are those on remand.

Your Government is sending dozens of children not sentenced of a crime to this notorious detention centre forcing them to spend lonely days, isolated in a cell sometimes for 23 hours at a time. Ashley Youth Detention Centre offends against the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child every day.

In her final remarks, the commission of inquiry's president called for Ashley to close as a matter of urgency. The new youth therapeutic sites are not finalised and will not be built for years. Will you step in and take control and find an interim safe space with the urgency these young vulnerable people deserve?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, I thank the member for the question. The Tasmanian Government is committed to developing a youth justice system that achieves better outcomes for young people and families and keeps our community safe. We understand the calls for closing the Ashley Youth Detention Centre and I was with you, present in the room, when commissioner Neave made what were very sobering comments not only about the report but also about Ashley Youth Detention Centre and I heed the words of commissioner Neave as you have quoted.

The Government has looked more broadly than the initial announcement to close Ashley, to now have reform of the whole youth justice system which includes raising the minimum age of detention to 14 years. Right now, the commission of inquiry recommendations are also being incorporated into our plans. We do want to progress our plan to close Ashley and at the same time transition to new contemporary therapeutic facilities and models of care. This will

help ensure we have fewer young people in detention and more young people catered for and supported through a range of facilities and wraparound services and supports that they need. This also means that we are investing in people and models of care that ensure that young people we have in detention right now are safe and that our detention centre is working for them.

Since the Government first announced the closure of Ashley, a comprehensive reform of the youth justice system with three key priorities has been under way. The first, as we have indicated, has been a range of actions to ensure the safety and wellbeing of young people in custody at the Ashley Youth Detention Centre.

Dr Woodruff - They are not safe.

Mr SPEAKER - Order. Member for Franklin, order.

Mr ROCKLIFF - Our Keeping Kids Safe Plan is publicly available and it documents significant work completed and under way to make Ashley as safe as it can be during the transition. The second has been the development of our over-arching blueprint for the entire youth justice system which will set the strategic directions over the next 10 years. The third key priority has been the development of our new approach to youth justice facilities that will replace the AYDC.

Our analysis of best-practice approaches from around the world has led us towards differentiated facilities that work together to ensure the fewest young people end up in custody and those who do are supported never to return, either to detention or indeed an adult prison. Our model is comprised of one detention and remand centre located in the south, two assisted bail facilities - one in the north or north-west and one in the south - and two supported residential facilities - one in the north or north-west and one in the south. The 2022-23 and 2023-24 budgets provided some \$50 million of investment to support the delivery of new facilities under our youth justice reform program.

Keeping Children Safe - Government Action

Mr YOUNG question to PREMIER, Mr ROCKLIFF

[10.26 a.m.]

Can you please advise the House on actions our Government has taken to keep children safe in advance of the public release of the commission of inquiry's final report?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, I thank Mr Young for the question and his interest in this matter, which we all share.

First, I acknowledge that this is Child Protection Week and that our Government remains steadfast in our commitment to keeping Tasmanian children and young people safe. As I have already announced, the commission of inquiry's final report will be made publicly available on 26 September this year and we have committed to implementing the recommendations. However, our Government has not waited for the commission's final recommendations to make

our systems and services safer. That was clear in commission president Neave's opening statement at the very beginning of the commission of inquiry process that the Government should not wait for the recommendations but also act now and we have done so.

Over the course of 2022, a total of 30 interim actions were announced in response to issues that were raised through the commission of inquiry hearings, 15 of these interim actions are now complete and work is well under way on the remaining actions. Of the 15 completed actions a key step was the delivery of a formal government apology on 8 November last year to all those affected by child sexual abuse in institutional settings on behalf of the Tasmanian parliament. I said at the time that our parliament would be defined by the actions that we take to protect all children in Tasmania from abuse and our commitment to give meaning to the apology through our actions will continue. A number of completed interim actions are aimed at making sure that child safety and wellbeing is embedded in organisational leadership, government and culture, including instigating the rollout of trauma-informed training across the State Service.

We have taken steps to reform our legal system. I acknowledge the Attorney-General's efforts in that respect. We have created a new crime of failing to protect a child or young person, and we have introduced a new offence of sexual abuse of a child or young person by a person of authority. We have also established two multi-disciplinary centres in the north and the south and the Arch Centres bring together specialist family violence services, sexual assault services and police and prosecution services under the one roof. To strengthen child safety in our hospitals and health settings an expert advisory panel undertook an extensive forensic review of child safety and we have accepted all recommendations.

The 2023-24 state Budget provides an additional \$30 million to fund priority action areas to keep children safer in advance of the final report of the commission of inquiry. This is an initial investment to deliver on urgent actions. Our Government will continue to take strong action and I am sure all members of the parliament will work with the government in those actions to ensure that Tasmanian children and young people are safe and well in our care.

Bus Services

Mr O'BYRNE question to MINISTER for INFRASTRUCTURE and TRANSPORT, Mr FERGUSON

[10:29 a.m.]

Your rhetoric around public transport clearly has not held up against the test of time. Last year you said:

We are a bus state, I want to expand on buses in our state, I want to expand on public transport. I have been very clear in the time that I have been in this role that I want to put more status on those buses. I want to see more direct express services, I want to see a more enjoyable experience.

Is it not true that you have delivered fewer buses to fewer people less often, and that waiting for a bus that does not show up is not an enjoyable experience for commuters?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, we are a bus state and I am very proud to be a part of a government that is investing in buses. There is a national bus driver shortage and Tasmania is not immune from that. We are working with Metro to support them as much as we possibly can.

I thank the member for his interest. I would have liked it better if he had made some of the same investments in the bus industry in Tasmania when he was the minister, in particular in our proudly state-owned Metro Tasmania.

By the way, I reaffirm that this Government will retain Metro as state-owned, despite the Leader of the Opposition's false claims without any evidence, running around the community telling them that we are going to somehow privatise Metro. Ms White will eat those words, just like she had to eat her words saying that there would be an election in August, running around trying to proclaim these statements.

There are real challenges for Metro Tasmania. We need to get in there and support Metro, just as the Government is seeking to do. We have now totally rewritten the three networks, the north west, the north and the south, precisely to the point that Mr O'Byrne raised about having more direct and more frequent express services because that is what passengers and customers told us they wanted. We have more buses in your electorate, Mr O'Byrne, particularly with the new southern services out to Kingston and the direct express from Huonville - something that you could not be bothered doing. We have park and rides, again in your electorate of Franklin, being provided for the first time, providing the community with better choice.

Mr O'Byrne also failed to mention that we have lowered many bus fares, particularly on the intercity buses in the country areas, giving country people a better deal and better access to regional communities to come in for city-based services, whether it is medical appointments, university studies or work. For example, a member of my family is a regular catcher of buses from Launceston to Hobart; his student fare has gone from something like \$23 to \$16. Those buses are now seeing more passengers enjoying them as a result of the Government's approach to standardise and go distant-based because many country people were paying far too much for their bus fares and we have fixed that.

We have a challenge with Metro. Their challenge is one faced by other bus companies as well because, unlike when Mr O'Byrne was the minister for economic development who presided over an 8 per cent unemployment rate, we have a good problem: our unemployment rate is half of what it was under Labor. It could be said that our state and workforce is suffering a shortage because there is so much work available right now. You can get work but it is harder than ever - you do not know what this problem is like, Mr O'Byrne - today in our economy we have businesses finding it hard to find workers.

What I am trying to do to support Metro is, first of all, insist on reliability. If you do not have the driver availability, shake the service so that passengers are not standing in the rain waiting for a bus. It is uncomfortable, it is not the best outcome but it is better than it was when people were uncertain about cancelled services. The Government wants to see Metro restore those services. The only way they can restore those services is to recruit, and those recruitment efforts continue apace.

I reject the premise of Mr O'Byrne's question. I appreciate what I think is his real interest in the issue but, unlike when Labor and Greens were in power, our strong and growing economy has put significant pressure on workforce availability and we are determined to support Metro to resolve that.

Tenancy Laws - Companion Animals

Mrs ALEXANDER question to ATTORNEY-GENERAL, Ms ARCHER

[10.34 a.m.]

In today's rental property shortage too many families or individuals are being forced to surrender their long-time animal companions to secure a roof over their heads. Over the last couple of years too many Tasmanians have been forced to make a heart-breaking choice: do they surrender their beloved pet to secure a rental property or keep their pet and risk homelessness and a life on our streets?

It is time for Tasmania's Residential Tenancy Act to be revised to align with Victoria and Queensland, where landlords must provide a good reason why pets are not allowed in rental properties. Could you confirm if the Government will make the necessary legislative changes to put an end to this situation? Is this a Government with heart, as the Premier claims?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, I thank Mrs Alexander for her question. We recognise how important pets are for people and to understand that some tenants rely on the comfort, interaction and companionship of their animals, particularly for their mental health and wellbeing. It is a difficult topic for me in the last week or so, having recently lost my own pet.

With the owner's approval, Tasmanian tenants can currently have their pets in residential properties and many do. We welcome that. I also acknowledge the balance argument that we need to afford land owners in terms of their properties. Some have had some awful experiences. I have had landlords contact me with those experiences so I am mindful of trying to have a balanced situation. I am very sympathetic. Anybody who owns a pet is sympathetic to what they provide to us in their own way of love and support.

I am giving this careful consideration. I have made public comments to that effect, particularly in the media. I favour a pet bond - an amount paid to cover a situation where there might be damage caused to a property by a pet. I acknowledge that an additional fee like that can be problematic for some people. All these issues are being considered in the context of any amendment that might be required to the Residential Tenancy Act, as well as a number of other issues I have committed to looking at under that particular act.

In short, I am looking at it. I can give the House the undertaking that I am taking this issue seriously, that pets are important to people and that I will give this active consideration with a view to providing some reform to the Residential Tenancy Act, if required.

Recreational Fishing - Changes to Permitted Takes

**Ms JOHNSTON question to MINISTER for PRIMARY INDUSTRIES and WATER,
Ms PALMER**

[10.38 a.m.]

Recreational fishing is well entrenched in our culture and is one of the few nature-based activities that can be enjoyed from childhood through to senior years. There is nothing better than a feed of fresh Tasmanian flathead. In the south east, a scale fisheries rules review flags bag limits cuts as follows: striped trumpeter cut from four fish to two; bastard trumpeter from five to two; garfish from 15 to 10; and sand flathead cut from 20 to just two. Many fishers see these proposed cuts as yet another attack on the lifestyle and culture enjoyed by thousands of Tasmanians, especially considering there are no proposed cuts to commercial takes of sand flathead and tiger flathead in Tasmanian waters.

What is your plan to return Tasmanian fisheries to the Tasmanian people? Will you include a return of allowable catch to recreational fishers as part of any rebuild or harvest strategy?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, I thank the member for the question. We have been going through an extensive process since science was released towards the end of last year showing that there are a number of species that are depleting or indeed depleted. We have gone through a very extensive consultation process presenting the science to fishers and those right across the industry. We had a great response to that with over 1000 submissions coming in, so we have extended that consultation period for another four weeks to ensure that we are crossing every 't' and dotting every 'i'.

We know there are some very difficult decisions ahead and we are having to look at this in a very holistic way. We have to ensure that in taking really hard decisions on one species it does not then put strain on another species. You cannot just look at sand flathead or tiger flathead, or whatever it might be; you have to look at it holistically and that is certainly what we are doing. We are also very conscious that we must find the balance between our recreational fishers and our commercial fishers and we are working very hard in that space. It will only be a few more weeks before we are able to come out with the decisions that are being made. Those decisions are being made very much based in science but also the socioeconomic impacts that those decisions can have as well.

One of the first things I decided to do as minister, certainly around sand flathead when the science came out which showed that that very iconic species for our state was indeed depleted, was to put in place immediate provisions and cuts to the bag limit from 20 down to 10 just to give us a little bit of breathing space while we went through the proper process. There are difficult decisions that will be made but we have an obligation to ensure that this way of life that is enjoyed by so many Tasmanians is protected for their children and indeed their grandchildren, and I would like to thank the thousands of Tasmanian fishers who have reached out, given their opinion and are depending on our Government to make really good decisions in this space.

Marinus Link - Costs

Mr WINTER question to PREMIER, Mr ROCKLIFF

[10.42 a.m.]

For the last three days, you have been telling Tasmanians that the total upfront cost of the Marinus Link will be only around \$100 million. That is not actually true, is it? Is it not a fact that Tasmania will also be required to take on its share of the liability of the debt - nearly half a billion dollars? Given Marinus requires the North West Transmission Developments, which Tasmania will have to fully fund, is not the true cost to Tasmania of getting this project up and running closer to \$2 billion, or nearly 20 times more than the cost you told Tasmanians about only three days ago?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, I thank the member for his question. This is a great deal for Tasmania. We have been very clear about the cost for Tasmania and it is a good deal. With a reduction of equity share to 17.7 per cent, this reduces what Tasmania needs to contribute to the project while still getting the economic benefits and the benefits of energy security that Marinus Link will provide. We drew a line in the sand and the outcome has landed on Tasmania's line in the sand, with good collaboration with the federal government. The federal minister, Mr Bowen, said today:

This is a game-changing project for both Tasmania and the mainland ... this updated agreement would not only deliver the benefits of Marinus Link, it will be cheaper to Tasmanians.

It is a win, win, win for Tasmanian consumers, for Tasmanian energy security and to put downward pressure on energy bills. We still have the negativity, of course, of those opposite and Mr Winter is included in that. I thought you would have welcomed the deal on the weekend.

Mr Winter - More Chris Bowen, less Guy Barnett - good thing.

Mr ROCKLIFF - You welcomed it though, didn't you? I thought you welcomed it.

Members interjecting.

Mr SPEAKER - Order.

Mr ROCKLIFF - The Leader of the Opposition did not get her way, Mr Speaker, because she wanted us to walk away from it.

Ms White - When did I ever say that?

Members interjecting.

Mr ROCKLIFF - This puts the Labor Party in an even more difficult position. I know they are dealing with other matters -

Mr WINTER - Point of order, Mr Speaker, under Standing Order 45. The question is about the cost estimates for Marinus. I ask the Premier to back up his claim that it is only going to cost Tasmanians \$100 million.

Mr SPEAKER - I take the point of order on relevance. The Premier was making some statements around Marinus and I will allow him to continue.

Mr ROCKLIFF - Thank you, Mr Speaker. We have been very clear and upfront. Mr Barnett has been very transparent in this whole process, as well as tabling a ministerial statement later today. It is very difficult for the Labor Party because they cannot find a position on anything. We are building; we are builders. You are blockers with your negative attitude talking Tasmania down all the time. Mr Winter has one position but I have to say that changes quite regularly on a number of matters. The Leader of the Opposition has another view, of course. It must be very difficult for the Labor Party members -

Ms Finlay - Look behind you; you're all over the place.

Mr ROCKLIFF - It is very difficult for Ms Finlay in particular. I reckon Ms Finlay is thinking to herself, 'I need to interview another political party'. Maybe, Ms Finlay, you should have put a little more research into your interview process -

Ms Finlay - I'm super-happy here, Premier. How are you feeling over there?

Mr ROCKLIFF - been a little bit more thorough. I can only imagine what Ms O'Byrne is feeling about the interview process.

Members interjecting.

Mr SPEAKER - Order; the House will come to order. There is too much noise in here. I have trouble hearing what is being said and I am sure Hansard is struggling to make out what is also being said. Please listen to the answer in silence.

Electricity - Capping of Prices

Mr WINTER question to PREMIER, Mr ROCKLIFF

[10.47 a.m.]

Energy analyst Marc White has said Tasmanians will be the losers from your Marinus deal. Mr White has alleged that Tasmanians will be on the hook for more than \$100 million in additional costs every year because Tasmanians will ultimately fund these projects through their power bills. He says this will see power bills increase by at least 10 per cent or \$250 a year once Marinus is built and Tasmanians will be paying these extra costs for the next 40 years. Power prices have already increased by nearly \$500 per year for the average household thanks to your broken promise to cap power prices. Will you finally support Labor's plan to cap power prices to protect Tasmanians from yet more massive price increases?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, I thank the member for his question. Labor does not have a plan. We have a plan for power while the Labor Party is in a power struggle, as I said previously. Your cap would destroy jobs and undermine investment into our energy security and our energy future. What Marinus does is unlock that renewable energy potential and brings investment in wind and solar to Tasmania.

Labor cannot be trusted when it comes to energy, prices and policy. The last time they were in power energy prices increased by some 65 per cent. It has taken our Government, working collaboratively with the federal Labor government and previously with the federal Coalition government, to put in steps to secure Tasmania's energy future. We are about the future, forward looking, not blocking and playing politics with silly slogans and ill thought-through policies and thought bubbles such as Labor's power price cap. Labor has no plan except for a price cap that would destroy the retail sector, destroy confidence, destroy jobs and drive up power prices -

Ms White interjecting.

Mr SPEAKER - Leader of the Opposition, order.

Mr ROCKLIFF - Contrary to the assertion in the member's question, what Marinus does with respect to increasing supply through investment in renewables is ensure that Tasmania can remain among the lowest of any other state when it comes to our energy prices. That is why we have a strong plan for our future when it comes to energy and unlocking that renewable energy investment in solar and wind, backed up by the federal Labor Government, previously the federal Coalition government, bipartisan support when it comes to the Marinus Link from the federal Coalition previous to the last election and now continuing that policy through the federal Labor government, working together to secure Tasmania's energy future through -

Ms White interjecting.

Mr ROCKLIFF - Dear, oh dear, Mr Speaker. I am not going to play games with Tasmania's energy future like those opposite.

Energy - Investment in Wind Power

Mr WOOD question to **MINISTER for ENERGY and RENEWABLES, Mr BARNETT**

[10.51 a.m.]

Could you update the House on the Rockliff Liberal Government's progress to bring on investment in new energy through offshore wind?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, I thank the member for his question. I note he is from the electorate of Bass, which is adjacent to the Bass Strait, which I will have more to say about shortly.

Tasmania has a world-class wind resource and we intend to use it. We want to harness that resource for the benefit of our economy, for the benefit of Tasmanian jobs and to attract new renewable energy generators to Tasmania to develop new industry, create jobs and opportunities that will underpin our renewable energy future to support our strong economy and our future.

The Premier has talked about the future. State Labor keeps going back to the past. We are builders. We are not blockers like those on the other side.

Opposition members interjecting.

Mr SPEAKER - Order, Leader of the Opposition. I am not going to keep warning you or other members. Order.

Mr BARNETT - It is why we support Marinus Link. It is why we want to back our strengths in a world-class wind resource and a world-class water resource. It is why we are pleased to have renegotiated that agreement with the Australian Labor Government and to continue that progress.

Bass Strait has been named as one of the top options for offshore wind energy generation in Australia, among the best in the world, as identified not by us, but by the Australian Energy Market Organisation and the Blue Economy CRC based out of Launceston - it is a national CRC and we are proud of it.

The Tasmanian Government has been working closely with the Australian Government - the federal Labor Government - and I have been lobbying and speaking with Mr Bowen for more than 18 months regarding the merits of Bass Strait being identified in this case. We have now secured a declaration for the Bass Strait as an offshore wind zone for an offshore electricity infrastructure framework and the process can now begin.

I am very pleased to welcome the announcement by Chris Bowen, the federal minister for Climate Change and Energy, that was made last week, that consultation on the offshore wind zone in the Bass Strait will begin in October - just next month. That will see Tasmania's offshore wind resource being fully explored, with the Australian Government soon to release an offshore wind zone north of Tasmania in the Bass Strait for public consultation.

As a result of the great relationship we have with the federal Labor Government, we are getting things done and we will continue to do so. The zone consultation will be a first step, ahead of the Commonwealth's licencing application process for seabed tenure. This is another step in our Government's Tasmania-first energy guarantee. It is about progressing new industry, new development and new opportunities, and using Bass Strait to our benefit. Of course, what has state Labor been doing? Confusion on the other side. They do not know where they stand on Marinus. They are sitting on the proverbial barbed wire fence and it is very uncomfortable for them.

Mineral Exploration Licences

Dr WOODRUFF question to MINISTER for RESOURCES, Mr ELLIS

[10.55 a.m.]

You are constantly referring to 'getting the balance right' as you bulldoze your way through sensitive portfolio issues. Once again you have committed to getting the balance right when considering mineral exploration licences. The area covered by exploration licences for metallic minerals has doubled in just two-and-a-half years to nearly 10 000 square kilometres and another 5000 square kilometres are on your desk for approval. However, you have no framework to guide what is now seen as a wholesale land-grab for some of Tasmania's most sensitive areas. It is disturbing how mining exploration licences are being ticked-off across the food bowl for Tasmania.

Let us be clear: we know and understand that we need to do mining exploration but farmers in northern Tasmania are furious that you are robbing them of agency over their land with zero consultation or consideration of the cumulative impact of exploration and mining. As a matter of urgency, will you actually get the balance right and enact law reform to ensure Tasmania's unique environment is properly protected and give landowners a real say about -

Mr SPEAKER - The member's time is up. We do have limited time.

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, we already knew it was going to be difficult for Dr Woodruff to keep to the one minute timeframe that she asked for and that was a classic example just then.

She is right and I am sorry the truth hurts, Dr Woodruff, but we have had a huge increase in exploration and mining interest here in Tasmania since we came to government, and that is a good thing.

It was a little bit strange that you acknowledged that you believe that we need mining, given that every time you open your mouth in this place about mining it is to shut it down. We are big backers of mining and agriculture on this side of the House because we believe that both are critical for the future economic success and job opportunities for young people in rural and regional Tasmania. Indeed, mining and farming have coexisted in Tasmania for generations such as at communities just up the road from me at Railton, Beaconsfield, and at Fingal where I was just the other day at the coal mine catching up with some outstanding Tasmanians.

Ultimately, we need to get the balance right as we work through these processes. We have an established process that we think gets that balance right, about the economic, social and environmental impacts and benefits of mining wherever it occurs, because we have some of the strongest processes in the world in Tasmania and we should be quite rightly proud.

We also have some of the most confident miners and farmers in the world in Tasmania and that is being driven by a Government that gives them confidence and certainty, that does not listen to the whingers from the Greens who just want to shut down both industries - mining and farming as well as renewable energy, tourism and just about every other industry under the

sun. All you do in this place is try to pit good people against each other as if it is a zero-sum game.

We know that we can get the balance right and support both. In terms of some specifics we have applications under way around a range of different areas and those processes are currently proceeding through a regulatory assessment and an approvals process. This is undertaken by Mineral Resources Tasmania and that is in line with the Mineral Resources Development Act 1995.

Dr Woodruff - But there is no consultation.

Mr ELLIS - There is, Dr Woodruff. The process allows the parties with an interest or a stake in lands covered by an application to lodge an objection. I understand that across different leases, objections when they are lodged can be worked through by MRT. Once an assessment has been completed, the Director of Mines then makes a recommendation to me as the minister to grant or refuse the application. It is important to note that no activity can occur on site until the application has been approved.

It is also important to note that no mining activity on site can occur as well until an application has been approved. It is also important to note that significant areas of the state are excluded from exploration activity, including national parks and the Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area, which make up a huge vast bulk of Tasmania's land mass. In the event that a mineral deposit is found, separate regulatory and environmental approvals will then be needed before extractive mining activity can then take place and any decision to allow mining is on a case-by-case basis on what is in the best interests of the state.

We are big supporters of mining and farming across the Tasmanian community and the economy. We know that both can coexist and they have done for generations. Rural and regional communities rely on these jobs and they do not want to see politicking from the Greens.

North West Transmission Developments - Cost to Tasmanians

Mr WINTER question to MINISTER for ENERGY and RENEWABLES, Mr BARNETT

[11.00 a.m.]

Yesterday you confirmed on radio that Tasmanian households and businesses will be ultimately responsible for paying 100 per cent of the cost of the North West Transmission Developments through their power bills. The original cost of that project was around \$800 million. You have admitted in a letter to the Prime Minister that it is now significantly more, although you refuse to tell the House exactly how much more. You said yesterday that Tasmanians would have to pay for this cost through their power bills each and every year. How much will that add to the average Tasmanian's power bill, which has already gone up by almost \$500 for the average household because of your broken promise?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, I thank the member for his question and I am looking forward to sharing my very comprehensive ministerial statement about the status of Marinus Link, Battery of the Nation and the North West Transmission Developments. With respect to costs to consumers, let us be very clear - we have a policy of delivering electricity in this state at amongst the lowest prices of Australia and that is a commitment that will continue. As a result of bringing on supply, that will deliver even more pressure to push prices down.

With respect to the deal we have done with the federal government, the Premier has already outlined that it is a win-win-win, as has Chris Bowen. Perhaps you could ask your federal counterpart, Mr Chris Bowen, his views because he has been sharing those in the public arena this morning on ABC and more recently and talked specifically about the fact that it would be cheaper for Tasmanians. That is what Mr Bowen said. The Premier has just quoted Mr Bowen as recently as this morning.

We are very committed -

Mr WINTER - Point of order, Mr Speaker, under Standing Order 45. The question is specifically around the North West Transmission project, which is a Tasmanian project delivered by a Tasmanian GBE and this minister. I am asking about the cost of that project.

Mr SPEAKER - I remind the minister of Standing Order 45 and relevance and ask him to tie his answer to the question.

Mr BARNETT - Thank you, Mr Speaker. As we have always said and as the member should already be aware, the North West Transmission Developments are very much critical to the Marinus Link development; it is part and parcel of the package, part of the deal with Marinus Link. Let us be very clear that electricity prices with Marinus Link will be much lower than electricity prices without Marinus Link. I will be happy to say more very shortly.

Tasmania Police - Government Investment

Mr YOUNG question to MINISTER for POLICE, FIRE and EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT, Mr ELLIS

[11.03 a.m.]

Noting the recent graduation ceremony, can you update the House on how the Government investments into police are keeping Tasmanians safe and making Tasmania Police an employer of choice?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, I thank Mr Young for his question and note his strong interest in keeping his community of Franklin safe. The Tasmanian Rockliff Liberal Government makes no secret that we are committed to continual investment in our police force to keep Tasmanians safe. This includes over \$100 million in infrastructure investment programs to give emergency workers state-of-the-art infrastructure to work from and live in.

In the last 18 months we have opened three new police stations, two emergency management centres, built and renovated several police houses around the state and established two new dedicated facilities for our Special Operations Group. This includes \$5 million for the Longford police station; \$5 million for the New Norfolk police station; \$4.6 million for the new northern and southern Special Operations Group facilities; \$7 million for the new Launceston police station redevelopment; \$12 million for the Sorell emergency services hub; \$6.5 million for the emergency management centre; \$22.9 million for the upgrade of police housing around Tasmania; \$12.5 million for the Bridgewater police station; \$1 million for the Rosebery police station; and \$7.5 million for the St Helens police station, and Mr Speaker, I pay tribute to your work in this role on that as well.

In the last month, minister Ogilvie and I were humbled to open the Government's \$15.1 million Arch centres for victims/survivors of family and sexual violence. In the context of Child Protection Week and the commission of inquiry, this is a strong example of how our Government is acting to keep Tasmanian children safe. This is supported through Tasmania's record investment and record number of police officers. There have never been more police in Tasmania than there are today. Tasmania has the highest number of police per capita than any other jurisdiction in Australia.

Just last week we welcomed 74 new recruits as constables of Tasmania Police; 26 will be in the north-west, including some outstanding Tasmanians and the dux of the class; 16 in the north and 32 in the south, stationed in our busy 24/7 police stations. They will benefit from our nation-leading roster trials, our safe staffing initiatives and our award-winning health and wellbeing program. In a climate of a highly competitive job market, our Government has supported Tasmania Police to be an employer of choice and in high demand. This is through strong investment in supporting our members and making sure they have modern, state-of-the-art facilities.

This is in contrast to the Labor-Greens government who defunded the police, sacked one in every 10 police officers and 25 per cent of the State Service who supported them. They cut the cold-case unit and key operational areas and left stations and police houses to rot.

Avebury Mine - Payroll Tax Reimbursement

Mr WINTER question to PREMIER, Mr ROCKLIFF

[11.06 a.m.]

It is no secret that the Avebury mine is facing some significant financial challenges. The last thing they need is broken promises from your Government. In the most recent addition of the *Western Echo* you said your Government would provide 'an immediate support package of payroll tax reimbursement'. You said it was your intention to make further available a funding package of payroll tax relief to Mallee Resources and that you remain committed to supporting the continued operations of Avebury, securing the important jobs of locals and claimed that this offer is a strong show of support for the mine. However, you have failed to deliver a cent of payroll tax reimbursements, or in fact any other assistance. Why have you misled the people of the west coast by breaking your promises and what are you actually doing to save the 200-plus jobs at the Avebury mine?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, we will always proudly support the west coast of Tasmania. It was great to be on the west coast of Tasmania just a few weeks ago with a number of my colleagues. We were also at a community Cabinet on the west coast earlier this year. Minister Jaensch and I were at the west coast more recently and, as the Minister for Resources, Mr Ellis, would attest, we are proudly pro-mining and pro the west coast.

We recognise the important role that the Avebury nickel mine plays on the west coast. The mine directly employs over 200 Tasmanians and supports opportunities for local businesses that supply the mine with equipment and services. It was very good to be able to sign a memorandum of understanding around a strategic regional partnership with the council and representatives from industry, including aquaculture and the minerals and energy representatives as well.

We have been working closely with the mine's owner, Mallee Resources, since it reopened last year. Last month we offered an emergency support package of payroll tax reimbursement to the mine, subject to certain terms and conditions. This offer sat alongside the funding we have made available to the mine through the exploration drilling grant initiative. We are committed to supporting Avebury's continued operation and securing the important jobs of locals and are continuing to work closely with Mallee Resources during this period under our Government.

Tasmania's mining and minerals processing sector has grown strongly, jobs and exports are up, royalties and exploration are at record levels, mines are reopening and the reality is under the Labor Government they will be shut of course. Under the Labor-Greens government Tasmania had one of the lowest rankings in the country for mining investment attraction due to the threat of land lock ups. We will always support and work with the mining industry and the energy industry to ensure their long-term success.

Eating Disorders - Treatment Services

Mr TUCKER question to MINISTER for HEALTH, Mr BARNETT

[11.11 a.m.]

We know that over 1 million Australian children and adults are living with eating disorders each year. Each year approximately 2000 Australians will die from the effects of an eating disorder. Eating disorders have the second highest mortality rate of any mental illness and the number of people diagnosed with an eating disorder has gone up by nearly 150 per cent since COVID-19.

Studies have consistently shown that the most important part of treating an eating disorder is with regular psychological therapy with inpatient treatment providing the ideal environment for recovery. There are currently no inpatient treatment centres dedicated to the treatment of eating disorders in Tasmania. Tasmanian families are having to shell out thousands and thousands of dollars to send their family members to the mainland for treatment.

What is the Government doing to help and support those suffering from eating disorders? What is the Government doing to implement their recommendations outlined in the 10-year strategy on eating disorders?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, I thank the member for Lyons for his question and his long standing interest in this matter. I also have a personal interest in this matter.

We were pleased with the previous federal government's commitment of around \$10 million to support the establishment of a state-wide eating disorder service primarily based in southern Tasmania - the area at St John's Park will be part of that and I will come to that in a moment - and also expanding the service more broadly to the north and the north-west.

The eating disorder treatment services in Tasmania are currently provided by both public and private health providers. Within the public system community and inpatient treatment for children, young people and adults provided by child and adolescent mental health services, adult community mental health services, paediatric outpatient clinics and by our hospital inpatient settings.

The Tasmanian Eating Disorder Service, known as TEDS, commenced initial clinical service delivery in June this year to deliver specialist eating disorder services statewide to which I referred. The Tasmanian Government has provided \$24 million of investment in the 2023-24 budget as part of our ongoing commitment to a Tasmanian Eating Disorder Service.

The Department of Mental Health, Alcohol and Drug directorate has developed a model of care for TEDS that is publicly available on the department's website. The model of care has been developed with input from a range of stakeholders including health professionals currently providing treatment for eating disorders in a range of treatment settings, such as mental health providers, dietitians and doctors from the public health system, private practice and primary care.

The Butterfly Foundation, the peak body for national eating disorders collaboration, Primary Health Tasmania and people with lived experience very importantly of an eating disorder, either their own or that of a loved one, are also involved. Recruitment of a state-wide TEDS workforce is continuing with a physician, a clinical nurse's specialist, dietician, psychiatrist, executive support officer, project manager and TEDS service manager recruited. The service manager has developed a program of implementation plan which is guiding the staged roll-out of the service.

TEDS will deliver six core functions state wide inclusive of a navigation hub: a specialist consultation and complex care coordination, community based intensive treatment in the north, north-west and south, a residential treatment program in the south, sector capacity and capability development, and research collaboration.

I appreciate the member's interest in this matter. I encourage the member and other members to have a more detailed briefing on the matter, should they wish.

Avebury Mine - Government Support

Mr BROAD question to PREMIER, Mr ROCKLIFF

[11.15 a.m.]

There is a very real possibility that Avebury could be in administration at any moment. This is serious. What are you doing right now, today, to support Avebury and the 200-plus jobs that rely on the mine remaining open?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, I thank the member for his question. Our Minister for Resources is also well engaged in this matter. It remains the Government's intention to provide a total of \$3.5 million in payroll tax relief. The Tasmanian Development Board has recommended a \$3.5 million assistance package for the reimbursement of payroll tax, subject to terms and conditions, including capital-raising. We continue to work closely with Mallee as it works through its financial situation, with shareholders and as it negotiates with finances. Subject to terms and conditions, and in keeping with prudent financial management, the Tasmanian Government will continue to work with Mallee on the provision of payroll tax relief, subject to further terms and conditions and an appropriation of funding for this purpose.

I am very mindful of every single job around Tasmania, the mining industry included. We value every job and we value every job on the west coast. I am proud of the west coast's mining heritage, which will always be important to Tasmania, not only through jobs but also royalties, which we invest in those essential services Tasmanians value.

I made a point to the mayor and others when I was on the west coast the other day how fabulous the diversification of industry sectors on the west coast has been, from predominantly mining, many decades ago, to energy, tourism, arts and culture. The Unconformity was launched just the other day. There is a huge breadth of diversification of industry, which I am very proud of the west coast for. We value every single job in each one of those sectors.

Do not criticise others in this Chamber when it comes to jobs because, with your crew, 10 000 jobs were lost between 2010 and 2014 because you shut down the forest industry.

Ms DOW - Mr Speaker, point of order, Standing Order 45, relevance. This is a very important question. It is about the 200 jobs of people on the west coast and across northern Tasmania -

Mr SPEAKER - I take Standing Order 45. Can you please sit down? It is not an opportunity to repropose an argument or a question. The Premier was answering the question. It went to jobs on the west coast and he was talking about jobs.

Mr ROCKLIFF - We value the jobs in mining and in every industry sector - every single job, and we have worked very hard and cooperatively with business and industry, small, medium and large businesses, over the course of the last almost 10 years to create 56 000 jobs.

I recall some of the Fraser Institute reports back in the Labor-Greens days where they were not recommending investment in the mineral sector in Tasmania. They are now. We have improved our rankings when it comes to the Fraser Institute. The mining industry and the

Tasmanian Government are proud of that. We will continue to value jobs because we have created 56 000 new jobs over the course of the last 10 years.

Mr SPEAKER - The Premier's time has expired.

Family Violence Legislation

Mr WOOD question to ATTORNEY-GENERAL, Ms ARCHER

[11.20 a.m.]

Can you advise the House on how the Rockliff Liberal Government is continuing to keep Tasmanians safe and secure, progressing legislative reform to improve the understanding of family violence-related deaths in Tasmania.

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, this is the lucky last question but a really important question. I thank the member for the question and his interest in this very important matter.

As Attorney-General and Minister for Justice I am committed to ensuring that our Government does everything we possibly can to make sure that all Tasmanians are safe, equal and respected and that our homes, families and communities are free from all forms of family and sexual violence.

My significant record on family violence law reforms speaks for how passionate I am about this issue. As Attorney-General I will continue to ensure our laws efficiently protect victims/survivors and hold perpetrators to account. Violence in any form is not acceptable. We know that, unfortunately, statistics show that family violence continues to play a role in a significant number of deaths each year. However, for a range of reasons it is sadly the case that the criminal justice system does not always provide answers about the circumstances of such deaths.

It is critical that our continuing response to protect those exposed to family violence and promote healing is informed by evidence and an understanding of the circumstances that contribute to family violence-related deaths. For that reason I am developing legislation to amend section 24 of the Coroners Act 1995. Section 24(1) of the Coroners Act 1995 provides the circumstances in which a coroner must hold an inquest. At present this section requires the coroner to hold an inquest in certain circumstances including suspected homicide, workplace accidents and deaths in custody. The proposed amendments will provide that a coroner must hold an inquest if the coroner suspects that family violence may have contributed to the death of the person.

The proposed amendments will ensure that deaths to which family violence has contributed can be appropriately examined even where there are no criminal proceedings. The evidence-gathering powers attached to an inquest including summoning witnesses to give evidence on those who are affirmation and the ability of interested parties to call and examine or cross examine witnesses, will improve the evidence base in relation to family violence-related deaths.

I take this opportunity to welcome Faith Tkalac who is present today in the Speaker's Reserve and I acknowledge Faith's tireless advocacy for her son, Jari. Preventing and responding to family violence remains a top priority for our Government and we remain committed to keeping our community safe. This proposed reform will make an important contribution to those efforts. I thank Faith for her contribution and suggestions in this regard.

MATTER OF PRIVILEGE

Request for Referral to Privileges and Conduct Committee - Minister for Energy and Renewables

[11.23 a.m.]

Ms WHITE (Lyons - Leader of the Opposition) - Mr Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 81, I raise the matter of privilege and seek to move the following motion -

That the Minister for Energy and Renewables, the Honourable Guy Barnett, having been ordered by the House to -

- (1) Outline to the House, before 6pm on 16 August 2023, the latest cost estimate for:
 - (a) Marinus Link;
 - (b) North West Transmission Developments; and
 - (c) Battery of the Nation projects,

and having failed to do so, this House refers the minister to the Privileges and Conduct Committee.

Mr Speaker, this motion is about the minister telling big fat lies to the parliament and to the people of Tasmania and the parliament needs to hold the minister accountable for that.

Government members interjecting.

Mr SPEAKER - We are not into the substantive motion so -

Ms WHITE - I withdraw that, Mr Speaker. We had from this minister a fortnight ago a statement that he was adamant he could not reveal the cost estimates for Marinus Link, the North West Transmission Developments or the Battery of the Nation project because they were all subject to a live procurement process. We saw on the weekend not just one but two press releases issued with the minister's name on them which detail the cost estimate for the Marinus project.

It is unquestionable that this minister failed to comply with an order of this House that it was reasonable for the minister to be able to provide a cost estimate to this parliament because he has subsequently released it publicly in a press release. We do not believe that the minister's explanations for why he failed to provide that information to the House are true and therefore we request the parliament refer him to the Privileges and Conduct Committee.

Mr Speaker, I understand you will need to consider this matter. I am happy to put further arguments but I believe the evidence before the House is plain to see. I ask for the parliament to support this referral.

[11.25 a.m.]

Mr BARNETT (Lyons - Minister for Energy and Renewables) - Mr Speaker, thank you for the opportunity to share a response to reject the advice and the remarks from the Leader for the Opposition.

In terms of the statement on 17 August, I gave an undertaking that I would deliver a ministerial statement and update the House today. It will be delivered, subject to having that opportunity to rise in the not too distant future, in this House and comprehensively update the House with respect to Marinus Link, Battery of the Nation, North West Transmission Developments and related matters.

At all times I took advice. I tabled the advice in this parliament from the chair of Marinus Link, from the chair of TasNetworks, and from the head of my department, in terms of a live procurement process. If you are reflecting on the advice of those three individuals that reflects more on your character than anybody else. They made it clear, and I tabled the letters in this House, that it was a live procurement process at the time and nothing could be said with respect to those matters in accordance with the advice. I acted on the advice, Mr Speaker.

In terms of the procurement process, that came to a conclusion towards the end of last week. I have, again, taken advice and I will have more to say in my ministerial statement.

Members interjecting.

Mr BARNETT - You are not interested. Mr Speaker, this is a smokescreen from state Labor to hide the fact that they do not have a position on Marinus because they are sitting on the barbed wire fence. This is what it is all about. It is a smokescreen from the real issue which is Marinus.

Mr Speaker, in addition, we were in live negotiations with the federal Government as the Premier has made clear over many weeks. That has also come to a conclusion with an announcement on Sunday with Mr Bowen, Julie Collins, myself and the Premier making that announcement on Sunday. Very clearly, it is based on advice. I have advice on what I can share with the parliament today. I am looking forward to updating the parliament in that regard with respect to the numbers that are relevant now that matter has concluded. Quite simply, if you want to reflect on the advice of those three independent objective chairs who have provided advice, that is a matter for you.

Ms White - They certainly did not tell you to mislead the parliament.

Mr SPEAKER - Order.

Mr BARNETT - I draw your attention and *Hansard's* attention to that interjection which is refuted. That is an outrageous allegation against independent objective authorities.

Opposition members interjecting.

Mr SPEAKER - Order.

Mr BARNETT - There are matters of probity in terms of the live procurement process. People know that and the business community knows that. This is a political stunt from the other side to distract from their own position. I will have a very comprehensive ministerial statement to share very shortly where you will learn a whole lot more if you take the opportunity to listen.

Statement by Speaker

Mr SPEAKER - I have heard enough. This matter was raised on the last sitting day where I declined to give it precedence over orders of the day. I do not consider that there have been any further circumstances arise that would alter that determination. I note there is ministerial statement listed today which has been foreshadowed as relating to energy. I remind members that there are other forms of the House that are available should the member wish to consider these.

TABLED PAPERS

Questions on Notice - Answers

[11.29 a.m.]

The following answers to Questions on Notice were tabled:

No. 78 of 2023 - TRANSIT OFFICERS ON PUBLIC TRANSPORT - TRIAL

Mr O'Byrne to Minister for Infrastructure and Transport, Mr Ferguson

See Appendix 1 on page 117.

No. 54 of 2023 - PUBLIC AND SOCIAL HOUSING - MANAGEMENT

Ms Haddad to Minister for Housing and Construction, Mr Street

See Appendix 2 on page 118.

Standing Committee on Subordinate Legislation - Annual Report 2022-23

[11.31 a.m.]

Ms FINLAY - Mr Speaker, I have the honour to bring up the following report of the Joint Parliamentary Standing Committee on Subordinate Legislation Annual Report 2022-23.

Report received.

**VEHICLE AND TRAFFIC (REGULATORY REFORMS) AMENDMENT BILL
2023 (No. 7)**

Bill returned from Legislative Council without amendment.

**JUSTICE AND RELATED LEGISLATION (REMOVAL OF OUTDATED SEX
TERMINOLOGY) BILL 2023 (No. 4)**

Bill returned from Legislative Council with amendments.

Ms ARCHER (Clark - Leader of the House) - Mr Speaker, I move that the last two mentioned bills be taken into consideration at a later time.

Motion agreed to.

**WORKERS REHABILITATION AND COMPENSATION AMENDMENT
BILL 2023 (No. 22)**

First Reading

Bill presented by Ms Archer and read the first time.

**NORTH WEST MATERNITY EMPLOYEE ENTITLEMENTS BILL 2023
(No. 23)**

First Reading

Bill presented by Mr Barnett and read the first time.

**METRO TASMANIA (FREE PUBLIC TRANSPORT) AMENDMENT BILL 2023
(No. 25)**

First Reading

Bill presented by Mr Bayley and read the first time.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Energy Projects - Update

[11.35 a.m.]

Mr BARNETT (Lyons - Minister for Energy and Renewables) - Mr Speaker, I committed on 17 August to further update the House at the earliest opportunity on Marinus and associated energy projects. Today I will provide that update for the House. I will discuss the agreement the Tasmanian Government has negotiated with the Commonwealth Government about Marinus Link. I will talk to the North West Transmission Developments, Battery of the Nation projects and energy security in Tasmania.

In the last session of parliament, I tabled the following documents:

- a letter from the chair of Marinus Link outlining the risks of disclosing cost estimates for the Marinus Link project during live procurement;
- a letter from the chair of TasNetworks outlining the risks of disclosing cost estimates for the North West Transmission Developments during live procurement;
- advice from the CEO of Renewables, Climate and Future Industries Tasmania (ReCFIT) regarding the risks of releasing the cost estimates of both projects during live procurement; and
- a letter from Hydro Tasmania containing the latest cost estimates for the Battery of the Nation projects.

I tabled what I was able to without breaching contractual obligations and exposing the state to sovereign and legal risk.

During the last session of parliament the Tasmanian Government was in live negotiations with the Commonwealth Government about Marinus Link. Further, Marinus Link was in a live procurement process with strict probity guidelines that legally prevented public disclosure of cost estimates. The strong advice I received was that disclosing any information while active procurement processes were underway is detrimental to the probity and would have serious unintended consequences for the future of Tasmania, including legal consequences.

I was also advised that the appropriate time to disclose the information such as the estimated cost for a project is once procurement processes have concluded and in accordance with generally accepted probity principles and subject to any contractual arrangements between the parties. Today I am happy to inform parliament that these matters have been positively resolved.

As announced over the weekend, we furthered the agreement with the Commonwealth and Victoria regarding Project Marinus announced as part of the October 2022 letter of intent. That agreement provided greater clarity around the future of the project, including tripartite ownership arrangements, concessional financing under the Rewiring the Nation Fund and cost allocation between Tasmania and Victoria.

Since that time, the tender process has been run by Marinus Link to secure manufacturing slots for the cable and converter stations required for the project and the procurement has progressed to an extent where figures can now be disclosed without opening up the state to legal and financial risk.

Marinus is competing in a global market and with tight supply chains is facing similar inflationary pressures to other major energy and infrastructure projects worldwide. This has led to tender responses for the initially envisaged two-cable 1500 megawatt project, which would have resulted in an unacceptable cost impact on Tasmanian electricity consumers. We were advised that estimates for the project would be approximately \$5.5 billion.

Consequently, following discussions with the Commonwealth and Victoria, it has been decided to take forward a single 750 megawatt project scope at this time, with the option for a

second cable to be considered after the financial investment decision on cable 1, planned for late 2024. The tender process was progressed as a single-cable project as a result of our successful negotiations with the Australian Government. It has now reached a point where I am advised it is appropriate to share cost estimates.

The single cable scope, which includes cable and converter components, is now estimated through the tender processes at \$3 billion-\$3.3 billion. The project will be funded 20 per cent from equity contributions and 80 per cent of debt funded through the Clean Energy Finance Corporation. The debt will sit with the entity that owns the project. We have further reduced our potential exposure to the project by negotiating a reduced equity stake in the tripartite entity, such that the state will now have only a 17.7 per cent ownership of the project.

On current estimates, Tasmania is projected to be responsible for 3.54 per cent of the current project costs to reach commissioning. The effect of this is that Tasmania's financial contribution toward the project will be limited to approximately \$115 million equity based on current project cost estimates. This is the cost of ownership of the asset.

The joint entity that will realise each government share will be set up by the end of 2023, allowing the project to progress and be funded in line with our agreement. We also have an option to sell our equity in the project to the Commonwealth once it is operational. If we exercise this option to sell our equity, we will have no ownership of the project entity and, therefore, no responsibility for the long-term debt the entity holds. While we have this option, Tasmania has retained decision-making rights in the project, ensuring we continue to have our say in its delivery should it progress past FID.

The final cost to customers will be determined through the Australian Energy Regulator in a fully transparent independent process. The AER will set the maximum allowable revenue (MAR) for the project based on a number of factors, including the final cost to complete the project, the cost of debt, return on equity, depreciation of the assets and other factors. The MAR is recovered from customers through electricity bills. Transmission costs represent approximately 40 per cent of the typical Tasmanian customer's electricity bill. Tasmania's share of these costs is estimated to be around 11 per cent of the pre-concessional finance MAR and includes a concessional finance discount for Tarraleah, to be passed through to consumers. The low-cost financing for Rewiring the Nation will reduce the annual costs of Project Marinus for electricity customers by almost half.

The quoted 6 per cent of benefits of the project are only the benefits from a projected reduction in wholesale electricity price and annual energy consumption. Current FDI consulting modelling shows that power prices will be lower with Marinus than without Marinus. And there are far more comprehensive economic benefits to Tasmania than just forecast lower energy prices for Tasmanians. Updated modelling from Marinus Link estimates the project will bring approximately \$2 billion in economic activity, over 1400 jobs to Tasmania and billions in new investment.

It is important to note that the project is still subject to a whole-of-state business case and financial investment decision. The whole-of-state business case will consider the financial, economic and social impacts of Project Marinus and its associated energy projects and issues on Tasmania and the Tasmanian community. This work will be led by Treasury and will be prepared in the context of the information available at the time. The business case will be completed and independently peer-reviewed at least 30 days before a financial investment

decision is due and will be made publicly available. The whole-of-state business case assessment will consider Marinus Link, the North West Transmission Developments, the Battery of the Nation projects, broader renewable energy and load growth developments to fulfil the Government's policy commitments and other impacts on Tasmania's energy sector.

We will make a decision with Tasmania's best interest in mind. The funding arrangements for Marinus Link have landed on our side of the line in the sand thanks to further concessional finance being provided by the Commonwealth Government, which we greatly appreciate. Given the pressure on procuring the necessary infrastructure, the Commonwealth has also agreed to play an underwriting role that will allow Marinus Link to reserve a spot in the manufacturing queue for the cable. This is a crucial risk mitigant for Tasmania. The Commonwealth underwriting enables the project to progress before making a financial investment decision in late 2024.

The project rescoping also means the North West Transmission Developments will be reviewed. This work will occur while TasNetworks completes its request for proposal for the North West Transmission Developments currently underway. The cost estimate of North West Transmission Developments in 2022 was \$832 million. Given the rescoping, my latest advice is that this is expected to be lower. TasNetworks will provide an updated project cost following the Request for Proposal (RFP) process.

As part of the updated agreement with the Commonwealth, we have secured deeply concessional financing for the North West Transmission Developments. A revised agreement will allow the Government to progress its energy strategy. The Tasmanian Government is happy to disclose further details on the deeply concessional financing arrangements but the Commonwealth Government has requested it remain confidential due to federal-state relations. We will continue to work in good faith with our federal counterparts.

A one-cable scope will deliver enhanced energy security, it will still allow us to redevelop the Tarraleah Power Station, it still provides a path to market for significant new private sector renewable generation and it will ensure Tasmanians pay less for electricity than they would in a world without Marinus. The analysis of a one-stage Marinus indicates that it will support between 1.5 gigawatts and 2 gigawatts of new generation. This would represent material progression towards the full Tasmanian renewable energy target.

This rescoping has some impacts. Our export capability is limited relative to the two-cable model we had envisaged, which for now means our pumped hydro ambitions may take a little longer to realise. I am confident that the National Electricity Market (NEM) needs this long-duration storage, as evidenced by the Electricity Statement of Opportunities released by the Australian Energy Market Operator last week. We will continue to progress the Cethana pumped hydro project and present the merits of this case, but a second Marinus cable will only be taken forward with the state's approval.

In some ways, Tasmania does not have the burning platform of other jurisdictions that are facing the lights turning off but I emphasise that there is no 'do nothing' for Tasmania regarding bringing on new sources of generation if we want to meet our own growing energy needs. What we have lost in the debate over Project Marinus is that it is not just about exports. We expect that a single-cable scope can help us to firm significant new load growth in the state, be it developing new industries, expanding our major industrials or supporting population growth and greater household and business electrification. But this will require new generation

to be built in Tasmania to maintain our net renewable credentials, which is the reason so many businesses want to locate to our state. Marinus supports new generation in our planned onshore and offshore renewable energy zones, which we continue to discuss with the community.

In addition to Marinus's energy security and electricity trading benefits, there is also the expected direct economic stimulus of construction and the renewable generation it enables. Further, Tasmania will have the option to sell its share of the project to the Commonwealth post-commissioning, removing any long-term debt and concerns about calls for additional equity on the state's balance sheet.

I thank the Commonwealth Government for their cooperation and note Mr Bowen's comments:

This is a game-changing project for both Tasmania and the mainland, and this updated agreement will not only deliver the benefits of Marinus Link, it will be cheaper to Tasmanians. A win-win for Tasmanian consumers, for Tasmanian energy security and put downwards pressure on energy bills.

I agree.

Expenditure on Marinus and north-west transmission to 30 June 2023 is as follows: \$57.1 million from the state, \$66 million from the Commonwealth, totalling \$123.1 million.

I will update the House on the planning and approvals required for Marinus Link and the north-west transmission development.

Project Marinus is a very complex project, subject to extensive and rigorous environment, planning and social impact assessments, and other due diligence activities that allow for both parliamentary and regulatory oversight, and the ability for the community to make representations. I remind members that in August 2020 both Houses of the Tasmanian parliament approved an order authorising the north west transmission developments to be assessed under the Major Infrastructure Development Approvals Act 1999. This approval included consultation with relevant local councils and a public interest test. The order for the North West Transmission Developments was approved because it was essential to Project Marinus and in the public interest. The order provides for the North West Transmission Developments to be assessed by an independent expert panel appointed by the Tasmanian Planning Commission. It will also require approval by the Commonwealth under the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act. Development applications for the North West Transmission Developments are being prepared for submission to the Tasmanian Planning Commission later this year and will be exhibited for public comment.

Marinus Link is a complex project spanning multiple jurisdictions and, as such, Tasmania, Victoria and the Commonwealth planning requirements will need to be met for various parts of the project. Marinus Link project documentation, including surveys, studies and environmental impact assessments, is currently being prepared. This project documentation will be available in early 2024 for public comment.

TasNetworks is investigating the strategic benefit payment to land owners impacted by transmission developments, utilising a similar approach to that planned in New South Wales and Victoria, and appropriate to the nature of energy developments proposed in Tasmania and

local landowner needs. The SBP would be a payment to landowners impacted by the North West Transmission Developments that is in addition to that afforded under the Land Acquisition Act. The purpose of the SBP is to acknowledge the vital role that landowners play in hosting the energy infrastructure that unlocks broader private and community economic benefits. TasNetworks will continue to work with impacted landowners and other key stakeholders to ensure the approach to compensation is fair and equitable.

There are three key publicly available documents highlighting the case for Project Marinus. The first is the Business Case Assessment document completed by TasNetworks in 2019 and supported by funding from the Australian Renewable Energy Agency (ARENA). This report found that there was a case to progress Project Marinus, and subsequently, further work has commenced to do further due diligence on the project.

The second critical report is the three Regulatory Test for Transmission - referred to in the sector as the RIT-T - reports for Marinus Link, particularly the Public Assessment Conclusions Report or PACR in 2021. The PACR report found that the preferred option for Marinus Link, a 1500MW capacity interconnector in two 750MW stages, delivered benefits well in excess of the expected project costs.

The final key report for Project Marinus is the 2022 Integrated System Plan or ISP prepared by the Australian Energy Market Operator (AEMO). The ISP outlines that Project Marinus is a very important actionable ISP project and provides significant net market benefits to the National Electricity Market, further supporting the RIT-T conclusions. There have also been prior publicly available studies into the potential for further interconnection between Tasmania and Victoria that occurred before Project Marinus was formally commenced. Public information can be found on the project proponent's websites and I encourage members to read all these publicly available documents.

I also want to update the House on Hydro Tasmania and the Battery of the Nation projects. The AEMO forecasts Australia will need up to 46 gigawatts of new energy storage over the next 30 years. Battery of the Nation includes the potential development of a new pumped hydro site, redevelopment of existing hydropower and better use of existing latent capacity. Hydro Tasmania is looking to redevelop and better utilise the existing hydropower fleet. With recent support from the Tasmanian and Australian Governments, the business is progressing with the early works and upgrade works for a potential redevelopment of the Tarraleah hydropower scheme. If a positive Financial Investment Decision (FID) is taken, a redeveloped Tarraleah would significantly increase the station's capacity and increase the renewable energy that can be generated from its existing water resources.

As part of the renegotiated agreement with the Commonwealth, we have secured deeply concessional financing for Tarraleah. Combined with the first 750MW stage of Marinus Link, this will provide low-cost, reliable, and clean energy to the NEM. Further power station upgrades on the west coast are also possible in conjunction with planned renewal works to improve capacity. Hydro Tasmania has identified Lake Cethana as the number-one pumped hydro site and further feasibility work is under way.

If the Battery of the Nation projects are progressed, hydro generation will remain a key part of the Tasmanian generation mix. It will continue to play a significant, though not sole, role in providing energy security for the state. A federation funding agreement was signed in April 2022 providing a \$123 million commitment from the state, the Australian Government,

and Hydro Tasmania to progress work for potential redevelopment of Tarraleah. The upgrade works include dam upgrades, intake excavations and the development of ancillary support infrastructure. These works are required regardless of whether the Tarraleah redevelopment has a positive FID because Tarraleah is more than 80 years old and in need of refurbishment whether or not Marinus Link is built.

Hydro Tasmania is developing a business case for Tarraleah. I commit to the preliminary business case being made available. This looks at several redevelopment options and the additional work and investment required to develop the full business case. As tabled on 16 August, the current estimate of the capital cost of Tarraleah in the preliminary business case ranges from \$851 million for a refurbishment of the existing scheme to \$1 050 million - all in 2022/23 dollars - for the redevelopment.

The next phase of the procurement process is engagement with contractors, which will give further confidence regarding the project's construction cost. This will further inform the development of the final business case, delivered in 2024, to lead to the final investment decision at the end of 2024. The redevelopment of the Tarraleah hydropower scheme could create up to 250 jobs during peak construction.

Mr Speaker, I also want to touch on the Cethana pumped hydro project. Hydro Tasmania analysis 2020 estimates that a first pumped hydro site could cost \$1.5 billion and would deliver up to 300 jobs across peak construction. The preliminary business case for this project has been developed and will be considered by the Hydro Tasmania board. It is important to note that to proceed, projects must demonstrate that they are sound investments; that is, they have a robust and positive business case with an acceptable financial return on investment. I also note that extensive approval process is required for both projects, including parliamentary approval. The Tarraleah redevelopment and Cethana pumped hydro both require parliamentary approval in accordance with the Hydro Electric Corporation Act 1995 and will also be assessed under the relevant planning legislation such as the Land Use Planning and Approvals Act 1993 and the Commonwealth Environment Protection and Biodiversity Act 1999. Community consultation is already well underway with both these projects allowing Tasmanians to have their say and shape the final business case. I commit to open dialogue and engagement with my parliamentary colleagues throughout this process.

I acknowledge that when the Government drew the line in the sand concerning Marinus queries were raised about energy security in Tasmania. I want to be very clear. Our energy security is not at risk. We have a very strong supply of energy for our current needs. Our dams are at 46 per cent, the highest for this time of year since 2019. What we need is more energy for the future. We need more supply to meet the needs of our growing economy and our growing population. Overall, the long-term average inflows into our hydro storages deliver in the order of 9000 gigawatt hours in a year. Sometimes this amount is higher, contributing to longer-term storage or more electricity exports to the mainland. Sometimes the amount is lower. We either draw on storage or import more electricity. Tasmania's hydro storages have been consistently maintained at or around the prudent storage level for the past three years.

Hydropower remains a vital part of Tasmania's energy system, but our existing Hydro assets will not generate all the energy we need for the future. As our communities and industries grow, so does the demand for clean electricity. We must continue to invest in new renewable energy generation, storage and transmission to support our island's economic and social prosperity and we have made this clear with our legislated Tasmanian Renewable Energy

Target. Hydro Tasmania can play an important firming role when the wind is not blowing or the sun is not shining through upgraded existing hydropower schemes. Tasmania currently generates about 17 per cent of its total energy needs from wind and we expect that wind energy will play an even bigger role in the future. As I mentioned previously, a one-stage Marinus is expected to support between 1.5 gigawatts and 2 gigawatts of wind generation. This would represent material progression towards the 2040 Tasmanian Renewable Energy Target.

Mr Speaker, I table a list of publicly available documents relating to Marinus Link, North West Transmission Developments and Battery of the Nation. I encourage members to read this information. Further, we will be proactively offering briefings on Marinus and associated projects. I understand the importance of these projects to the community. There will be ongoing community engagement and dialogue as the assessment of the projects continues ahead of any final decision.

As I have just outlined, there are several factors and areas to consider when developing energy policy for Tasmania. While I have mentioned many aspects of Tasmania's energy ecosystem today, the Tasmanian Government is taking many more initiatives and actions to ensure that Tasmanians continue to have among the lowest energy prices in the nation. I hope the information I have provided today has enlightened the House and I table the documents.

MOTION

Note Statement - Energy Projects - Update

[11.59 a.m.]

Ms WHITE (Lyons - Leader of the Opposition) - Mr Speaker, I move -

That the ministerial statement be noted.

I rise to make a contribution on the ministerial statement that has been handed down by the Minister for Energy and Renewables and I have to say that if this parliament had not relentlessly pursued this minister in the last sitting fortnight, demanding that he provide transparency about these projects, I doubt we would have seen that detail provided to the House just now.

Members interjecting.

Mr SPEAKER - Order.

Ms WHITE - The only reason that the minister is in this place providing a ministerial statement is because he was under extraordinary pressure. An order was agreed to by this House for him to provide an update on the costs of three projects - Marinus, the North West Transmission Developments and Battery of the Nation. He did not comply with that order and instead what he said he would do was to provide a ministerial statement today which is the only reason that we are seeing this level of detail.

This is a Government that is known for its trademark secrecy. Does anyone honestly believe we would have seen this level of transparency if the parliament had not been

relentlessly pursuing this minister to provide this update? Absolutely not, Mr Speaker. There is no way that a ministerial statement would have been provided to this level of detail.

I watched the minister very carefully when he was providing his update. I noted that every time he talked about planning pathways he looked to the crossbench. No one is left with any doubt here: if this was not a minority government, we would not have seen this ministerial statement today. That is the only reason we have seen the level of detail provided today because this Government is in minority. One of the reasons that two of its members quit was concerns about lack of transparency regarding these projects; a lack of process around how they will be assessed and a lack of information about how they will benefit Tasmanians. Every time the minister spoke today - and I do not know if the members noticed it on the crossbench - but every time he spoke about how these projects will be assessed and the role the parliament will play, he looked directly at them. That is why this ministerial statement has been provided today. This Government is trying to shore up its numbers in this House. It is very nervous about its minority status and it is only releasing this level of detail for the public because it is under huge pressure.

Mr Speaker, this is a Government that for 10 years has talked about these projects. For 10 years it has talked about Marinus and the transmission line upgrade and pumped-hydro. On how many occasions have we seen this minister for Energy standing somewhere in a hi-vis vest and a hardhat talking about how 'water is liquid gold'? I cannot count the number of times. Yet, after 10 years, what do Tasmanians have to see for it? Higher power prices, that is what they have. They do not have a single project that this Government has talked about actually delivered. Today the minister still could not detail information to this House about a timeline for delivery on those things. Instead, he again doubled down on the mistruths that he gave to us, not only today but a fortnight ago, where he said he could not provide information about the cost estimates for these projects because of contractual and tender processes.

At the last session of parliament this minister tabled information from Hydro Tasmania which detailed the cost estimates for a number of the Battery of the Nation projects. Is that suddenly going to put the tender process in jeopardy? Is this a live procurement that is suddenly put at risk and sovereign risk for the state undermined? How reckless of the minister. Absolutely not. This is simply information that should already have been in the public domain, just like when Marinus Link has previously put out information about Project Marinus like this report in 2021 that provided a cost estimate.

It is entirely reasonable for the Government to provide updates to the public about how they intend to use public money for public infrastructure projects. It is not believable that the minister claims he could not provide that update two weeks ago and he had to wait until today when we all know exactly what was going on here. He was trying to bluff and bluster his way through so he did not have to be transparent. We all saw it with the release of not just one but two press releases on the weekend which detailed the cost to the Tasmanian taxpayer and the overall cost of these projects - information that could have been provided to this parliament two weeks ago. Instead, what do we get? A ministerial statement today, a bit of a fob off. It was 'kick the can down the road'; 'we will tell you something in the future'; 'trust us', they said. 'We will tell you when we are good and ready', they said.

I do not trust this Government. Tasmanians do not trust this Government. They said they would cap power prices. They broke that promise. Tasmanian power bills are going up under this Energy minister and this Premier because they broke their promise to Tasmanian

customers. This is the Government that Tasmanians are being asked to trust. They do not trust this Government.

This update from the minister today is only provided because they have been called out for their lack of transparency. You should face the facts: we are only having this conversation because you have been called out by this parliament and if we had not been relentless in the pursuit of finding answers, I doubt we would have ever seen this level of detail.

We will have a look at the details that have been provided by this minister today. I note that there are timelines he has given about further information he will be providing to this place and briefings that have been offered to members of this parliament. It is the Tasmanian community he has to convince about these projects. It is the Tasmanian community that is bearing the brunt of the broken promises of this Government and is seeing their power bills go up. They are the ones who need to be told how Project Marinus is going to benefit them because right now all they have is a minister saying, 'Trust me'. We do not trust him.

That is simply not enough for the Tasmanian community. You need to do better than a ministerial statement to this House. This Government needs to provide a full cost-benefit analysis that details how Tasmanian customers are going to be better off and not worse off like they have been left worse off by this Government over the last 10 years.

[12.06 p.m.]

Dr WOODRUFF (Franklin - Leader of the Greens) - Mr Speaker, we had a breathless announcement from the minister on the weekend that Tasmanians had a great deal. It was a 'ripper deal' he said, that the two 750 megawatt Marinus Link cables that he has been talking up for years now will be reduced to just one for the same price that we were going to pay for two - \$3 billion to \$3.3 billion. In Estimates only two months ago, and in the Budget papers, we were told directly by the minister that the price would be up to \$3.8 billion.

We are now expected to be excited about the fact that we will get one cable for the price of two. Only in Tasmania could you call that a great deal. Only in Tasmania under this Liberal Government could you call that a great deal. We have been told for years now that Tasmania has so much energy that we could be the battery of the nation and help the mainland get off coal and gas. All we need is a shiny new Marinus Link and a 1500 megawatt extension cord and big dollars will flow to Tasmania. However, we have had this 100 per cent reversal and we are told that Tasmania does not have enough power. This is a new narrative that the minister has started this year where, according to the minister, we are desperately short of power and we would have power shortages unless we import power from the mainland.

This is more 'mission creep' under this Government and it is changing goal posts every six months. We could not do without two power cables but now we can settle for one. We were also told by the minister on the weekend in part this is about hedging against Basslink redundancy but Basslink is obviously not redundant because the Tasmanian Government must have supported the company in their bid to the Australian Economic Regulator for that cable to become a regulated asset. What is going to happen is that Tasmanians have already paid once for Basslink and now consumers are going to pay twice. We have an existing Basslink cable that the Government is backing to become a regulated asset and that means that TasNetworks will be able to charge us through our power bills to pay off the cost of that asset.

No one seriously believes that mainland Australia needs Tasmania's energy. We are pursuing through this minister a financial millstone around our necks. The Greens are really concerned that it has been a decade of circular discussions about an energy solution for Tasmania and what we have got through the minister's statement is 'everything is dependent on everything else'.

We will have the North West transmission corridor, do not worry, there is a process in place where we can all have a say, a process for consultation, and that is dependent on Marinus Link but do not worry, we can have a conversation about that too, and we will also have Battery of the Nation and that is going to feed the process. Every single part of that process apparently is all tickety-boo and we are all going to have a say, according to the minister.

However, what he said in his ministerial statement is that there will be a business case completed and independently reviewed at least 30 days before a final investment decision is due and it will be made publicly available. Well, when will that be made publicly available? After the investment decision has been taken to go ahead with the project? What about the cable that is apparently being procured by the Commonwealth Government now in advance? We heard the minister say in his statement that there is an underwriting process from the Commonwealth Government for that cable. Why was the minister able to provide us with a cost estimate in the Budget papers in the budget process at a time that he said it was a commercial-in-confidence and procurement issue? It is in the Budget.

According to the minister, today is the day he is allowed to speak. He did a media storm on the weekend with the federal government and somehow it has made it okay again to talk about the cost estimate for a process. We are talking billions of dollars that Tasmanians are going to pay for, but it was in the Budget papers and you cannot tell us that this so-called commercial-in-confidence process was not in train just two months ago, so what is it? You did not answer questions when they were asked by the Greens and the Opposition and Independent members of this House in Estimates for hours about this process. You do not tell Tasmanians what is going on. You wait until you have it sorted out internally and you can sense the real pressure that is coming on you and the Government.

Last weekend was all about saving you from the fact that you have defied an order of the House to provide us with the answers that we rightfully demand on behalf of Tasmanian consumers and all people who care about a renewable future. That is what this is about. Come back and tell us why it was okay to give a cost estimate in July but it is not okay to say it in August. It does not stack up. It is a stinky, slippery approach that this minister takes to all of his portfolios. We do not buy it. We have only started asking questions, so get used to it and try giving us some straight answers for a change.

[12.12 p.m.]

Mr TUCKER (Lyons) - Mr Speaker, what a mess. Since the takeover of the Premier's Office by the Font of all wisdom, we have seen an escalation of political BS that is diametrically opposite to the policy shambles it is designed to cover up. The latest Marinus deal is a case in point. While the Font spinners, with pockets bulging with taxpayers' dollars, extol the virtues of a 'big win' for the Government, the reality is anything but.

The so-called transformational deal with the feds is in reality nothing more than a marginal improvement on a deal which was so bad that the Government itself has admitted it would 'bust the budget', as the Treasurer said. The risks to Tasmania are massive and at best

will only be massaged at margins by a new funding formula. The Government's numbers are simply not believable and the risks for future generations are far too high. We need a parliamentary inquiry and I will be moving it to make it happen.

Mr Speaker, the purpose of a ministerial statement is to inform the House on matters of policy or fact. On that test, the minister's statement gets a 'fail' from me. The PR puffery on the new Marinus deal does not get anywhere near telling Tasmanians the real story of the costs and risks of Marinus and the related power developments.

Let me make a few points very clearly. First, the record to date suggests trading energy across Bass Strait is not a commercial proposition. Basslink has been a commercial failure and it is now seeking to become a regulated asset, which will require energy users to foot the cost through their power bills. That does not augur well for Marinus, which is a far bigger deal with far greater commercial risks. The fact that it is not a commercial proposition is demonstrated by the lack of commercial interest in building it. In other words, the likelihood is that, like Basslink, it will lose money. The only question is who will pay?

As members know, the ministerial statement came about because the House wanted details of the cost blowouts which torpedoed the deal signed by the Premier and the minister less than 12 months ago. That should not have been hard. The federal minister announced after a review of Snowy 2.0 that costs had blown out to \$12 billion - six times the original estimate of \$2 billion. However, the Rockliff Government, instead of coming clean on its disastrous track record, has been trying to hide behind a fig leaf of commercial-in-confidence. That is rubbish. They know it, and the House knows it. The only option left is a detailed investigation by a parliamentary committee. This is a very big deal.

Treasury warned in the Budget papers this year about the risks involved. The warning was explicit and was issued under the heading 'Risks from the ownership of government businesses'. Treasury pointed out that as the new owner of government businesses, the Government is ultimately responsible for the financial position of those businesses. The warning refers specifically to significant energy projects. In total, Treasury estimated the cost of Marinus Link, Battery of the Nation and the North West Transmission Developments would be more than \$6.4 billion. That puts into perspective the silly games being played by the Government over minor adjustments in what is an effectively a deposit on the Marinus Link project. The claim that adjustments in who will pay the 20 per cent deposit on Marinus will transform the economics of what is a multi-billion project is just laughable.

Under the deal signed by the Premier last October, Tasmania, Victoria and the federal government were going to share equal responsibility for the deposit, with only 80 per cent borrowed. In other words, Tasmania's share of the deposit was a bit less than 7 per cent of the full project costs. Under the revised arrangements, that share of the deposit falls by about half; however, Marinus Link still needs to borrow 80 per cent of the cost. Marinus Link is wholly a subsidiary of TasNetworks, which in turn is owned by the Government, the Tasmanian taxpayer.

This means that under the Treasury formula the total exposure of the Tasmanian Government reduces marginally under the latest deal, from just under 87 per cent of the total cost to around 83.5 per cent. We know that the research by the Victorian Energy Policy Centre suggests two things. First, the cost-benefit analysis on Marinus has excluded significant investment costs and there is no way that the project would return a benefit if all costs were

included. Second, there is no way that trading energy across the cable would return a commercial profit to the operator. It is a fact that there will be no commercial return for Marinus. You would expect commercial interest in grabbing a slice of the profits. The commercial interest appears to be about as hard to find as the mythical Lasseter's Reef. This means the risk to Tasmanian power users and taxpayers needs to be carefully assessed before any decision is made to proceed.

An inquiry also needs to establish why the investors waiting to invest billions in wind farms on the back of Marinus have not been required to make a contribution to this vital transmission link. Compare that to Western Australia, where the energy minister has announced that the private sector will largely fund the cost of renewable energy generation and transmission infrastructure in the Pilbara to the tune of tens of billions of dollars over the coming decades. Why should Tasmanians carry all the commercial risk on Marinus while 94 per cent of the benefits flow north of Bass Strait and well-heeled investors pounce on the profits from associated developments?

Finally, Mr Speaker, if the public sector needs to stump up for Marinus, it should be treated exactly the same as Snowy 2.0. This means the Commonwealth should foot the entire bill.

[12.19 p.m.]

Mr ROCKLIFF (Braddon - Premier) - Mr Speaker, first, I commend the minister on his statement and also his diligence working with successive energy ministers nationally over successive governments to find ourselves in a very strong position where the federal minister for Energy has said that this is a game-changing project for both Tasmania and the mainland and this updated agreement will not only deliver the benefits of Marinus Link, it will be cheaper for Tasmanians. A win-win-win for Tasmanian consumers, for Tasmanian energy security and to put downward pressure on energy bills. Of course, I am quoting from minister Chris Bowen, so if those of the Labor Opposition criticise the Tasmanian Government for political reasons, they must accept that they are also criticising the federal Labor government.

Thank you, minister. It was comprehensive and provided further detail on Marinus and associated energy projects.

We have a plan in Tasmania for our future energy needs and the future of and for Tasmanians, and we are getting on with it - our Tasmania First Energy Guarantee, a plan that grows supply, creates jobs and ensures Tasmania will continue to have among the lowest power prices in the nation. Marinus will drive renewable generation development in Tasmania, meaning more electricity, more jobs and more energy security for Tasmania. It will drive economic growth. It will deliver thousands of jobs, particularly in regional areas, as the minister has articulated over the course of the last few days, including today. And power prices will be lower with Marinus than without it.

Updated modelling from Marinus Link estimates the project will bring approximately \$2 billion in economic activity, over 1400 jobs to Tasmania and billions in new renewable investment, wind and solar. Marinus on Tasmania's terms is an important step in our Tasmania First Energy Guarantee, which will ensure that we will deliver among the lowest prices in the nation, as we have said and will continue to say. We put a line in the sand and have landed on the right side of the line for Tasmania. We said we would only progress the project if it stacked up for Tasmania. With this revised agreement it does.

Tasmania needs more generation for its future. Our hydro assets are old and in need of significant investment. Hydro is actually quite expensive. Wind and solar are the cheapest forms of electricity. We need to tap into cheap energy and encourage more cheap generation to be built here to ensure that Tasmanian households have the lowest possible electricity into the future, and this is what Marinus does.

We need more energy to secure Tasmania's future. We need more supply to meet the needs of our growing economy and, indeed, our growing population. We are faced with a number of challenges, some of them due to the success of the Tasmanian people over the course of the last decade, including a growing population. That is why we have ensured that Marinus Link becomes a reality on the right terms for Tasmania. We will always be in Tasmanians' corner first.

The second step in our Tasmania First Energy Guarantee is our Renewable Energy Dividend. Tasmania already has the lowest, or among the lowest, power bills in the country but we know that power bills are still a major cost for every Tasmanian. Our government will deliver millions of dollars in energy bill relief to Tasmanians with our Renewable Energy Dividend. Hydro was built by Tasmanians for Tasmanians and now Tasmanians will rightly reap the rewards of this Tasmanian success story. This Renewable Energy Dividend means that when Hydro makes money, Tasmanians save money.

The other vital cog in our Tasmania First Energy Guarantee is a vibrant retail sector that provides real competition in delivering clean renewable power to our homes. We must have competition between retail companies to ensure the lowest prices in the nation. The best way to kill competition and force up prices is by introducing a power price cap on retailers. That is not the answer to keeping power prices low. In fact, it would mean the opposite. It would lock in higher prices and force them even higher when the price cap is lifted. What we are doing is sticking to our long-term plan on energy and doing what matters for all Tasmanians.

I commend the minister for his tireless work in this space. He has thoroughly updated the House today. I hope all members will take the opportunity to digest all the information already on the public record and the further information the minister provided today. We have an exciting future if we have the courage of our convictions to make these bold but difficult decisions such as Marinus Link.

We have worked well with successive federal governments, including the existing federal government, because we understand that Marinus Link is essential for securing our future energy needs, for unlocking that renewable energy investment in wind and solar, and also growing our economy. The opportunity costs must be factored in here. This is something those opposite must start comprehending - that we cannot sit on our hands and do nothing. We have to draw a line in the sand in a policy sense and 'do nothing' is not an option.

[12.26 p.m.]

Mr WINTER (Franklin) - Mr Speaker, I agree with the last statement from the Premier that we cannot do nothing, but that is what this Government has been doing for 10 years on Marinus. I congratulate and wish them all a happy 10-year anniversary talking about Marinus today. Happy anniversary. September 2013 was when you first started talking about building a second Basslink, as you called it then. Matthew Groom, over this side of the House, started and you have been talking about it ever since. Congratulations on all your talking about building Marinus or a second Basslink and achieving absolutely nothing. Talking about

different federal ministers, it was Greg Hunt who stood with you at the time back in 2013. He is now retired; replaced with some others in the parliamentary world should be considering.

This is a joke. The idea that we need to get on and build it, that is what the Tasmanian economy has been needing, to actually start building more generation and put it into the grid. This Government has achieved almost nothing. This absurdity of the Premier talking about capping power prices being something that might impact the development of generation - the last time there was new significant generation built in Tasmania was Granville Harbour, which was built - guess what? - when there was a price cap in place. There has not been any development since. AEMO is pointing out that there is not going to be additional generation in Tasmania for the foreseeable future.

The minister for Energy has admitted that the next most prospective major wind farm in Tasmania is Robbins Island. Well, that is about to go to the planning appeals tribunal. That is another project that is nowhere near coming to fruition, nowhere near giving the state the power it needs. Ten years of talking about Marinus, not any cable laid, no transmission built, no approvals received, nothing at all. The Premier wants to stand up and talk about getting on and delivering it.

As the Leader of the Opposition said, the reason we heard this ministerial statement today is because the minister for Energy is under pressure over this because he did not adhere to the order of the House which asked him to outline to the House by 16 August 2023 the cost estimates for Marinus Link, North West Transmission Developments and Battery of the Nation project. It was a very simple motion. The reason we did that was because of a letter that then acting premier Ferguson, with minister for Energy, Guy Barnett, had sent to the Prime Minister of Australia and federal minister for Energy Chris Bowen, which said of Marinus:

We are concerned that the project may not be in the long-term interest of Tasmanian consumers or the state and, as such, the Tasmanian Government is not in a position to continue to take this project forward and is seeking your further engagement regarding an alternative pathway to delivering the project.

They talk about having multiple positions on Marinus. Have a look in the mirror. Industry has had no idea what was going on with this and I understand that Marinus itself did not know that this letter had been sent. No one knew that this letter had been sent, that they were putting a project they had been talking about for 10 years into serious question. Now they stand up today and congratulate themselves for a project that will deliver half of the capacity they have been talking about for about the same cost.

There are serious concerns about the way that this is being handled, but in particular the House should be concerned about the way that this minister has responded to the order of the House.

Those letters that were relied upon in an earlier contribution from both the minister for Energy and the Premier in terms of the Premier saying there were live contract negotiations and now they have progressed to a new stage, with no further information I do not know what they are talking about, Mr Speaker, because this is what they relied upon when they told the House they could not provide the information it was seeking. The minister said that reviewing the costs would be absolutely mad, mind-boggling, dreadful, absolutely irresponsible, and that

it would be reprehensible, reckless, shameful and a sovereign risk to the state that would have serious intended consequences for the future of Tasmania and would force the Government to essentially break the law.

Then, in a media release on Sunday, he provided the information the House was seeking and their current excuse for that is to say that the procurement process has concluded and they were in live contract negotiations. If that is the case, I would like to understand from the Government what has actually changed from 16 August when they said that it would be illegal to provide the information to now, when they say they can just provide the information. What has changed, minister for Energy? What has changed, because there has been no detail provided in your ministerial statement or in the contribution by the Premier or yourself about what has changed.

We asked for further information on the North West Transmission projects. As far as I know, nothing has changed, apart from the fact you now want to review whether or not you are going to deliver the full capacity of that project. What has changed? I think nothing at all. The hyperbole and hysteria from the minister for Energy that afternoon and evening about why he could not provide the information was farcical. It was clearly not true that he could not have provided that information. He clearly knew the \$5.5 billion. Why is it that journalists tell me they get backgrounded about a price - about \$5.5 billion - and it is written in the papers, but we have a minister who cannot tell the House? Why is it that the media get more and better information than the House?

You have the media being told it is \$5.5 billion and do not worry about it, and when the House asks for that information, they will not say. The answer that he should have provided was \$5.5 billion. That is how simple it could have been. They later reduced the project to about half the size and it is now \$3.3 billion. Why could we have not had that on 16 August? The original order was important and the Government's response was telling.

The minister and the Premier talked about these letters that were provided as advice and he said he relied on the advice. Those letters were sent by Marinus, TasNetworks, Hydro and ReCFIT. I will read the start of the one from ReCFIT. It says:

You have requested that I provide advice to you on the implications ...

You asked for the advice, minister, and then you seemed to say to the Leader of the Opposition earlier that you had not. You asked for the advice. I will read the one from Hydro Tasmania. It starts:

You have requested latest cost estimates for Hydro Tasmania ...

You asked for the advice. The minister asked for the advice and now is relying on -

Time expired.

[12.33 p.m.]

Mr JAENSCH (Braddon - Minister for Education, Children and Youth) - Mr Speaker, in the time available, I would like to put on the record my appreciation for minister Barnett and colleagues who have worked together to reach the agreement announced on the weekend which has enabled the minister to provide a detailed statement today on where we have been able to

get in terms of this historic agreement with the Commonwealth of Australia. I congratulate the minister on maintaining his focus on the best interests of Tasmania at all times through that, noting that Marinus is an important part of our energy future for Tasmania, unlocking economic growth and an improved power supply, security and pricing for Tasmanians.

I thank the minister for maintaining his absolute commitment to a confidential, sensitive negotiation process and for taking the fight to the Commonwealth to at all times ensure that we are getting the very best deal for Tasmanians. Mr Barnett and this Government have been the only ones in this conversation and this debate today whose focus has been on getting the best deal for Tasmanians.

The Labor Opposition seem to have taken credit for the statement that was made today. I believe that they think it is a good deal. They certainly have not criticised the Australian Labor Government and Minister Bowen for the content of the agreement that was announced on the weekend, but they have spent the last few weeks doing everything they can to scuttle it.

Time expired.

Statement noted.

MATTER OF PUBLIC IMPORTANCE

Transparency

[12.35 p.m.]

Ms DOW (Braddon - Deputy Leader of the Opposition) - Mr Speaker, I move -

That the House take note of the following matter: transparency.

I am pleased to speak to this very important matter of transparency. If you look up the word 'transparency', it is defined by being open and honest. Those are two words that I would not closely associate with this Government. They talk a lot about being builders, not blockers, but on almost every occasion in this place when we ask them to table further information such as reports or to provide cost estimates on projects that are of significance to the people of Tasmania, expending large amounts of public funds, they block the opportunity for that debate and that information to be provided to the parliament.

It is a pattern of behaviour. We have seen it now in this place for months, whether it be about the proposed Premier's priority project for a billion-dollar stadium in Hobart or for Marinus Link, which we have had lots of debate about in the House today.

This Government's weakness is not being upfront with Tasmanians, and it is not just the Labor Party that has begun to notice that. I could take this right back to the beginning of this Government. There has always been a culture of cover-up, whether it be the Hodgman Liberal government, the Gutwein Liberal government and now the Rockliff minority Government. Every step of the way, this Government will try to cover up and not provide information to the Tasmanian community, weaselling their way out of providing important information, as we have seen today, and not being truthful and upfront with Tasmanians.

You only have to look at the current state of the parliament to see the end result of what happens when a Government does that over nearly a decade. You only have to look at what has happened with its own backbenchers who are no longer part of this now minority Government. They are now on the crossbench because they had significant issues with the way that this Government was treating the Tasmanian community when it comes to transparency, and in actual fact the way this Government was treating them when it comes to transparency and wanting more information about projects that were of genuine significance to them, the Tasmanian community and their electorates. Mr Tucker and Mrs Alexander clearly have a problem with the lack of transparency of this Government and they continue to state that in this place and in the Tasmanian community. They are not on the crossbench for no reason.

I will talk a little about a couple of projects. I wrote an opinion piece recently and I think these projects really outline how this Government has a problem with transparency, with being open and honest about delivering on its commitments. I spoke about the Cradle Mountain cableway, a project this Government has touted for many years now and failed to deliver. They have not been upfront with the Tasmanian community about progress made on that project. I also spoke about the Burnie Court, which is another example of not being upfront, making announcements when you have not yet even purchased the land for the new site. I spoke about the harness racing and greyhound racetrack in the north-west. I also spoke about a commitment that was made by a former premier in this place, Peter Gutwein, to work with the Burnie City Council around providing funding, in addition to the Burnie Court redevelopment, for the revitalisation of the Burnie CBD. This Government gave a commitment to do that and there was even a figure of \$20 million talked about to provide to the council for those upgrades. To date, that has not been provided.

In response to that opinion piece, this Government rolled out Senator Jonathan Duniam to defend their record. In doing that, he did not defend their record. He deflected to the federal government. You have to ask the question: why does this Government not have its own intestinal fortitude to defend its record? They have to deflect to Senator Duniam, who lives in Hobart, to talk about projects of significance to the north-west. It is absurd and is yet another example of this Government's inability to be upfront with information, defend its record and be open and honest with the Tasmanian community.

Mr Speaker, if the Premier's Government had not fallen into minority then the secret deal for the AFL would not have been released publicly, even though it was heavily redacted. It would not have come to the parliament as a project of state significance and we certainly would not have seen that project come to the parliament twice for approval which is what has happened now, given the current state of this minority government.

The point that I make is that none of these events would have happened. The ministerial statement today would not have happened if it were not for the fact that this Government is in minority. They do not have certainty on the floor of this place. They have not been upfront and honest with Tasmanians over many years and they have criticised us constantly for wanting them to provide more information about these really important projects to Tasmanians. It is only now they are in minority and the pressure is on that they have come forth and produced these documents.

It is not that they have come forward and initiated that on their own merits. This has been a long and arduous road and it started around the proposed billion dollar stadium in Hobart, and wanting more information, access to documents and advice. It took months for

the Public Accounts Committee to reveal that there was no Cabinet discussion or approval of this contract and deal with the AFL. There was no Treasury advice that was provided but it took months to get that information out of this Government.

It does not matter who you talk to, whether they are in favour of the AFL stadium or not, or the AFL team, one thing that people always agree with me on is the fact that this Government needs to be upfront about what they have signed Tasmanians up for and the same goes for Marinus. It is public money. It is of great public interest. As a Government which is responsible and accountable, you should be providing information to the Tasmanian community about the cost. These projects should not come at any cost at a time when Tasmania simply cannot afford it.

The Premier has had a bit of a reprieve, he has had his reset, but it is pretty clear to me that it is going to take more than a reset to clear up the stench around this Government when it comes to transparency. It is an ongoing problem. You cannot reset blanchmange. Blanchmange, just like this Government, is not transparent and this Government as it continues along its merry way is pretty sloppy, just like blanchmange.

[12.42 p.m.]

Mr FERGUSON (Bass - Treasurer) - Mr Speaker, the use of the word 'blanchmange' is spot on about the Labor Party itself because not only is it wobbly and chunky but it is also on fire because it is on its civil war at the moment. To have this MPI come from the Deputy Leader of the Opposition -

Opposition members interjecting.

Mr SPEAKER - Order.

Mr FERGUSON - That was as weak as water from the Deputy Leader of the Opposition. Labor is in a mess and reflecting on the goings on in this House through the day to day, a lot of claims, cheap shots. What I observed from the Labor Party today had a particularly nasty character about one member of this House. That was very apparent. Frankly, it is beneath this House that we get these constant, quite nasty, personal attacks against a member of the Government.

We have the histrionics and the false claims being made. I also observed a very snide interjection from the Leader of the Opposition today. When the minister was discussing the letters that were written in very short time last sitting Wednesday when the House passed a resolution requiring the minister to give a full account of Marinus within the next 60 minutes on information that he believed on advice he was not able to provide, given that there was a live procurement process, we had the Leader of the Opposition interject very unwisely that the minister had told them to say it, and quickly backtracked when challenged. What a nasty character that the debate this morning reflected. Ms Finlay, who is not ever able to keep quiet, also has a lot of explaining to do particularly when I reflect on the theme of transparency, given her recent interview in *The Examiner* which was read by many of us on this side of the House. I do not know what Ms Finlay has told her new Labor colleagues but many on this side of the House raised more than an eyebrow as we were reading about how Ms Finlay 'came to interview us', before deciding that deep down she was not an independent at all as she had told the voters of Rosevears but she was Labor.

Ms Finlay - And loving it.

Mr FERGUSON - In the interests of transparency one day I am certain the fuller story will be told and it will be very revealing for members of the Labor Party today when they dig a little deeper into their colleague. You need to be careful what you say.

In respect of transparency, given that the dominant theme today has been around Marinus, I commend the Minister for Energy and Renewables for his very comprehensive statement. As ministers, we are obliged not just to be open and transparent and honest but also to observe the requirements that sit on us. It is very easy for members of the Opposition, most of whom have never been in office, have never had to actually observe certain rules and requirements, in particular, tender process rules and due probity rules. Let me share with the Opposition a simple fact about probity and a tender process.

When a government business goes to the worldwide marketplace and says, 'We are interested in getting prices for these goods and/or services,' and when you put out the request for tender, if the request for tender assures the bidders that their commercial-in-confidence information will be protected and will be held confidential, if you breach that, you have opened up the people of Tasmania to very dangerous legal consequences.

Ms Butler - Overreach again, from you.

Mr FERGUSON - Overreach. I hope that *Hansard* got that interjection from Ms Butler who has never run anything in her life. For that comment to sit on the record from a shadow minister is a very poor reflection on today's Labor Party. They think it is an overreach to point out that when you put out a public call for submissions to a tender process that if in the probity guidelines you assure bidders that their commercial-in-confidence proprietary information will not be revealed to the broader market, if you breach that, that would lead to significant financial and legal consequences. For the shadow minister to say that is an overreach shows just how naive today's Labor Party really is, in relation to these matters.

I could not help but notice that the Labor Party at the weekend actually said something for the first time that they have never said before, which is that they support Marinus Link. I thought that was interesting. Yet, coming in here today, any person listening to the debate might have thought Labor is dead against it.

Ms Finlay - We do not trust you, that is the issue.

Mr FERGUSON - There you go. Ms Finlay, who is not able to remain quiet, again opens up that fresh invitation. We are being very open and some of the information that the minister outlined in his statement that he is not able to provide is because the federal Labor Government has asked that it remain in confidence.

It is interesting that the Labor Party in Tasmania is on a different page to federal Labor nationally. If they are saying that Marinus is bad for Tasmania then they need to be prepared to say so to their federal colleagues. If they believe Marinus is not in the interest of our state, of Tasmania's future energy growth and potential then they need to be prepared to say it nationally, but they will not. They are cowards.

I also make the point that the Deputy Leader of the Opposition in her transparency talk could not help but talk about the stadium. Ms White, the Leader of the Opposition, said Labor would do everything to stop the stadium. After Question Time today, we had a message from Her Excellency the Governor indicating that the State Policies and Projects Act has been approved. Mr Speaker, Labor voted for it in the lower House, and in the upper House. That does not sound like doing everything possible to stop the stadium considering it is the Government's position that it be a project of state significance.

Labor is in a mess. The blanchmange is on fire because they are at civil war; they are at war with themselves while the Government will work for Tasmanians.

Time expired.

[12.49 p.m.]

Ms FINLAY (Bass) - Mr Speaker, I am happy to rise this afternoon to speak on this matter of public importance about transparency in Government. It is a bit rich, the member who has just spoken, minister Ferguson, talking about his Government and transparency and honesty. It has been mentioned already that when you look at the definition of transparency, it talks about honesty, openness, available to public scrutiny. Honesty is a key tenet of anything in this place.

One of my last contributions in the last sitting time was around the Treasurer's preliminary outcomes report. This minister, this Treasurer, talks about being honest with people. In my last contribution, I referred to the infrastructure references in that report, again a responsibility of this minister, where he said that they had spent more in the year just gone than in previous years. That may be true in terms of dollar figures. However, when you consider the final position in 2022, there was an \$819 million spend. Yes, the actual spend in 2023 was \$968 million. However, this Government promised the people of Tasmania that they would deliver \$1.3 billion of infrastructure and they did not.

The one true thing about this Government is that they make promises all day, every day. They commit things to the Tasmanian people, saying, 'We are great, we are going to do this, we are going to help you, we are going to be useful, we are going to do what we say we do', and you do not.

From the very first time I came into this place, I could tell that this Government believes it is okay to say whatever they want with no intention or capability of actually delivering on it. In the last parliamentary sitting the minister, the Treasurer, did it to Tasmanians again. It is not good enough. I always believed, all through a range of things I have done in life, that what is true at one level is true of another level, and it is true of this Government. The most significant financially burdensome projects in Tasmania have elements of not being honest and transparent but so do the smallest of actions that this Government takes. It is not just in big economic projects where this Government cannot help be anything but untruthful but also in the small community projects. I have only a short list I thought of this morning when we decided that we would talk about transparency in government but it goes across almost all responsibilities of this Government. It is as an indication that this Government cannot hold themselves to account, be truthful to themselves or to the people of Tasmania in any area.

Just recently, we prosecuted in this place the energy required by Norske Skog to develop further, increase their capacity onsite and invest in more jobs, if they can transfer their current

boilers into boilers using energy instead of burning. Norske Skog has been told that they cannot access any power to do that. They are an existing business that invests heavily in Tasmania, that employs Tasmanians and they cannot grow.

We were onsite recently in Launceston with two businesses, my colleague in Bass, Michelle O'Byrne, at one business, the Rodman Group, then collectively we visited Hudsons, who have been given commitments of their capacity to grow their businesses and move to TRANSlink but are unable to do so. In-written commitments by the Treasurer, the minister who has just spoken, to say that could and it would happen and yet, it cannot. They have invested millions of dollars in the transition and the movement for them to grow and employ more Tasmanians and it sits idle because of the broken promises of this Government.

This morning we heard again, and we heard in the last session of parliament, the concerns with Avebury Mine. This Government has promised action for years - 'immediate' is the word used in their media releases - immediate action to support Avebury Mine and 200, maybe more, workers over there on the west coast whose jobs are at risk. When you have 200 jobs at risk on the west coast of Tasmania, the regional jobs that were scoffed at by the Attorney-General when they were referenced in question time this morning, that has a far greater impact than just those 200 individuals. It impacts their families, the workers related to the mine, it impacts not just the west coast but the northern community and Tasmanian community because of how important those jobs are to the west-coast and Tasmania.

In what universe is it reasonable and fair to say: 'We cannot deliver Metro services, we are having a real struggle and we are under pressure and under scrutiny daily, so you know what we are going to do to fix it? We are just going to cut the services.' It is a bit like the waiting lists in the hospitals. They say, 'Oh, the waiting lists are going down'. Yes, but when you ring people and say, 'Do you really still want this?', or people are waiting for so long that they remove themselves from the list, the list goes down. This Government does nothing to deliver on their promises and the broken promises are hurting Tasmanians.

Speaking of health, the Launceston General Hospital, the centrepiece of the last election, a signature commitment from this Government, with the \$580 million stage 2 redevelopment of the LGH, this Government went to Canberra asking for funds for a stadium but not for the essential services and development of the LGH for the people of northern Tasmania. If people can access the health care they need so that they can be well in their community, they contribute; they are engaged and they make a contribution beyond just being well. They are then fully engaged members of the community. This Government cannot even commit to what was a signature commitment in their previous election campaign yet the new Minister for Health uses that to say, 'We are continuing to deliver on our commitment of \$580 million'. It is just not true. It is not true what we have seen play out this morning and I am sure we will continue to see play out - the stepback they make when ordered to disclose information about the Marinus project, about the transmission lines and about the Battery of the Nation. Our Leader said earlier today that this Government has a trademark of secrecy. I suspect that this Government is the most secretive government in Tasmanian history. Tasmanian people deserve better. They deserve a government that is going to tell the truth. This Government makes promises, breaks promises, has no intention or capacity to deliver on the things that it commits to the Tasmanian people and it is not good enough.

Time expired.

[12.57 p.m.]

Dr WOODRUFF (Franklin - Leader of the Greens) - Mr Speaker, what we saw from the minister's statement this morning was an attempt to present a narrative to Tasmanians of the Liberals being in control and being open and transparent about the processes. However, what we actually had from this minister, and why I do not have confidence in many of the things he said in his statement today, is that he is known for readjusting the narrative to suit the moment. Today felt like it was all about politics. Given his recent performance where he has no respect for parliamentary process, I do not have a lot of confidence in the material in his ministerial statement. There are many questions and there are a lot of circularities within it.

Coming back to the fact that this was about covering his defiance of an order of the House just a couple of weeks ago, at the time when he was ordered by the House to provide all the documents in relation to decisions and financial estimates of Marinus Link, he said that it was not possible to provide any advice, even a cost estimate boundary, because legal advice had directed him that it would breach non-disclosure principles and it would be an issue of confidentiality. He also tabled a letter from TasNetwork chairman Roger Gill, presenting Mr Gill's letter on the north west transmission costs as though Mr Gill had said that documents could not be tabled because they were commercially in-confidence. However, Mr Gill did not say that the minister could not provide parliament with an updated cost. So he used and abused Mr Gill's letter and misrepresented it to us as suggesting that he could not provide a cost estimate.

The problem the Greens have is that the state Budget papers referenced \$6.4 billion for Marinus, for Battery of the Nation and related projects and the minister told me in Estimates that the cost for two cables, 1500 megawatts of power across two cables, would be \$3.8 billion for Marinus. We know it takes more than eight weeks to undergo a commercial procurement process. We know because it was discussed.

Time expired.

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

MATTER OF PUBLIC IMPORTANCE

Transparency

Resumed from above.

[2.30 p.m.]

Dr WOODRUFF (Franklin - Leader of the Greens) - Mr Speaker, if the minister seriously expects Tasmanians to believe that eight weeks ago when the Budget Estimates process and committee scrutiny was under way that there was not a procurement process in train that he referred to as his stated reason for not providing the House with the documents that we ordered him to just recently, that is not credible in any plausible business scenario when you are talking about billions of dollars of cable procurement, negotiations around the construction of converters, and all the other associated arrangements between the Victorian, federal and Tasmanian governments.

We do not believe him when he says that he can provide information two months ago but he could not provide it two weeks ago. We do not believe the minister on that matter and we also want to understand, and the minister has never been clear about this, why in the letter that he tabled to parliament two weeks ago that he redacted the figure about the original cost estimate from when the deal was signed in the first place.

In the letter it had a publicly known cost of \$3.1 billion to \$3.8 billion, which was in line with the Jacobs Report estimates of 2021. We do not understand why he redacted the original cost figure from the letter he tabled for us last parliamentary sitting. Perhaps it was because the Government knew that the cost had increased at that point and that the redacted figure was actually higher than the \$3.8 billion that was in all likelihood in the letter. If that was the case then the Budget papers were incorrect and did not reflect the increased cost that the Government knew at the time was the updated estimate. The only reason he could have done that is to hide that information from Tasmanians. Therefore, we are now calling on the minister to provide the entirely unredacted copy of that letter to parliament.

We have a minister who for 10 years has refused to answer the questions that have been asked along the way - including the increasing scrutiny that he has been under as minister for years at the Estimates table, in the last three years in particular - calling for the costs of the Marinus Link, the North West Transmission Line and Battery of the Nation. We have been trying to understand how much Tasmanians will be stumping up in the original equity payment and what proportion we will pay of the 80 per cent total debt for this cost.

We know we have not had answers and if he thinks Tasmanians are going to be satisfied with a ministerial statement after he has had a media circus on the weekend and that is it after 10 years, he has another think coming. We want to know how much the long-term debt will be for Tasmanians. People will be paying for this in their power bills for decades to come.

[2.34 p.m.]

Mr WOOD (Bass) - Mr Speaker, our Government is committed to improving the openness and accountability of government decision-making. We have been steadily increasing access to government information and increased transparency and many of these key reforms have already been delivered such as:

- significantly increasing the number of routine disclosures of information including release of key information related to ministerial and parliamentary support and expenditure including employee and salary details, Tasmanian Government card expenses, minister's travel and entertainment expenses. This now includes the routine release of minister's meeting schedules or diaries. This new quarterly release is now occurring, consistent with other jurisdictions.
- publishing right to information responses online within 48 hours of release to applicants to increase the broader public's access to information.
- implementing a public submission publication policy in relation to major policy and legislation reviews.
- initiating a major review into electoral reforms including political donations and third-party disclosures. Legislation is now before the parliament.

- significant reform of the pecuniary interest disclosures for all members of parliament.
- a new whole-of-government gifts, benefit and hospitality policy.
- continuous updating of the ministerial code of conduct in 2014, 2018 and 2021 to improve accountability in the performance of the duties of all ministers particularly related to conflict of interest and ensuring government operates in a manner that protects and upholds the public interest and withstands the closest of public scrutiny.
- delegating all ministerial RTIs to independent departmental RTI officers.
- a significant uplift of RTI capability and capacity and practice in the Tasmanian State Service with \$500 000 provided over two years to support the provision of centralised training, building skill, RTI practitioners and reducing key person dependencies while enhancing consistent practice right across government.
- we have also supported additional oversight, misconduct prevention and education through the Integrity Commission with \$900 000 in added funding.
- transferred responsibility to the Tasmanian Lobbying Code of Conduct and Lobbying Register.
- established a new Disability Commissioner to lead and drive oversight and monitoring related to the rights and safeguarding people with disability.
- significant reform and strengthened oversight of the Public Trustee backed by an additional \$4.3 million.
- a government information gateway web page is available on DPAC's website to make government information easier to find.

Additionally, we have amended the Right to Information (RTI) bill to allow for review of RTI decisions by the Ombudsman, backed by additional funding including the \$500 000 in 2021 and \$750 000 in 2022-23. An additional \$1 million will be provided in 2023-24 and again in 2024-25 to support the Office of the Ombudsman to deal with the backlog.

With regard to the release of ministerial diaries, we have recently begun the quarterly release of information on ministerial meetings and events. The first release was in April of this year. We have been progressing system changes since early January to enable the easy gaining of this information. A review of information released from minister's diaries in other jurisdictions has occurred in the development of this important reform. Information will include scheduled meetings with stakeholders, third parties and lobbyists and include the purpose of the meeting.

The release will also include details of ministerial portfolio visits, events attended and media commitments. The routine disclosures will not include personal information, electorate meetings or internal briefings with ministers, staff or government officials. The 2022-23 Budget provided funding of \$500 000 over two years to improve the performance of Tasmanian Government agencies in relation to the right to information. This funding will support a significant uplift in the Right to Information capability and practice in the Tasmanian State Service (TSS). It will also facilitate the provision of centralised training building skilled RTI practitioners and will reduce key person dependencies in agencies. A senior project officer has

been appointed to lead this work. The officer has developed a detailed project plan. Furthermore, a discussion paper which explores current RTI practice across the TSS and areas for practice reform and trading and development needs is being developed and will be consulted on by other TSS agencies.

Consultation to gather business requirements and identify business gaps has commenced with internal stakeholders. A steering committee has also been established and three-weekly meetings have commenced.

It is government policy that ministers delegate their functions and responsibilities under the RTI Act to departmental officers. Delegating ministerial responsibilities in this way reduced perceived conflicts of interest that may arise if ministers or ministerial staff conducted the assessments.

Mr Speaker, there have been many significant and ongoing efforts made by this Government to improve the openness and accountability of government decision-making and may I say, much more than any other government has before us. The recent release of ministerial diaries is another sign of our ongoing commitment to ensure the community has trust in their elected officials.

Time expired.

Matter noted.

TASMANIAN PUBLIC FINANCE CORPORATION AMENDMENT BILL 2023 (No. 8)

Second Reading

[2.42 p.m.]

Mr FERGUSON (Bass - Treasurer) - Mr Speaker, I move -

That the bill be now read the second time.

This bill introduces important changes to the way in which the Government provides support for borrowings by government businesses and other government entities from the Tasmanian Public Finance Corporation (TASCORP). Specifically, this bill replaces the provision of Treasurer-approved guarantees for borrowings and provides for an enduring legislative government guarantee of the borrowings undertaken by those entities from TASCORP. Importantly, this guarantee will be subject to limits determined by the Treasurer, with these limits to be included in the Treasurer's annual financial report.

Unlike TASCORP's debt issuances, which are guaranteed by the Government under the Tasmanian Public Finance Corporation Act 1985, the repayment of borrowings undertaken from TASCORP by government businesses and entities is not currently automatically guaranteed in legislation. These entities, which include government business enterprises, state-owned companies and their subsidiaries and other government entities such as Homes Tasmania, Stadiums Tasmania and Macquarie Point Development Corporation, play a vital role in the delivery of a range of important government policy priorities.

Currently, support for these entities' borrowings from TASCORP is provided through different legislative provisions, under mechanisms such as deeds of guarantee provided by the Treasurer. While providing the necessary support to entities with borrowing powers, these different legislative provisions and mechanisms can be complex and, due to their establishment at different times, can also be inconsistent in detail.

It is also noted that, notwithstanding the fact that these provisions provide for the provision of a guarantee, there is a strong perception that the Government stands behind the financial position of its businesses and other entities, regardless of whether an explicit guarantee exists or not.

An enduring legislative guarantee of the borrowings from TASCORP by government businesses and other government entities with borrowing powers will provide a number of significant benefits. It will provide clarity to the broader community, including the business community, that as owner, the Government stands behind these entities. This is important, given the vital nature of the services that these entities deliver to the Tasmanian community. It will also provide confidence to the boards of supported entities as well as TASCORP, ensuring that entities continue to have access to sustainable and cost-effective borrowings made available by TASCORP.

This bill will also ensure that the Government's support of its entities is transparent and administered efficiently. Individual entity borrowing limits will be approved by me as Treasurer and will be reported annually in the Treasurer's annual financial report, as well as being publicly disclosed in each supported entity's annual report.

Guaranteed borrowing limits will be reviewed annually and updated on an as-needed basis. These reviews will be undertaken with reference to credit assessments and reviews of the financial position of relevant organisations prepared by TASCORP and other relevant information. This will reduce the administrative burden of the framework and will also ensure that supported entities and TASCORP can respond quickly and appropriately as government projects and policies evolve and borrowing requirements change. The ability to respond to evolving circumstances is particularly important at a time when government entities have commenced or will soon commence major infrastructure projects that are required to be funded partially through borrowings, including the new *Spirit of Tasmania* vessels and important port upgrades.

There are some other important details in this bill that I will briefly discuss. The legislative guarantee will only apply to borrowings from TASCORP by supported entities. In the case that a supported entity has borrowings with another entity, these borrowings will not be covered by the legislative guarantee. In such instances, any borrowings will be required to be subject to other security arrangements established on a case-by-case basis. The legislative guarantee will not extend to the borrowings of other government entities, including local government entities, TasWater or the University of Tasmania. These entities have other borrowing security options. Thirdly, under the provisions established by this bill, the legislative guarantee will only be able to be called upon as a last resort by TASCORP when other security options associated with the particular borrowing have been exercised.

These new arrangements are consistent with those in place in other Australian jurisdictions. Legislated guarantees for central financing authority lending to clients are already in place in New South Wales and Victoria.

Mr Speaker, as their ultimate owner, the Government has always stood behind its businesses and other entities with borrowing powers. This bill will formalise these arrangements in a clear, efficient and transparent manner that will mean the Government will continue to be able to provide this support, facilitating the delivery of key government policy priorities, without exposing the Government to undue risk.

I commend the bill to the House.

[2.47 p.m.]

Dr BROAD (Braddon) - Mr Speaker, I rise to make some comments on the Tasmanian Public Finance Corporation Amendment Bill 2023. It was some time ago that I received a briefing on this bill given by Fiona Calvert, David Bailey and Kerry Hudson. I thank them for that.

I will say upfront that Labor will be supporting the amendment bill. However, I do have some comments and questions and I would like to also discuss the bigger debt picture which Tasmania is currently finding itself in.

I will go through some questions and comments on the minister's second reading speech to start with. It is obvious that the repayments of borrowings are not automatically guaranteed in legislation and deeds of guarantee have been provided by the Treasurer. We certainly saw during COVID-19, for example, there was a blanket guarantee across the board and some of that still stands in place at the moment.

We know that the legislative provisions can be complex. There are some issues due to their establishment at different times and they can be inconsistent. This bill solves those sorts of problems. There is a comment that it will provide confidence to the boards and supported entities perhaps, but as the minister says later on in his second reading speech, the Government has always stood behind the GBEs so maybe from a process point of view there would be more confidence but we know that the Government has always stood behind GBEs.

The guaranteed borrowing limits will be reviewed annually and updated on an as-needs basis. These reviews will be undertaken with reference to credit assessments and reviews of the financial position of relevant organisations prepared by TASCORP and other relevant information. I believe the Greens have also flagged an amendment about the reporting of these assessments. I have not had enough time to go through it but I would like to know what will actually be made public and when it will be made public. Are you saying when the Treasurer's annual report comes out? Is that guaranteed or do we have to take your word for it? I think that gets to the nub of the Greens' amendment. I do not think they are going to take your word for it and want it amended so that it has to be done in the Treasurer's annual report. A few comments around that might head off some of the issues that we will debate later, no doubt, when and if an amendment gets put in the Committee stage.

The minister said that TASCORP can respond quickly and appropriately as government projects and policies evolve and borrowing requirements change. I am not sure how that comes about compared to what it is currently. Are you saying that this new process will be far more streamlined than the current process of a Treasurer's guarantee? I would like you to explain that comment, if you do not mind.

The minister also said that the legislative guarantee will only be able to be called upon as a last resort by TASCORP when other security options associated with the particular borrowings have been exercised. I am not exactly sure what you mean there. It was probably covered in the briefing that I received but it was such a long time ago I cannot recall. I am sure I asked about this, but are you talking about acquiring assets and selling them, or something along those lines? Is that the other security option associated with the particular borrowings you are discussing? It would be good if you could give me some examples to get my head around exactly what you are going to there. It would be a tragic circumstance if we had TASCORP calling in a guarantee and winding up a GBE. That would be a horrendous circumstance, not that we hope it would ever happen but we would like to understand what you are referring to in the second reading, minister.

I have kindly been given some slides which I have made notes on. The key changes in the bill are removing the power for the Treasurer to guarantee borrowings and moving that on to TASCORP - I think that is correct - and establishing the capacity of the Treasurer to limit the amount of borrowings undertaken by the relevant organisation from TASCORP that are guaranteed by the Government. I imagine that the Treasurer limiting the amount of borrowings undertaken by a relevant organisation from TASCORP would be based on Treasury advice. This is interesting because the secretary of Treasury obviously sits on the TASCORP board. I would like to know a bit more detail about how that is actually going to work in a process sense. Is that like a reserve power, in effect, that the Treasurer may be able to limit borrowings? I imagine that TASCORP would not be lending money recklessly so I wonder why the Treasurer needs that reserve power or the capacity to limit the amount of borrowings and what the process would be to bring that to bear.

Another interesting thing in this bill that probably was not immediately obvious is that if there is a default from the debt it immediately switches to the Public Account. So, if a GBE's or guaranteed entity's debt defaults that switches immediately to the Public Account which provides for any payment made by the Government in accordance with the guarantee to become debt owed by the relevant organisation to the state, which will be subject to terms and conditions determined by the Treasurer. In the worst-case scenario, that switches to the Public Account but, in effect, GBEs are government entities so it may be a moot point. That is something I would like you to comment on.

There is a comment in the Treasury briefing that goes to what the Greens' amendment discusses. It says that limits established by the Treasurer will be reported in the Treasurer's Annual Financial Report and the annual reports of the relevant organisations. That is good but, as I talked about earlier, what else will be made public? They talk about reviews of credit assessments. Will they also be made public, or are we just talking about the limits that will be put in place?

I refer you to the earlier question I had and I hope you have taken notes on that. This is the bit I have already discussed, that Treasury will provide advice to the Treasurer to inform the establishment of limits, with the advice taking into account advice provided by TASCORP and other available information. That is a bit of a loop when the secretary of Treasury is also on the TASCORP board. What is the process there?

As the minister highlighted in his second reading, the guarantee does not apply to borrowings other than through TASCORP. How did we actually get to this point? We know that the state has generated significant debt and the forward Estimates are showing that the last

budget was \$5.6 billion at the end of the forward Estimates period. We have had Treasury highlighting in the fiscal sustainability report a number of scenarios which included the potential for \$30 billion of debt by 2036.

We are in a situation now that is markedly different from when the Government came to government when there was zero debt. In fact there was cash and investments in the bank and no debt. Now we are looking at \$5.6 billion worth of debt that is sitting on the government books and we have massive projects coming at us.

Mr Jaensch - We've had a pandemic and we've kept people in their jobs, kept people safe. Hopefully you can mention that on the way through.

Dr BROAD - I can talk about the pandemic but the \$5.6 billion was not 100 per cent related to the pandemic. Some of it was and we supported that during the time. The fact the minister needs to come to terms with is that this debt that is building up will be a significant fiscal drag. This debt does not just go away; it has to be accounted for. We are seeing over the current budget period something like \$2.4 billion in debt servicing costs. That is not an insignificant amount.

We know that the minister has challenges in the Education department, which I may reflect on later. The budget for the Education department has increased but we have seen the results getting worse. Maybe the minister should reflect on that and make that his priority rather than making silly comments during this debate.

Mr Jaensch - You're making it up.

Dr BROAD - The NAPLAN results are pretty black and white, which show that 10 years of Liberal policy in education has been a dismal failure -

Mr Jaensch - The NAPLAN results have started a new series this year. Quote your sources.

Mr SPEAKER - Order.

Dr BROAD - on just about every measure, which will be a significant economic drag because we know that economic performance is correlated to the education of the people in a state. Due to the incompetence of the Liberal Government over the last 10 years we are facing a less adaptable student group who will then flow on into the economy and have fewer options unless something changes. This is a significant problem for the state's economy. We need to train; we need people. We know that the modern economy needs high levels of education and students need to be more adaptable, but we are seeing over a third of grade 7s not meeting the reading standard under this Government's watch. That is something that minister should turn his attention to rather than sitting here making snide comments.

This is a serious economic problem for the state. This state is facing serious economic issues. There is record debt. We know there are massive projects coming. TasPorts want their infrastructure upgrades, absolutely, a great thing. TT-Line are building the new ships which the Government has increased the cost of by \$300 million because of their attempt to try to do a sweetheart deal with the federal government and build ships in the Philippines and float them to Perth. They canned the contract with the Finnish boat builder only to go crawling back later

and cost the state an extra couple of hundred of million of dollars - but do not worry about that, that is fine.

It will be a great thing for the state when these new ferries come over the horizon, but they are late. This Government guaranteed they would be here already. They are not. They have delayed the contract and it has cost more. It is not good economic policy to delay and to cost the state money, so it is not good to delay and cost more for the same result. We absolutely need new ferries. It will be a massive boon for the state but they should already be here.

The retort from the Treasurer may be that as a result they have guaranteed more Tasmanian components on the ships, but that is what they had guaranteed when they first announced they were purchasing new ships. There is in effect nothing different from what was already planned, except for additional costs because they have stuffed this up and had to go crawling back to Rauma Marine Constructions (RMC) to beg for the previous contract to be signed again, so we have a significant problem with debt building up.

There are huge increases in the net debt and that does not appear to be turning around, so what we have is that debt building up over time which is going to be a significant drag on the Budget bottom line. We have TasPorts doing upgrades. We have the TT-Line buying new ships. We have the Tarraleah project which is going to be a lot of money. Is that going to be \$1 billion? There is talk of Marinus. The Government has said the state cannot afford to be involved in terms of putting equity in the project. This is a situation that the state faces in that the financial situation has declined that much that the Government has to go crawling to the federal government to bail out a project which they have launched about 100 times and been talking about for 10 years. We get to the pointy end and the Government throw up their hands and say 'we cannot afford it.' That is the financial situation this Government has put us into, so it is no wonder we have to clear up issues like how to guarantee finances across the GBEs because this Government has put us into a situation where there are concerns about the credit-worthiness of some of our GBEs.

During the briefing, it was highlighted that the credit-worthiness of some of the GBEs would not meet TASCORP's standards without a guarantee. That is a significant concern so, obviously, these entities are doing massive upgrades but the credit-worthiness is such that they need a guarantee. Their books cannot sustain the debt that the Government is planning to put on it. This is not necessarily an issue in and of itself because we have productive debt. I do not think anybody would complain about the debt that TT-Line is holding to be able to buy two new ships and get more tourists and more freight in and out of the state - that is a good thing - and then the process that needs to go around that with the changes in the port. TasPorts needs to do those upgrades, we have no problem with that. However, what we are seeing is TASCORP has concerns about the credit-worthiness of putting those amounts of debt on the books of those entities so therefore they need guarantees.

At the same time, we have the Government building up a lot of debt on its own balance sheet so these two things mean that the total state-sector debt is increasing quite rapidly and this is something that needs to be managed with some care because we could get to a stage of unsustainable debt. What we saw during the end of, especially, the Groom/Rundle years was a lot of debt being built up. There is talk in the corridor that when Labor came into government a Liberal member said, 'I don't know what you're going to do because the books show there is a lot of debt'. What actually happened was Labor pulled the state out of that mess and ended up getting in net debt free. That was the Labor government that did that but that is not the first

time that the Liberals have absolutely racked the state up with debt, but there are some economic concerns too.

We have to be able to repay this debt. The Government, by sticking so much debt on the state government's books, has reduced the flexibility that we can put in play if there was another pandemic and there needed to be significant borrowings. We are now getting to a point where the budget has less flexibility and we also see economic storm clouds developing all around us. For example, the ABS data released on 1 September showed that private capital expenditure fell by 6.2 per cent over the past year with Tasmania the only state to go backwards. That is a concern when the state's economy is so heavily reliant on private capital expenditure.

We also heard from Tasmania's business community that the energy crisis in Tasmania is putting a handbrake on the state's economy. That is another issue. How do the major businesses in the state grow the economy to be able to service the debt that the Government is putting on the books if there is no power? There is no additional power. We know that people like Norske Skog want 50 megawatts of additional energy. What happens? 'No, it is not available'. What happens when hydrogen proponents come to the state after the Government spruiked hydrogen for however many years? They come to the state and then the state Government says, 'Oh, by the way there is no power available at any price'. We know that around Bell Bay there is no water available either. What sort of credibility does that give the state? No wonder the business private capital expenditure has fallen.

We also know there has been a decline in retail trade. On 28 August, data from ABS showed that retail turnover has declined for seven consecutive months in trend terms where July, which is the last recorded period, showed the largest decline this year with spending dropping 0.4 per cent. Coupled with previous outlooks, the economic storm clouds have well and truly gathered. These are the things that need to be managed. We do not just need the Government to start talking about Labor 10 years ago which seems to be the 'go to.' What you actually need to do is address these issues.

Concerning as well is Tasmania's unemployment rate which continues to bounce around. I am not sure what the Treasurer thinks about the ABS data on the unemployment rate but it does bounce around. Why is it bouncing around? Is it a methodology issue, Treasurer? It just seems like maybe they take a small sample in Tasmania which means that it bounces around because it has bounced around from being the lowest to the highest between samples. I really hope that it is a methodology issue, that they are taking a small sample size which means it can skew, it can go up and down. It is a concern that unemployment has risen to 4.2 per cent. It is the highest of any state or territory and we know that business confidence has wavered and the total number of people in work fell for the third month in a row: it was down 1000 jobs in total.

Concerningly, we have a situation at Avebury, which I raised in Question Time today, where there is a real concern that the Avebury Mine - Mallee Resources - may go into administration at any moment. That would have a massive impact on the west coast economy, the north-west economy and on the state. It would be a massive knock to the state, yet the Government is not even handing over the \$3.5 million payroll tax rebate that they promised back in 2018. They have done zero to help the Avebury mine stay solvent and keep those people employed. There is a real risk that those people could lose their jobs. It really does not bear to think about the impact that would have.

I know there have been a number of people who left good jobs to work at Avebury. What does their future look like? If it goes as bad as it potentially could, then we would have to pray for someone to come in and buy that mine and get it operational again pretty quickly. Otherwise there are more than 200 jobs lost not to mention the multiplier impact of probably another 1000 people who are reliant on that mine. It would be a significant issue. I fail to understand why the Government has not provided any assistance to Avebury to keep that mine operational and to keep those people in work.

The Government says it is a big supporter of the mining industry. Here is a classic example where they could do what they said they were going to do but, instead, the people who work at Avebury have only heard hollow words. So much for 'immediate' relief from payroll tax. They have ended up with zero.

We also have other government bodies holding bonds. We have a massive bond that Aurora held to get the power on. Those sorts of things are putting a real drag on Avebury's bottom line right at the time when they are struggling to stay solvent. It is amazing that the Government is rolling the dice on this one because it could go pear-shaped at any time. From what I understand it is a day-by-day proposition. We have already seen one of the board members resign over the weekend, which is definitely not a good sign. That is ringing alarm bells, yet the Government has sat on its hands and not delivered a single cent of the money and support they promised.

Getting back to education, which is a significant economic issue, last week's NAPLAN results show that 37 per cent of year 7 students in Tasmania are not meeting reading expectations. This is a significant economic issue. What is this Government doing about it? It seems that their entire educational strategy has been based on year 12 extensions; that solving Tasmania's problems is getting students to start year 12. That strategy appears to have failed if you look at the results across NAPLAN. It is an incredible indictment of this Government's education policy. They need to do something about this, and do it now. There are students who will miss out on the benefits of education if they cannot read to a standard. How are they going to engage? They are in grade 7. How are they going to engage in years 8, 9, 10, 11 and 12 if they cannot read to standard? There needs to be massive remedial action. That should be ringing a huge alarm bell, especially in the minister's office. He cannot wring his hands any more. He has to take some action. The minister may, as this Government does, talk about record funding but putting more money in and getting worse results is the definition of bad management.

As I have said, the GBEs are getting loaded up with debt. There are massive projects in the offing. Hydro with Tarraleah - where that debt sits is going to be a big issue. We are also seeing the Government create new entities that can also hold the debts off the Government's books. It still sits on the state sector but it makes the Government's budget day look a bit better. We have Homes Tasmania, which has the ability to borrow significant sums. We also have Stadiums Tasmania which will, no doubt, be loaded up with the unknown level of debt that building a stadium will involve, if it ever gets off the ground. Who knows how much that will be? That would have to be guaranteed because there is no way Stadiums Tas will be able to handle that sort of money on their balance sheet. We will see Stadiums Tas loaded up with debt, which will mean there will have to be a guarantee. Smoothing that process out may be of benefit to Stadiums Tas.

As I have said before, record debt is heading towards \$5.6 billion by the end of the forward Estimates. The budget situation would be much worse if it was not for the big GST windfalls we have seen. We know the predicted GST can go up and down and that makes a massive impact on the Government's bottom line. They will say in the Revised Estimates Report (RER), as we saw last year, that there is going to be a massive uplift in GST. Then we see on budget day that has not come through. That makes a significant impact on the debt bottom line. Then we see the Government's next report; once again GST is coming back. The GST yo-yo makes the books look better then it makes the books look worse, and all the time the debt is building up. There does not seem to be any end to it. The Government's only strategy to bring this debt under control is to rip \$300 million out of essential services, but only do it next financial year through the blunt instrument of an efficiency dividend. Not saying exactly where it is coming from but it is no coincidence that it coincides with the amount in the budget for the stadium.

We have seen the alarm bells being rung across a number of reports. I spoke about Deloitte Access Economics. They have estimated that Tasmania's economy shrank in the 2022-23 financial year and predict further declines in the year ahead. That is a massive worry. We have seen the Gross State Product (GSP) per capita the lowest of any state and territory and that the GSP has gone backwards for two quarters. Is the state technically in recession? I do not know. Maybe we will not find out until the end of the year but, according to Deloitte, the economy shrunk for the whole of the last financial year. If our economy is shrinking, how are we going to pay off growing debt?

We also have shrinking investment. This is not a good situation for the state to be in. Deloitte forecast the state's economy to fall into recession and Tasmania is the only state they are predicting will go backwards. That is in the Deloitte Access Economics Report. That is a significant concern.

Debt is a concern. The amount for servicing that debt across the forward Estimates in the last budget was \$2.4 billion. We have gone above Peter Gutwein's total borrowing of defined benefit scheme costs. The borrowing and defined benefit costs as a percentage of general government cash receipts this financial year will hit 5.8 per cent. The limit Peter Gutwein put in place was 6 per cent, which will be absolutely busted next year and it gets even worse. By 2026-27 it is predicted to be closer to 8 per cent. That is not good. We know that when Labor came in after the Gray years that debt servicing made up 10 per cent of the budget and that was a financial disaster. This Government is predicting 7.8 per cent and pretending that everything is fine. That is a significant concern. The state budget is not in good shape.

We also know, as I have said, that there is no extra electricity available for businesses to create employment and there is no energy available for hydrogen. The Marinus Project is some time off. There is no extra generation capacity and what I gather from briefings is that the energy demand in the state increases by 5 per cent per annum. Concerningly, in the energy briefing on Friday, it is predicted that we will actually have less energy available over the next few years as some of the Hydro schemes have to go through a maintenance period. That is a significant concern. Not only do we not have enough energy for businesses to grow, how will the Tasmanian economy cope if people start taking up electric vehicles? We already know that families are doing their best to absorb a massive 22.5 per cent power increase over the last 12 months. This is putting a significant burden on the Tasmanian people and it is something

that the Government could do something about because they have done it in the past. They have capped power prices in the past.

We hear the Premier and Treasurer talk about how capping power prices would be a horrendous act for any government. Why did they do it themselves? They are saying that if power prices were capped to protect Tasmanian families from these massive increases they are facing, then renewable energy projects will not go ahead. Well, guess what? The last renewable energy project was commissioned when there was a price cap in place. It is bizarre that the Government can argue this and yet they do.

The policy to cap power prices and disconnect from the National Energy Market is still on their website even after we continually raised it. Even this morning, as my colleague, Mr Winter, points out, it is still on the website. The Government is howling down their own policy as being irresponsible but will not even take it off their website.

We notice that debt is a significant issue but even the Government's own glossy Budget overview did not mention the words 'debt', 'deficit' or 'efficiency dividend'. Talk about a piece of spin laid on the top of the Budget papers, completely devoid of any discussion of debt. The Treasurer tries his best to spin the debt position when he does his Budget roadshow. We saw from last year the debt growing with four red columns of growing debt and he drew a line that started to curve slightly towards the final year which, last year, was 2026. He talked about the arc of the javelin: the debt was starting to come down like the arc of a javelin. Well, if you look at the graph like anybody else, you can see that the javelin is still way up in the air and it does not look like it is going to be arcing any time. We will only find out where this debt gets to as the Government rolls out its budget.

The discussion is not about zero net debt now; it is about 'how can we spin it, how can we put ourselves up against the other states and start to talk about where we sit compared to other states - that we have the second-lowest net debt, or we have the lowest net debt compared to the others?'. We are a lot smaller than the other economies so that is not a big surprise. He talks about net debt per capita but what the Treasurer does not talk about is the acceleration in debt. He is only talking about a point in time, not, to use his javelin analogy, the arc of the javelin still going straight up. Where are we going to be compared to other states next year and the year after that, and the year after that? This is a budget that has significant issues. This is a state economy that has significant issues.

I talked briefly about the amount of debt the GBEs are holding. We know, for example, that TasNetworks is holding \$2 billion in net debt. That is a lot of money. The debt has been shifted around the energy entities. Hydro has net debt of - I only have figures from 2021 - net debt was \$730 million in 2021. Aurora had a lot but that was all transferred in 2014; Aurora borrowings transferred to TasNetworks amounted to almost \$3 billion. That was a huge transfer.

Even entities like Tasracing have \$4 million. No wonder the Government is dragging its heels on building the new racing centre in the north-west that they promised. Are they going to have to give Tasracing a guarantee to hold any more debt as well?

We also know TasPorts has a loan facility of \$286 million with a 15-year term. They have not used \$256 million of that but I am not sure how TasPorts is tracking on the development in East Devonport, whether they are going to need more than that. Are costs

starting to blow out like costs are on any major infrastructure project? If so, we may see TasPorts have to borrow even more money. The comments in the Treasury briefing were that the credit-worthiness of TasPorts does not meet the standards and, therefore, has to have a guarantee. These are the issues that this debt guarantee brings to bear - the issue that we need these debt guarantees now.

TASCORP needs this more efficient way of dealing with debt guarantees because they have to put the debt guarantees in place now. The Government's process is creating a problem. They have to come up with an administrative solution to make it easier to deal with a problem they have developed themselves.

We have big issues in this state economy. We have growing levels of debt, we have an economy that is showing it is facing serious headwinds, especially when you compare us to other states. The ABS data comes out regularly and quite often Tasmania is at the bottom of the rankings. When reputable businesses like Deloitte put out their reporting, it shows that the Tasmanian economy is performing worse than the other states, but what we get back from the Government is CommSec. I suppose when the minister gets up, or one of the backbenchers, and does their retort, they will talk about how great CommSec is looking, but the CommSec report is not the same as Deloitte. It is actually backward-facing, not forward-facing. It is based on assessing the state's own performance and not how it is performing against other states. It is like the most improved award but I think even CommSec will turn around because the other economic data is irrefutable.

The CommSec data is pretty heavily reliant on home lending and housing starts. The ABS shows that is going backwards, so I am not exactly sure how CommSec can rank Tasmanian housing starts as being improved on other states when the ABS shows it is indeed the other way.

The only piece of economic data you rely on is not the ABS, it is CommSec, and we hear it time and time again. What is this Treasurer going to do when CommSec no longer has us leading? We know that significant debt is building up on the Government's books and the GBEs' books. This bill streamlines but does not take away the significant problems this state is facing.

[3.27 p.m.]

Mr BAYLEY (Clark) - Mr Speaker, I am pleased to make a contribution on behalf of the Greens to debate on the Tasmanian Public Finance Corporation Amendment Bill. The Greens are inclined to support this bill but we do have a number of concerns more broadly around TASCORP and the function of GBEs and a number of questions we are hopeful that the Treasurer can answer.

Of particular interest to ask is the commitment for reporting on the individual guarantee arrangements in the Treasurer's Annual Financial Report. As we understand it, not all of the guarantee limits under current arrangements are necessarily reported. As far as we can tell, active loans subject to guarantee are reported in the Treasurer's Annual Financial Report but not the details proposed to be reported subsequent to this proposed process.

We also note that additional entries can also be added by the Treasurer if they are gazetted and that proposed new section 24(2) means that such a proposition, despite being an order and not a regulation, would be a disallowable instrument. We also consider that the proposed more

formal process encouraging active review of guarantee limits and related matters for each entity would provide for improved governance. That being said, we note that many of the matters referred to in the second reading, including the proposed inclusion of details in the Treasurer's Annual Financial Report, relevant annual reports and annual review of these limits, are not stipulated in the bill. Instead, the bill only provides that the details are to be determined by the Treasurer.

Why are these matters not outlined in the bill? It would seem to be a relatively straightforward matter to set out in legislation. While we take the current Treasurer's intention at face value to transparently report on these limits, there is nothing to ensure that a future Treasurer also follows this procedure. As such, and as flagged by the member for Braddon, we have an amendment we will take forward here. The amendment we will be moving is to insert a new Part into the bill to amend section 42 of the Financial Management Act 2016 to make reporting a requirement committed to by the Treasurer a statutory requirement.

We also have something of an incidental question in relation to TasWater. We note that TasWater is not proposed to be covered by this guarantee. We question why it is not included. When doing research on the bill we were also interested to note that the revisions in the Water and Sewage Corporation Act 2012, specifically section 26, allows for councils to provide a guarantee or indemnity for TasWater, but not the state. This is somewhat out of scope of the bill before us but I am curious about the Government's broader position on this matter. If the Treasurer is able to advise whether a guarantee can be provided to TasWater by the Government through another mechanism that would be appreciated.

As I say, we are inclined to support this. We maintain ongoing concerns about TASCORP and the ability of government entities racking up unsustainable loan arrangements and at times funding unsustainable activities, but in general, subject to the amendment we have floated here today, we see this amendment bill as generally improving transparency and reporting and we will support it.

[3.31 p.m.]

Mr O'BYRNE (Franklin) - Mr Speaker, I rise to have a quick chat about the Tasmanian Public Finance Corporation Amendment Bill 2023. I will be supporting the bill. I have not sought or been offered a briefing on this matter but -

Mr Ferguson - You are always welcome, if necessary.

Mr O'BYRNE - Thank you, I will take that as given.

I have a couple of quick questions. Obviously the arrangements around these matters have been managed this way for many years. The second reading speech obliquely refers to some issues that are forecast in terms of the *Spirits of Tasmania* but I think the parliament should be offered a bit more explanation apart from a reference to a pending decision, which in the organisations and the decisions of governments and third parties and GBEs, et cetera, are relatively standard in terms of the size.

I know it is a significant investment for the *Spirits* but the big question for me is why now? Why do we need this kind of amendment bill to deal with this matter? Obviously it is very important that people know the Government has the back of the GBEs and state-owned companies and that there is transparency around decisions made, particularly significant

financial decisions, not only on behalf of the GBE but we know that is an extension of government. Whilst they operate under their own act there are clear relationships, both formal and informal, between the ministers and the shareholders of the day through their normal arrangements in accountability to the GBEs but also through TASCORP in terms of their funding and their debt levels and their reporting through the GBE hearings at the end of the year.

Is it the case that when taking on, for example, a new venture in terms of Homes Tasmania, that has triggered this kind of change? There has been a concern raised either by people within Homes Tasmania or within the market, or if the minister has received formal advice from TASCORP on these matters - and I am sure you have - has that triggered that there is significant change and does that mean that triggers some further decisions by government that they might be forecasting in terms of arrangements with, for example, public transport authorities in terms of moving to a more independent or changed kind of relationships there?

We have had these arrangements under the existing legislation arrangements for quite some time and they have served Tasmania well. As far as I am aware there has been no major issue, so just to say, 'Oh well, we've got a couple of vessels' - we know that the TT-Line has a long history of good financial management in the work they did in the purchasing of the two original vessels and the arrangements and the fact that the government of the day chose not to seek a return on that through a dividend. I note that has now since changed under this Government. Essentially at the time we made decisions to allow that GBE to maintain its own debt and income to ensure that it could purchase vessels and prepare for purchasing of the new replacement vessels. I know that this Government threw out those arrangements and went through an interesting contortion to explain why they clawed money back so that the finances at the time looked better than what they were. It is not the first time Liberals have done that in government, both state and federal.

Whilst the argument that you put is completely plausible and sound, and I think the amendment proposed by the Vicar of Clark is a decent one, why now? The argument to say that you might be buying a couple of vessels and therefore you seek this change does not really stack up given the arrangements of GBEs and governments over the last 15, 20, 30 years. I ask the Treasurer to expand on that and explain, why now? If there is something that he has been briefed on that is outside cabinet-in-confidence, I think the parliament is owed that explanation.

You refer to it, saying it is about transparency, but it does not increase transparency. I know Mr Bayley's amendment will hope to resolve that in part, but essentially you are only going to be publishing the annual report and, yes, there will be hearings at the end of the year to traverse that ground. However, if you are about increasing transparency, surely there should be some more elements in the amendment bill that would provide for more public reporting of these circumstances.

I note that the new proposed enduring guarantee does not apply to borrowings from third parties, outside of the TASCORP arrangement. Does the bill replace existing provisions that currently provide any sort of guarantee over third party borrowings? For example, are there any guarantees in place for third party borrowings by Homes Tasmania, and if there were would this bill impact any guarantees over third party borrowings that are currently in place?

I did have a question about the limits the Treasurer will include in the annual financial report but Mr Bayley's amendment hopefully should cover that. They are all the questions that

I have. Why now? Why this at this moment in time? The arguments in the second reading speech do not indicate anything significantly different from the core of the bill. The issue around third-party borrowings and the broader question around transparency which you may, in part, cover in your response to the member for Clark's amendment to this bill.

Having said all of that, I believe this is a sensible thing to do and I support it.

[3.38 p.m.]

Mr YOUNG (Franklin) - Mr Speaker, I rise to speak in favour of the bill. The Tasmanian Public Finance Corporation Amendment Bill will enhance transparency and support government business to invest in major infrastructure that underpins their economic growth. Borrowing for capital investment is economically sound and responsible. It is an approach that benefits not only the present generation, but also future generations of Tasmanians. I would like to shed some light on the key advantages it offers.

Borrowing for capital investment allows us to harness the power of leverage to finance projects that can have a transformative impact on our society. Whether it is building infrastructure, investing in education or advancing technology, borrowing enables us to expedite, progress and generate economic growth that benefits everyone. Think about the construction of roads, bridges and public transport systems. These investments not only create jobs but also enhance productivity and connectivity. TasPorts' \$240 million Keylink project at the Port of Devonport is an excellent example of debt funding for a state-owned company which is driving trade, economic growth and employment. Keylink is TasPorts' largest port upgrade project under its master plan. Once delivered, Keylink will provide a step-changing capacity for freight and vehicles that will future-proof Devonport as a tourism and freight gateway for the next 50 years.

The staged delivery of project Keylink is timed to cater for a new fleet of larger Bass Strait ships set to enter service in coming years including TT-Line's new *Spirit of Tasmania*. With the new vessels being commissioned to arrive from 2024, the Port of Devonport's freight capacity is expected to increase by 40 per cent, along with an additional 160 000 passengers visiting Devonport every year. To date, the joint venture established by Hazel Bros Group Pty Ltd and Brady Marine and Civil Pty Ltd has contracted more than 80 local Tasmanian jobs.

Furthermore, as part of TasPorts' Port Master Plan, TasPorts is committed to developing Macquarie Point in the Port of Hobart as a key strategic port for the Antarctic and Southern Ocean. In March 2021, TasPorts released its vision for the Port of Hobart which will position the capital city as the international gateway to the Southern Ocean whilst enabling growth in well-established key trade areas over a 30 year horizon. The Macquarie Wharf Redevelopment will see the delivery of bespoke infrastructure for the Australian Antarctic Division (AAD) icebreaker RSV *Nuyina* as well as upgraded berthing facilities to attract further international Antarctic science programs to the port, enabling growth in the research sector.

The redevelopment will also enable the growth of Tasmania's key passenger tourism service through the ability to berth next-generation cruise vessels and facilitate improved port solutions for a variety of other industries. TasPorts will fund infrastructure investments using borrowings through TASCORP when appropriate commercial agreements are in place that underpin the business case. Through a staged infrastructure development approach and finalisation of funding, including commercial agreements with customers, TasPorts anticipates that works could commence in late 2023, subject to appropriate approvals.

Mr Deputy Speaker, further benefits from borrowings are evident in the new TT-Line vessel replacement. Tourists continue to be hungry for what Tasmania has to offer and this means demand for the *Spirit of Tasmania* and its service remains high and continues to grow. We are building new and bigger ships which will go a long way to meeting the needs of our passengers and clients, particularly those wishing to travel with high vehicles such as caravans and motorhomes. The new ships will have an increased capacity for passengers up from 1400 to 1800 and the number of cabins increasing from 222 to 301. Perhaps the most significant difference is in a nearly 60 per cent increase in vehicle lanes for passengers and freight vehicles with more than 4 kilometres of vehicle lanes to be available on the new ships. Unlike the current ships, all vehicle lanes will have extra height and will fit caravans and campervans. The new *Spirits* will have a much greater capacity for passengers, passenger vehicles and freight.

This financial year, TT-Line has already carried more than 9500 caravans and more than 6000 motorhomes and campervans. We know that TT-Line is a key part in our tourism economy and the new *Spirit* vessels will be a core driver in both our freight logistics sector and enabling more visitors to experience our beautiful state.

The Tasmanian Liberal Government is turbocharging the economy with a record infrastructure program. In the 2022-23 financial year, we invested a record \$568.5 million in roads and bridges. This financial year, we will see another step-change increase in roads and bridge infrastructure investment with \$754 million and \$2.2 billion over four years on our roads and bridges. The 2023-24 Tasmanian Budget invests almost \$5 billion in our infrastructure program which is designed to support jobs and build safer and more connected communities.

The Budget and forward Estimates includes nearly \$4.3 billion in investments in the general government sector with a \$656.5 million in supporting investment by other government business and entities. Our investment through infrastructure business such as TasPorts, TasRail, TT-Line and the energy businesses all play a part in our integrated plan to ensure that Tasmania has the economic capital that facilitates growth, investment and more Tasmanian jobs. Our investment will stimulate the economy by supporting jobs in the booming construction and professional services sector, as well as providing confidence to business to train, employ and grow.

Mr Deputy Speaker, responsible borrowing for capital investment can help us mitigate the burdens placed on our future generations. While it is true that borrowing involves interest payments and debt servicing, it is essential to distinguish between the different types of debt. Borrowing for capital investment which yields long-term economic benefits is fundamentally different from accumulating debt to finance current consumption. The former is an investment in our future while the latter can be seen as borrowing from the future to support our present desires.

Favourable financing conditions in today's global economy make borrowing for capital investment an attractive proposition. Tasmanian government businesses can take advantage of these conditions to secure financing for essential projects at lower costs making it economically prudent to invest. Borrowing for capital investment must be done responsibly and with careful consideration of future debt sustainability. This requires prudent fiscal management and a commitment to allocating borrowed funds efficiently and transparently. The Government

must also ensure that investments generate long-term returns that exceed the cost of borrowing, thereby contributing to overall economic growth and prosperity.

The intergenerational nature of borrowing for capital investment is not merely a matter for economic policy; it is a matter of responsibility towards future generations. When done thoughtfully and strategically, borrowing to finance capital projects can provide a pathway to economic progress, address pressing societal challenges and minimise the financial burden on our young people. As we navigate the complex economic landscape of our time, let us remember that the choices we make today will have far-reaching consequences for those who inherit our world. Let us be wise with our resources, making investments that will leave a legacy of prosperity, sustainability and progress for generations to come.

So that I do not disappoint Dr Broad, as far as the CommSec report goes, how about you celebrate our achievements, not put them down.

[3.46 p.m.]

Mr WINTER (Franklin) - Mr Deputy Speaker, I will start with the CommSec report since my colleague from Franklin finished with it. I have been in our electorate of the Huon Valley over the last two weeks talking to small businesses. I have to say I have not seen things this tight and difficult for small businesses in a long time; a lot of them are really hurting. If Mr Young, the member for Franklin, wants to go down there with his CommSec report and flap it around at Geeveston and tell them how good the economy is going, he might find himself in a bit of difficulty.

Things are getting really tough for small business at the moment, particularly in the hospitality and tourism sector. They are not in the position of saying to themselves, 'The state of the state says that we are performing well against the last 10 years'. They are in a position of saying to themselves, 'Things are really tight, things are difficult and I'm having trouble making ends meet'.

Tourism in particular in the south of the state, certainly in my electorate, and I will take advice from my colleagues around the rest of the state, has made things really difficult and we are not in the same situation we have been in the last couple of years. Things are difficult and when I hear Mr Young talk about the CommSec *State of the State* report, which is frankly the only report in which the Government has anything positive to say about our economic performance, I wonder whether he is actually in touch with our electorate and what people are telling me and what I assume are telling him when he visits the far south.

The member for Franklin spoke about different types of debt and the benefits from borrowing, which I have not heard a Liberal member talk about before. What members of the Government need to understand is that the Budget is in deficit and has been for quite some time now. It is in an operating deficit and in an underlying deficit. It is in record deficit and in fact we have hit two record deficits in a row. They are not borrowing just for infrastructure. They are borrowing to continue to operate the Government. That is a fact. It is in your own Budget, and yet you think you can stand up here and say borrowing for infrastructure is good and we would only ever borrow for infrastructure, when you are borrowing to run the Government. That is what your operating deficit is. That is what the underlying deficit is.

That is what is happening in your own Budget. That is how you are running this state Budget, with debt, which is obviously the topic of the bill in front of us. It is all about

TASCORP and the ability for government businesses to borrow to fund infrastructure in some cases, all sorts of government activities. As the shadow treasurer has said, we broadly support the bill in front of us. I have to say there have been some good contributions elsewhere around the transparency of what not only this Treasurer but future treasurers need to do to report back on the amount of borrowing and the borrowing limits that are set by the Treasurer.

I want to talk about the levels of debt being carried by our government entities. This should concern Tasmanians. There is a lot of love for our government businesses, particularly Hydro Tasmania, which has been with Tasmanians for 100 years now and we hope is with us for a long time into the future. However, this Government has been treating Hydro Tasmania as a cash cow, not as a strategic asset for the benefit of the state which is what we think it should be. This Government has chosen to continue to take dividends and special dividends sometimes from Hydro Tasmania in order to make its own budget look a little better. The impact of that has been that the debt-to-equity ratio for Hydro Tasmania in 2021 was 41.8 per cent in 2021, while TasNetwork's debt-to-equity ratio, according to the Auditor-General's report, is 192.5 per cent - just extraordinary.

This is topical because of what the Government has been talking about doing with TasNetworks: building a whole bunch of new transmission, including Project Marinus although not directly through TasNetworks, but certainly with the North West Transmission Developments directly through TasNetworks. That will be, according to the Government - they have not given us a final number - \$800 million last week, we think maybe, at least last year there was and we are looking forward to an update, but significantly more capital expenditure required by that business for a new project that will have to be funded by debt, by TASCORP. With a debt-to-equity ratio of 192.5 per cent on 30 June 2021, this is starting to look like the debt is continuing to increase.

When I did the numbers from 2014 to 2021 there was an additional billion dollars' worth of debt sitting on government business books by this Government, by choice. Former treasurer Peter Gutwein used to like to say he wanted to make the balance sheet work harder; that is how he used to say he wanted the businesses to take on more debt. 'Make it work harder', he said, and that was the approach to TasWater, TasNetworks and Hydro, which have been paying significant dividends and continuing to borrow more from TASCORP to continue that.

I believe that some additional transparency around the borrowing is a good thing but this is a simplification. The bill simplifies the approach that the Treasurer of the day has in dealing with debt. TASCORP GBE hearings have been interesting for me in trying to understand the rationale behind the decisions that TASCORP makes around particular entities. I remember asking whether any entities had asked for TASCORP's financial support or borrowings. We found out through that process that Devonport City Council was the only entity that had not been able to borrow from TASCORP. That is a really interesting decision. I am sure it was made in the best interests of the organisation and Tasmania, but the more transparency we can get from this entity the better.

We should not be having to ask questions. In terms of the parliament, in terms of the way that debt limits are increased or not increased and the limits that the Treasurer has set, the more information we have the better our ability to hold the Government to account and understand what is going on with these entities.

Treasury has been a really critical component and has a very strong and close relationship with TASCORP, but the Government has relied on Treasury advice for major projects for a long time. Governments of all types have relied on Treasury advice. I go back to the Marinus decision, which I believe is driven by Treasury advice which said to the Government they are taking on significant risk with the deal they signed only late last year and that the risks involved with the amount of capital outlay, the amount of debt that the Government was taking on, even if it was with concessional finance, that level of debt was a particular challenge and a huge risk to the Budget. We saw in the Budget papers where the risks had been outlined, albeit briefly.

We understand that those risks came through in a letter from the then acting premier and the minister which they wrote to the Prime Minister and the federal minister for Energy to say that the Tasmanian Budget was not in a position to take on that level of debt based on increases in costs. I am surprised that it took them that long to realise these projects were going to blow out in costs. We have seen projects increase in costs across the country, whether that is stadiums or hydro proposals in New South Wales, the Snowy scheme. Project costs are blowing out and so are the borrowing requirements of TasNetworks in the Tasmanian context and Hydro Tasmania in the context of projects like Tarraleah and, potentially, Lake Cethana.

Even in an ongoing sense, they are going to change. There is going to be a growing requirement if the Government is going to continue down the path they are on in relation to this. We still have not seen the new costing for the North West Transmission Developments but I can understand, given the recent decision to halve the capacity, at least initially, for TasNetworks why that might be the case. It is important that we understand what the debt burden is going to be on these businesses and that we have the ability to hold the government of the day and the treasurer of the day to account for any borrowings held by the government.

The borrowings from GBEs, as I said, have grown - to 192.5 per cent debt-to-equity ratio in TasNetworks' case of 30 June last year and about 40 per cent for Hydro. In the Tasmanian budget we have seen debt forecast to grow in this year's budget to \$5.6 billion of net debt over the next four years. The Government's own Tasmanian Government Fiscal Sustainability Report 2021 paints an even bleaker picture about debt with this Government. The conclusion in that report, on page 7, says:

For all scenarios analysed, the results show projected fiscal outcomes that are manageable in the short to medium-term. However, the size of the corrective action required to maintain fiscal sustainability increases over the projection period.

The high-level analysis of the impacts of the updated data in the RER and the PEFO [Pre-Election Economic and Fiscal Outlook] indicate that changed circumstances over the short-term are not the primary drivers of the outcomes over the longer-term. Rather, the outcomes over the full projection period continue to be driven by long-term expenditure and revenue growth trends.

Projected health expenditure is the single most significant driver of the projected future fiscal challenges for the State. It is the largest expenditure category within the Budget and is projected to grow at a significantly greater rate than projected revenue growth.

Treasury is saying we have a problem here. We have the member for Franklin who seems to think that all the debt is just going into infrastructure but it is actually coming from deficits that are being driven by a budget situation where, without short-term corrective action, as outlined by Treasury, there is going to be a continuation of the growth of net debt.

The Tasmanian Budget this year forecasts that we will spend less on health this year than we did last year, which I am sure will not happen. It projects that instead of increasing expenditure by 8 per cent, as we did two years ago, it was a declining expenditure for this financial year, effectively, a flat rate of expenditure increased over the next four years, which I do not think this Government can deliver. It certainly has not delivered it in 10 years and I do not think it will deliver, yet that is what this projected surplus is based on.

I do not know when they are planning to have a real conversation about the state of the budget with Tasmanians. It has to happen at some stage because you cannot keep hiding the debt. You can hide; you can play tricks around TT-Line, as the former treasurer used to like to do, to create transfers and try and improve the budget. You can take special dividends to try to briefly create yourself a surplus but you cannot hide the debt.

Two things have saved the Government from debt becoming even greater. One is their failure to deliver all their infrastructure projects - around \$400 million last financial year. The other one is GST receipts continuing to increase. Contrary to some reports and some statements made by members, GST revenues continue to outpace expectations within the Tasmanian budget. GST revenue has been extremely kind to this Government and the only thing I can think of is that they are crossing their fingers that GST revenue will increase again, which would cover up the fact that they cannot meet their expenditure targets. If they do not increase their expenditure targets, we are having another conversation about net debt continuing to increase over the coming four years, unless they do not spend their infrastructure budget. It does help your debt position if you do not spend all your infrastructure budget.

The concern I have around these matters is that the Tasmanian economy is not forecast to grow; it is actually forecast to shrink this year. Access Economics is forecasting that it will shrink by 0.3 per cent. We will wait until later in the year when the ABS releases the numbers around the state accounts, Gross State Product, how the economy has performed this financial year. However, they are forecasting for this financial year and, in fact, for last financial year, for the economy to have shrunk. I do not know what the Government is going to do at that point, whether it will continue to wave around its Commsec *State of the State* report or whether they will admit that there is a problem here. As I said earlier, there is a growing cost-of-living crisis in Tasmania which is not just impacting Tasmanian households. There is a flow-on effect on discretionary spending. A local hospitality business on the weekend told me that people they usually see come in to buy a meal each are now buying a single meal to share because they cannot afford the expenses they usually do. We are seeing Tasmanian households tightening their belts and Tasmanian businesses having to deal with the impacts of that.

At the same time you have the Government pressing on in saying that things are really good out there when we know they are not. If you are not aware of the struggles of, particularly, small businesses in this state at the moment, then you are not really listening.

Energy prices in Tasmania have continued to grow and put a lot of pressure on households and businesses. The 22.5 per cent increase in power prices since June 2022 means that Tasmanian businesses and households are having to tighten their belts.

I will mention Peter and Patricia Harvey, who I caught up with on Sunday. They run an outstanding food relief organisation in my area, Kingborough Community Missions. They were telling me about the cost-of-living impacts on their community and what that is doing in terms of driving demand. They have been providing emergency food relief to Tasmanians in need for almost 10 years now. They told me that demand is way worse than they have had for their history of doing this. They are now delivering 14 000 emergency food relief packages to people in need, up from barely 1000 when they first started. They are having to do that because Tasmanians are doing it tough. They told the media they felt it was time to cap power prices because they could see that the power bills people were paying were putting so much pressure on Tasmanian households, on families who were now having to reach their last resort. It is a very big step to ask for help like that, to ask for emergency food relief, a hugely stressful thing, but they are having to do it. It is a thing of last resort. It is being forced by a number of factors. Interest rate rises and petrol prices are things outside the state Government's control. The one thing that is not is power price increases, which can and should be dealt with by this Government. But they have refused to do so over a long period.

In terms of government business debt, there is another large project I want to talk about - Macquarie Point. It is not just the stadium, it is TasPorts. They have a real requirement for Wharf 6 to be upgraded. Again, looking at the Auditor-General's report, when it comes to finance, you are looking at a debt to equity ratio of 9.6 per cent but continuation of significant borrowings, as of last year around \$30 million of borrowings. What we need to do with these government businesses is treat them as the strategic assets they are. There is a reason why the public still owns TasPorts and there is a reason we still own our power generators. It is because we want to make sure they work for Tasmanians. I understand that TasPorts is looking at a business case around the upgrade of that wharf and I understand they have been struggling to make one stack up. They have not been able to make one stack up yet, so we can have a long-term sustainable futureproof arrangement with the Antarctic Division and the *Nuyina* to make sure they continue to use our wharf facilities here in Hobart. We should not take it as a given that Hobart is the gateway to the Antarctic in Australia but to the world. It is not, and we need to make sure we have the right infrastructure in place.

There was a plan through TasPorts and through that project to have an Antarctic and science precinct at Macquarie Point. I am not sure whether that is still the plan or not. It is very unclear to me. I think it is unclear to the Hobart city mayors whether that is still the plan or not but it is critical and the condition of these organisations like TasPorts, their ability to finance future projects is critical. The way they have been treated by the Government has not allowed them to actually do their job.

There are some significant challenges around the *Nuyina* at the moment. Its inability to refuel in Hobart at the moment is - well, it is not funny; it is an extremely serious situation that has been allowed to happen and it needs to be resolved extremely quickly. The project that the federal government is requiring the Government to do - and as part of that deal is a significant and important one. The Government is saying that the \$240 million of federal capital going in through that deal is going to the stadium, which means it cannot go to the upgrade of the wharf facility which is an important economic driver for this state.

Antarctic research and science is a very important economic driver and supports a lot of jobs both public and private. Through the Polar Network there is a significant network of businesses that rely on the trade through that research and that project is critical. If it is the case that TasPorts needs to go to TASCORP for more debt because it is not being allowed to

use any of the \$240 million for that project, that is going to increase its debt to equity ratio and, as I said, I understand they are finding it very difficult to stack up a business case without any of that \$240 million being offered to them.

It is being offered for the stadium by the Government. They have made that pretty clear to AFL. At least the AFL has been told that \$240 million is going to the stadium - that is the rhetoric we hear from the Premier and the Deputy Premier: that the stadium is going to be funded by the \$240 million from the federal Government. The federal Government did not just say it was for the stadium. They said it was for the precinct and if that \$240 million goes all the way into the stadium then that makes that project even more difficult to stack up.

Whether there is an equity injection or a contribution from the Government into that project, the funding for that needs to be dealt with. We need to have certainty and clarity around that project to make sure that it stacks up and it gets delivered so it can continue to be the hub and the gateway for Tasmania. As I said, I think this is a better approach. The approach to providing these letters of comfort and guarantees to these businesses and entities has appeared from the outside to be a bit ad hoc and this provides some clarity around how it is being dealt with. It is really important and I appreciated the contribution from the shadow treasurer and also the member for Clark, Mr Bayley, making sure we have the right transparency measures around that so that the parliament can hold the Treasurer to account. I look forward to hearing the Treasurer's response to that in a minute because we have a role here to play with our state finances.

Yes, we always support the Budget and there is always Supply, but it does not come without scrutiny. We need to make sure that when it comes to the debt - and this is the ability for our businesses and the government to service debt - that we are across all the details. The more information we can have the better off Tasmanians will be in understanding what our fiscal situation is.

[4.10 p.m.]

Ms FINLAY (Bass) - Madam Deputy Speaker, I rise this afternoon to make my contribution the bill. I will refer to a number of Government documents and provide some contextual comments around the state position.

The Fiscal Sustainability Report is clear in its observations of the current financial position of the state. It is clear on what needs to be done and what should not be done. It says, very clearly, to not kick the can down the road yet that seems to be the only thing this Government is good at. It says to not ignore the realities of the circumstances we find ourselves in: do not think that there is nothing to see here, that no one will notice, do not keep overspending, overborrowing and inflaming the debt position of the state. The document is there for people to read and for the Treasurer to be guided by. It appears he is not willing to take that advice, to chart a course back to a sustainable position. If he does not want to refer to the Fiscal Sustainability Report, then his own Budget documents from this year also outline a number of concerns.

The work we do must consider and respond to the needs of Tasmania because our job is to ensure that the life of Tasmanians is the best it can be. As we have just heard, the current pressures in our community around the cost of living and the cost in doing business are burdensome for so many. When we see people making very difficult choices because they

have no other choice, then it is incumbent upon us in this place to ensure that we use the lens of scrutiny to make the right financial decisions in this place for the people of Tasmania.

The first Budget paper provides an overview of the economy, of the fiscal strategy of the Budget Estimates and liabilities and risks. The bill discusses risks associated with government business entities in Tasmania. They are also referred to in the Budget documents. There are risks to the Budget around a number of projects, projects that are delivered either directly via the Government or through some of these business enterprises.

There is a section on the risks of the ownership of government businesses. It says that as the owner of government businesses, the Government is responsible for the financial position of those businesses, whether legal or perceived. The minister said that practically people would perceive that the Government stands behind and guarantees these loans to these entities. This instrument is formalising that.

Our own budget papers say that the responsibilities are there, whether legal or perceived. Where the Tasmanian Public Finance Corporation undertakes borrowings to facilitate the provision of funding to businesses by the way of debt, these borrowings are guaranteed by the Government. The Government has announced that it will introduce this legislation and provide a standing guarantee to TASCORP.

It also outlines that the Government provides significant support to government businesses to facilitate the provision of the services they provide to our community. That is what I was reflecting on before. It is essential that the services either directly from the Government or through government businesses is done for the sole purpose of supporting Tasmanians and ensuring that Tasmanians have the best life possible. Budget paper 1 identifies risk in Marinus link, Battery of the Nation and the North West Transmission Developments line. It also talks about the National Energy Market and the change in volatility. That is something we have spoken about in this place because we are talking about an instrument of change. We need to be able to trust the Government and believe that what the Government says it will do, it does. The Government made a promise to Tasmanians that subject to the ongoing volatility in the National Energy Market it would cap power prices. The Premier said, 'I do not know why you keep bringing that up'.

Premier, minister, Treasurer, when your own website has a policy on it that says that you will cap power prices if there is ongoing volatility in the National Energy Market then why would Tasmanians not expect you to deliver on that? There is nothing more black and white than it being published on your own website. The Tasmanian people must believe that but how can they when you stand in this place and say, 'That is rubbish, that is stupid, why would we do that?'

You cannot have it both ways. You cannot have it written in black and white on your website and in this place refute that it is a good idea. Take it down from your website if you are not committed to it, or do the right thing by Tasmanians and commit to the promise that you made and cap power prices. The cost of living and cost of doing business are being devastated by power prices in Tasmania.

The Budget talks about other risks, including the Macquarie Point waste water treatment plant relocation and Tas Irrigation. The work in this instrument this afternoon has been referred to in those Budget papers. It is not a surprise that it is here, yet another member in the House

asked, 'Why are we dealing with this today?'. What would cause this Government to act? In so many circumstances this Government does everything possible not to act, even when it has made commitments. It is interesting it has brought this forward. Is there something of concern? Is there something in the future it is worried about? Has something happened that caused the Government to do this, because it is not characteristic of this Government to do that?

The bill amends the Tasmanian Public Finance Corporation Act and provides an enduring guarantee by the Government of borrowings from TASCORP by relevant organisations: for instance, GBEs, state-owned companies and other government entities with a current power to borrow. It covers borrowings from TASCORP but not from third party providers. The bill also provides a guarantee to the relevant organisation, subject to individual entity limits established by the Treasurer. It only applies to borrowings sourced from TASCORP. It will only be called upon after all other options in relation to security held in respect of guaranteed borrowings have been exhausted. It commences from 1 July and applies to all borrowings from TASCORP.

It also provides in the event the guarantee to a relevant organisation is called upon that any payment made to TASCORP under the guarantee is reserved by law and is automatically appropriated from the public account. The Treasurer has the discretion to determine that any payment made under the guarantee in respect of the relevant organisation's borrowings from TASCORP are repayable by the relevant organisation to the public account, subject to the terms and conditions determined by the Treasurer. It includes, as it should, the consequential amendments to remove the borrowing guarantee provisions for the relevant organisations currently within their enabling legislation when they are no longer required.

In his second reading speech, the minister used only a couple of examples where this is applied. He used the examples of Homes Tasmania, Stadiums Tasmania and Macquarie Point Development Corporation, indicating they all play a vital role in the delivery of a range of services and priorities to Tasmania. The clause notes outline all the entities it applies to. It amends the Tasmanian Public Finance Corporation Act and the Electricity Companies Act.

We heard earlier about the way this Government uses Hydro Tasmania. When an organisation is used to move funds for the benefit of the Government to make balance sheets and other instruments look positive that is not good governance or financial management. Hydro Tasmania is no longer respected by this Government as significant infrastructure and a beneficial entity for Tasmania, rather it used to bring in cash and generate a profit, but not to pass on to Tasmanians.

People are starting to figure this out. I said at the Budget lunches that people do not hear what the Government says and believe it. They can see the reality and the difference between what is said and what is reality.

Organisations have said this is practically a power tax. Practically using an entity of Tasmania to siphon off profit to prop up the Budget black hole you have is practically a power tax. It is not good enough. Significant business entities and peak bodies have recognised that and are calling with Tasmanian Labor for changes to the way you manage power and pricing in Tasmania.

The bill also applies to the Fire Service Act, the Forest Practices Act, the Government Business Enterprises Act, Homes Tasmania Act, the Irrigation Company Act, the

Macquarie Point Development Corporation Act, Metro Tasmania Act, Private Forests Act, Racing Tasmania, the Rail Company Act, Stadiums Tasmania, TT-Line Arrangements Act, the Tasmanian Development Act and the Tasmanian Ports Corporation Act.

Concerns were raised in the development of some of this legislation regarding what happened to assets and borrowings in these entities. This is the first time I have seen an amendment like this come through so I have taken particular interest in it. When the Stadiums Tasmania Act passed through this House, a number of questions were raised at that time regarding the significance of those assets. That entity was formed prior to public conversations about a Macquarie Point stadium. At the time it was made to bring together York Park, Bellerive, MyState, then later Dial and Silverdome.

Concerns were raised at the time about the disposal of assets. This provides a guarantee to borrowings to the entity but a question was asked earlier: what if TASCORP called on funds at some point?

We know only through relentless pressure, only through two members of the Government leaving the Government and going to the crossbenches and putting this Government in minority, that there has been the beginnings of scrutiny. It is just the beginnings of scrutiny, around the Macquarie Point project but also around Marinus. We know that only due to that scrutiny that there is significant financial concern around these projects.

At the time when Stadiums Tasmania passed through the parliament there was a question about what powers would this authority have to divest assets and there was a concern and it was something that was raised in our community prior to this legislation being drafted. What if York Park, Bellerive and MyState came into an entity together and the others that are included, and at some point the entity decided that it would release itself of one of the assets. If for instance, it sold Bellerive, what were the controls over that? If one of these entities gets into financial trouble to the point that the borrowings are called on, then could for instance in a Launceston community, York Park be sold to cover that? That would be a massive concern for the pride that our community holds in that asset. It is already being used - and I mention that Hydro is used as a plaything sometimes. York Park is also politically used as a toy in the Government's contributions and messaging and I would say threats around what happens with the Macquarie Point development.

What this says is that there are powers within this act, it is held in the front sections, in part 2 of the act under the powers of authority, that Stadiums Tasmania can dispose of assets and this new instrument here is that TASCORP can call on organisations to sell assets if they are getting into financial trouble. That is a real concern for Stadiums Tasmania and should be considered in the passing of this amendment bill this afternoon.

One of the other entities that I want to reflect on that has been previously spoken about in here is the TT-Line Arrangements Act. This Government does not always seem very sensible about the way it makes decisions and does not seem very timely or able to make timely or thoughtful decisions, and therefore end up having to pay much more for things than had they dealt with at the time in an appropriate way.

We have seen for instance, and I think the member for Franklin said this morning it is the 10 year anniversary since the first mentions of Marinus in this place. In 10 years not much has happened in terms of delivery, except that the prices have exploded to the point where they are

congratulating themselves today for a project half the scale at almost the same price and still unknown financial burdens to Tasmanians. What we do know is that the minister says that yes, Tasmanians will pay in full for, say, the transmission lines and therefore power prices will go up for the Tasmanian people.

The reason I mention those is because with the TT-Line arrangements, what a debacle and the delay of the right commitments on how those ships would actually be constructed and delivered. They continue to make videos and congratulate themselves on what is happening with that, but the reality is that delay cost not only a financial increase in the cost and therefore an increase in the borrowings but also was a massive burden to Tasmania whether it be tourism, hospitality and the lost trade opportunity with the expanded size of those ships. Where we have got the Government talking up these great projects, they do not talk up the financial burdens that are applied to Tasmania because of their inability to deliver in a timely way and make the right decision at the right time. That will burden TT-Line and put them under greater financial pressure.

Tasmanian Irrigation is one of the other entities mentioned in the clause notes. It goes through some amendments. That is an area that I have particular interest in. It is interesting in terms of the capital program for Tasmanian Irrigation. The target in 2022 was a \$37.6 million; budgeted capital program for the 2021-22 year, the actual was \$13.1 million. I know that Tas Irrigation has agreements with the Government around borrowings. In the Notes to the Financial Statements under section A3 Government Dependency:

The Company receives contributions from the Tasmanian and Australian Governments towards the construction of approved capital projects and for some aspects of operating expenditure. Contributions received for capital projects are accounted for as an increase to equity. Contributions received for operating activities are accounted for as income.

The Tasmanian Government has undertaken to provide the Company with ongoing specified equity, as well as supported borrowing facility with the Tasmanian Public Finance Corporation

We know that in the 2021 year, compared to the 2022 year, there is a substantial difference in the capital projects included in the equity. It was \$2.2 million in 2021 and \$10.8 million in 2022 and so they have ongoing and increasing needs to borrow from TASCORP. Further, in the notes under the loans and borrowings, they have a number of secured loans with TASCORP. In the 2022 year it was \$33 million and they have terms and debt repayment schedules, which again if they need to borrow and have delays in projects like we saw in the change between the 2021-22 year in actuals and reality, that is going to increase the burden on that entity. There are all sorts of details in the financial reports about Tas Irrigation and they will be supported by the changes to this, this afternoon.

One of the things that is really clear to Tasmanians and really clear to us on this side of the House is that the overall context of any decisions that are taken and the changes that are being made here are within the bounds of the overall Tasmanian situation financially. We know there is significant mismanagement of the Tasmanian Budget. There is record debt. There is record deficit as well. We know that means the Government, and a member said it earlier, is not only borrowing for projects that it says will deliver economic benefits to Tasmanians but this Government is borrowing to make repayments to operate.

Tasmanian Labor will be the first to back projects where there is an understood scope for a project, understood costings and benefits to the Tasmanian people. You borrow for that and it is productive borrowing which provides economic contribution to Tasmania. We are all for that. This Government could not operate and deliver all the things that it did without borrowing for that. That is a terrible circumstance. There are many households that have no other opportunity to survive than to operate off loans, quick loans from friends, loan sharks in the community or off credit cards, where they are borrowing just to be able to afford the basics every week. It is debt on debt on debt and it gets to the point where it builds so that you can no longer operate. That is where this Government is sending Tasmania.

This Government is sending Tasmania into a situation where the burden and the debt and the deficit is growing. As I mentioned at the beginning, the Tasmanian Fiscal Sustainability Report outlines that very clearly. The risks outlined in the front of the budget documents outline that very clearly. This Government must, in the best interest of Tasmania, get a handle on its commitment to looking at financial sustainability.

There are a number of entities in Tasmania grappling with similar things that call on the Government for support. We heard just this morning, as an example, of Avebury Mine. Four years this Government has known the concerns with that entity and the need for support. Multiple times, repeatedly, this Government has said it would 'immediately provide support.' Where we are talking about borrowings here, where we are talking about Tasmania and the Tasmanian economy budget positions and particularly this change this afternoon, private enterprise knows what this is like.

Private enterprise and families and households understand these sorts of pressures and the commitments that they have to make, but when a Government makes a promise to an organisation that employs 200 employees on the west coast of Tasmania - and we know that this is 200 families and we know that that is the organisations and the workforce that support that operation - the impacts of the loss of these 200 jobs, could see a collapse in the west coast economy and community.

This Government makes commitments and does not deliver. As I said earlier, in the documentation around the volatility in the National Energy Market, it makes commitments, and does not deliver. The one thing we know about this Government is you cannot trust them. This seems to be a relatively simple instrument this afternoon, which Tasmanian Labor has said we support. There have been questions and we expect the minister to be able to answer those questions.

However, in the back of my mind, sparked by a comment from someone else, why now? What has happened that has caused the Government to act in a way that is so uncharacteristic? Tasmanian people expect a government that looks out for them, looks after them and does what they say they will do. This legislation does make a change and it is a change for the better. It is supported by Tasmanian Labor. But if this Government operated across all of its operations in the best interests of Tasmania, so that Tasmanians, the Opposition and the crossbench could trust them, we would all be in a better place.

[4.36 p.m.]

Ms DOW (Braddon - Deputy Leader of the Opposition) - Madam Deputy Speaker, I am pleased to speak on the Tasmanian Public Finance Corporation Amendment Bill 2023. Others from our side of the House have stated our support for this amendment bill and I reiterate that

support. I also make the point, as others have, that this is obviously a shift for the Government and for our GBEs. I would like to learn more thoroughly what has prompted this from the minister in his concluding remarks today.

I will speak about a number of those GBEs and some of the projects they currently have on their books. Before I do that, I will make some more generalised comments about the Tasmanian economy and this Government's budget management. These are two different things. Quite often this Government will misconstrue that and claim responsibility in good times for the local economy, for our regional economies across the state but then in bad times blame that on external forces. They will also, similarly, look at a budget position and take credit for that if economic times are good and, if they are bad, similarly blame that on the budget position and the external pressures on their budget.

I heard remarks made today about the importance of being fiscally prudent, and that is very important. That was spoken about in this place in the context of Avebury and the Government's offer to provide payroll tax relief to Mallee Resources, to the Avebury mine and the 200 workers there as a way of making the business sustainable into the future and securing, more importantly, those 200 Tasmanians' jobs and their families' future. This Government made a commitment about that back in 2015, which is a long time ago, and they still have not provided that payroll tax relief. That is disgraceful and it has reached crunch time now.

This Government needs to act. They need to support Mallee Resources and those 200 workers, the west coast community, our regional economy, of which mining is an important focal point and contributes significantly to us as a state and our state economy. They need to put their money where their mouth is when it comes to supporting regional communities and regional workers. They talk a lot about that. They reflect a lot on times gone by and their support for regional communities. I would like to see them put their money where their mouth is and support these 200 hard-working Tasmanians and their families, and secure their jobs.

This Government has had it pretty good. They have been lucky when it comes to the economy, but that is fast running out. There are different economic times ahead of us and significant economic challenges and headwinds. Peter Gutwein used to talk a lot about the golden age. I reckon that is fast deteriorating for this Government. As I said, you have been lucky to date but you are going to have to start managing things much better, making some more difficult decisions and getting your priorities right. To date you have not had your priorities right when it comes to spending across Tasmania.

Others have talked about the debt you are racking up, the net debt. Your backbencher, Dean Young, spoke about the importance of investment in intergenerational infrastructure and the role that that type of debt plays. As others have said on my side of the House, we ultimately support that. That has to be in the right projects. There are a number of intergenerational life-changing projects that have been slated by this Government but are a very long way from being delivered. One of those is the redevelopment of the Launceston General Hospital.

Earlier this morning we spoke about transparency in this place, being open and honest. At the last state election, this Government made a commitment to deliver stage two of the Launceston General Hospital redevelopment, which is desperately needed, Madam Deputy Speaker. You would know that because that is in your electorate of Bass, and how difficult it is for the staff at the Launceston General Hospital given the current pressures there, particularly

in the emergency department, which is impacted significantly by the access flows across that hospital and this Government's inability over nearly a decade to address those issues.

It is also important because it is important to be honest and to hold your commitments. To date, we have only received \$8 million this financial year in the budget for that project. At the time the Government made this announcement, they said they would be seeking funding from the federal government. Two years has elapsed and we are still no further advanced on that front. When you have people presenting to an emergency department in their time of need, seeking emergency care, just 37 per cent of those people are seen within four hours. That is shocking. That is down from over 60 per cent in October last year. We have had coronial inquiries related to what is going on at the Launceston General Hospital. Even the Coroner, in one of his latest reports, said that this Government does not appear to have any plan to fix those issues.

They go out and talk a big game about investing in infrastructure that changes people's lives. Well, invest in the Launceston General Hospital and change people's lives. They have just six cardiac beds available for people right across the north of the state. It is the major referral hospital for this state, servicing right across the northern part of Tasmania. It is at capacity, it has not been invested in for years and that is having dire consequences for people trying to access services there and for the staff, who are choosing to leave rather than stay.

That brings me to another important point. We have some significant structural issues in our economy across Tasmania that, after nearly a decade, this Government has not addressed. Those structural deficiencies are around educational outcomes. Only education will change Tasmania's economy forever by educating our people. When you have 50 per cent of our population who are functionally illiterate, it is not a very good place to start.

The second point I want to make is around health because the health status of people affects productivity, and we have the oldest and the sickest population in the country. This Government has not made a dent in that after nearly 10 years and that puts pressure on the budget.

As my colleagues, Ms Finlay and Mr Winter, alluded to, we are at the point now in Tasmania where we are borrowing to fund essential services. We have recurrent deficits. That is not good. You are spending more than you are getting in. That is the economics 101. Every year this Government says they are spending more, for example, on health, but we see health outcomes for Tasmanians getting worse and we see the health system under increasing pressure. If you look at the budget papers, that is not true anyway because they are spending less.

Then there is the question of the efficiency dividend, which has to be found operationally across the budget, and what that means for essential services for Tasmanians. The Government has gone very quiet on how they hope to achieve that efficiency dividend. I would like to learn more about that from the Government and what services will be impacted.

We have talked about intergenerational debt. I want to talk about intergenerational poverty. To my mind, that is the other significant structural problem in the Tasmanian community. This Government comes in here and talks about the 56 000 jobs they have created whilst they have been in government, when in fact we have the lowest participation rate in the country. There is about a third of our population who are dependent on some type of welfare.

That holds people back. We have come in here today and others have spoken about the increasing need for food relief. We have a government that has failed to do anything. There is something they can control directly, which is power prices and they will not cap those even though they said in their policy they would. They have not done that and for some reason, they still have that policy position on their website and deny they ever said they would exit the National Electricity Market.

The fact remains Tasmanians are doing it really tough and it is not just those who are living in poverty, it is right across Tasmania. Like other members, I have been out in my community over the last two weeks talking to people on the west coast, in Circular Head, and small businesses there are doing it tough as well; there is no doubt about that. Tourism is down across the state. That is a significant pillar of our economy and the Government does not really have any solutions I can see or hear of to address that. That has ramifications across our regional communities and regional economies.

I will make a couple more points in relation to the health status of Tasmanians and how that impacts on our economy, productivity and the wellbeing of our community. Mental health is another important aspect of that which is closely related, but when you have 56 000 Tasmanians waiting to see some type of specialist for a health condition, you have a significant problem. If you drill down into that, you have people who are waiting for joint replacements which means they are not able to be engaged in work across their communities. That leads to less productivity in itself and once they can finally get to see a specialist then they are on an elective surgery wait list waiting to have their procedure. There are over 7000 Tasmanians waiting to have a procedure right now.

When you drill down to look at the wait times around paediatrics and particularly, ear, nose and throat specialist referrals, this feeds into our poor educational outcomes, which are critical to productivity and a thriving economy and a healthy, well-educated happy community and society across Tasmania. When children are waiting up to four years to have an ear, nose and throat review to have their tonsils removed, to have grommets put in their ears, there are so many developmental delays that occur during that child's critical time in their life in zero to five years that should have been picked up earlier and addressed which lead to poorer educational outcomes. If you are not getting those basics right, which I believe this Government is not, Madam Deputy Speaker, then you cannot get the big things right. They are not getting those right either, so these issues need some immediate attention of the Government and we have a new Health Minister now. He has an opportunity to be accountable, be responsible and actually do something about this.

I have been shocked to hear him talk a lot about the responsibilities of the federal government and deflecting a lot to the federal government, particularly around the provision of primary healthcare services across Tasmania. One way to reduce the cost to the budget is to invest in regional health and primary healthcare to stop people having to present to hospitals, having to take up a hospital bed, which comes at a huge cost to the Tasmanian budget over a period of time, particularly if those people are then not able to be discharged into the community for an aged care package, an aged care placement or an NDIS package. They are systemic issues not being addressed.

The last point I want to make is in relation to our ageing workforce and skill shortages, which are significant. This Government has spoken a lot about TasTAFE reforms which, to my mind, have not been successful. You still have people in regional communities unable to

access TasTAFE courses across a whole raft of areas. You have severe teacher shortages across TasTAFE. The Government has not been able to recruit the 100 teachers they said they would. Skills and training is absolutely critical. Each of the GBEs mentioned in this amendment bill today are going to rely on a skilled workforce to do the work they need to do, to deliver those capital investment projects. They are fundamentals; they are basic things that we are not getting right.

We have severe shortages across our central workforce, across the state. There is no plan from the Government to incentivise key, essential workers to come and work in Tasmania or to encourage those who are already working here to want to stay and work in Tasmania. Other jurisdictions are offering a whole raft of incentives and initiatives around retaining and attracting skilled workers, particularly in health and teaching - and they are fundamental to a well-functioning economy and a well-functioning society.

Mr Young spoke about infrastructure delays, and I have spoken about the Launceston General Hospital. When I was in Circular Head this week, I spoke to locals about the delays to infrastructure upgrades, particularly the Wynyard to Marrawah road, and the quality of some of the work that has been done and their concerns about that. They are still waiting for many of those improved upgrades to their road network. They are an essential freight corridor for the state and they have been promised those upgrades for a long time. The Government needs to move much faster to deliver those upgrades.

The other piece of important infrastructure that was discussed with us was the Cam River crossing. I know this Government is committed to doing a feasibility study about a second crossing across the Cam River but, to date, we have just heard crickets about where it is at. It is a very important piece of work that the community needs to be informed about, because it is their lifeline, as we saw when the Cam River bridge was out of action for a period of time. It is extremely detrimental to our economy, and has a significant impact for people accessing essential services. The Government needs to clearly outline what their plan is and to release that feasibility study sooner rather than later. The community needs to have certainty that the Government does have a plan to provide that important infrastructure.

The other infrastructure delay that was mentioned to me while I was on the west coast is the next iconic walk and the delays that have been experienced around that very important tourism project. The west coast at the moment is having a difficult time with the railway not being functional. I know how difficult that is, through speaking to local tourism operators on the west coast the week before last. They are looking for more support from the Government in relation to that.

Then there is my old favourite: the Cradle Mountain cableway and the Cradle Mountain precinct plan. That is another plan that has been around for a very long time. Federal money has been allocated to it and, once again, this Government has failed to deliver another piece of critical infrastructure, which is the Cradle Mountain cableway. I will never miss an opportunity to put that on the record.

That brings me then to the GBEs, which this amendment bill is, in essence, about. Others have spoken about the Hydro and the fact that the Government has used that as a cash cow over the years. There is no doubt that Tasmanians are so proud of the Hydro, and the fact that they built it and that they own it; and they do think that Tasmanians should be paying Tasmanian prices for Tasmanian power. I have had that conversation with many Tasmanians, particularly

when I am doing street stalls and talking to them about our plan to cap power prices, which this Government should adopt.

The second point I want to make is about Metro, and what a disgraceful state Metro is in. Tasmania already has very poor public transport networks, particularly across regional Tasmania. I was in Rosebery last week, meeting with some locals about the fact that there is not a bus shelter for them to catch the Tassielink bus service from Burnie. When they get on the bus, they are all wet and they go up to Burnie for the day. There is only one trip back so they are wet and uncomfortable for the duration of their stay when they come up once a week to do their shopping. No thought is given to simple things like that.

We have talked a lot in this place about the need for better infrastructure around public transport. Right now, it would be good to just be able to get a bus; but more broadly, there simply is not good community infrastructure: lots of bus shelters and the like that make travelling on public transport comfortable and practical for people. When you live in somewhere like Rosebery where it rains many days of the year, you would think there would be the courtesy offered for those people using that service to have a suitable shelter. There is also a similar issue at Waratah of a bus shelter required there for students travelling to Burnie for school.

I will be continuing to pursue that issue and writing to the Treasurer and infrastructure minister about that to try to find some resolution for the elderly residents in Rosebery who use that very valuable service.

The other point is TasPorts and the infrastructure upgrades which have been committed to for the Stanley Port. Locals hold very fondly the Stanley Port, with great recollections of fishing off the wharf there over many generations across the north-west coast. It is a vocal point for the Stanley community. The Government and TasPorts have made a commitment to upgrade that and that is taking a very long time to happen. It is an important community project. We can make much more of the Stanley Port as a visitor attraction, as a beautiful local amenity for people to fish and to enjoy as part of their community. I would like to see the Government and TasPorts get their skates on and get that happening because it could be a great community asset. The same could be said for the foreshore development in Strahan - another project which has undergone considerable delays - to improve amenity and is much needed in that community.

That concludes my contribution. As I have said, community confidence is down, discretionary spending is down, and people do not have the money they had in times gone by to be out there spending money in our local economies. Our small business owners and hospitality providers are feeling that.

This Government has had a pretty lucky run of it when it comes to the economy, but there is change in the air. There are significant economic headwinds ahead of us and this Government does not seem to have a plan to address that. They have talked a lot about being fiscally prudent. I would like them to demonstrate that. The budget is in deep need of repair. We have some considerable challenges ahead of us. We have the oldest and sickest population in the country which means we will need to continue our spending on health. We have significant staff shortages across each of our essential services across Tasmania and a government that does not appear to have a plan to address that around workforce development.

We have significant infrastructure projects across the state that have been delayed, sometimes for years. There are important community infrastructure projects that cannot keep being pushed out and kicked down the road. They are schools, hospitals and intergenerational infrastructure that changes lives and this Government is not delivering on those commitments.

Sitting Times

[4.58 p.m.]

Ms ARCHER (Clark - Leader of the House) - Mr Deputy Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 18A, I move -

That the House shall not stand adjourned at six o'clock and that the House continue to sit past six o'clock.

We had expected to finish this bill by 6 p.m. and it looks like we are not going to. The Treasurer is away from noon tomorrow and we would like to get this bill finished today.

Motion agreed to.

[4.59 p.m.]

Ms WHITE (Lyons - Leader of the Opposition) - Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise to make a contribution on the bill before the House at the moment, the Tasmanian Public Finance Corporation Amendment Bill, and join with my colleagues on this side of the House and the shadow treasurer in outlining the Labor Party support for the bill.

I also join with colleagues to seek some further information from the Treasurer with regard to the reasons for this amendment bill. It has been a long-standing agreement, that Governments stand behind their GBEs and state-owned companies. To my knowledge there has not been a circumstance whereby there has been a concern that a GBE or state-owned company would fall over because the government was not there to support them. I understand this is an amendment that provides clarification on what happens but it is interesting that it is happening now. I am keen to understand the reasons, because nothing that this Government does comes without reason.

They do not have a very strong legislative agenda. So, for them to pick this matter to bring before the House today makes me curious because they do not have a plethora of bills, or a strong agenda that they are taking forward. This is a year where they are on record to progress the fewest number of bills for any government in a very long time.

For the Government to decide they are going to progress any matter before this House deserves further scrutiny than it might otherwise warrant in an ordinary term of government. We know this is a government that does not really like being in this House. There are a few reasons why they do not like being in this House. They are in minority. Every time they come into this place they are worried about what is going to happen and where the votes may go, but also, this is a government that avoids transparency at all costs. It is well known for its trademark secrecy and if they could avoid parliament they would choose to do so, but they are not able to do that at all times.

This is a bill that we are debating at the moment which goes to the operations of not just the Public Finance Corporation, but the different GBEs and certain companies that are provided with funding to make sure they can continue to operate, which everyone in our community would expect. There are many strong industries in our state that rely upon certainty from government to continue to do what they do well. This is a government that has not done a very good job over the 10 years they have been in office, progressing any micro-economic reform, or setting up our economy and our State for the future.

They have been happy to sit back on their hands and to benefit from additional GST revenue each year that they have not budgeted for, which has quite literally saved them from more budget deficits and a larger, or a worsening budget position than we currently see in the budget papers today. This is a government that is in record debt for Tasmania and record deficits. This is a government that does not openly talk about that.

My colleague, the Deputy Leader, spoke about how this is a government that deliberately confuses language with respect to the economy and the budget. They talk about what is happening in the economy to deflect from their mismanagement of the Tasmanian budget. This is a Liberal government that has put Tasmania in the worst budget position the State has ever found itself in. It is not just because of COVID-19, which is what the Government would like people to conveniently think. The budget was deteriorating far before anyone spoke the word COVID-19 in this state. It is because of their mismanagement.

They inherited a budget position from a Labor government with no net debt, with cash in the bank and they have squandered it. What do we have to show for it after 10 years? We have worsening education outcomes for our young people. We have nearly 60 000 people waiting on the specialist outpatient waiting list to access health treatment in this state. We have 4500 Tasmanian families, children waiting for affordable housing in this state. We have Tasmanian families grappling with some of the most challenging cost-of-living pressures they have faced in their lifetime. This is the legacy of this Liberal government. So, it is curious to me that we are having a debate today about how they are going to support our GBEs and state-owned companies if they find themselves in financial difficulty, given the financial difficulty this government has put the state in already.

I am interested to hear from the Treasurer, what has prompted this change today? Is it a change that has been initiated from advice through TASCORP, or from Treasury, or is it from the state-owned companies, the GBEs? Was a review undertaken that provided information to the Treasurer that led to this particular matter being brought before the parliament today? Does the Government have any concerns about the financial sustainability of any of the state's GBEs and state-owned companies? We know that some of them are carrying very large debt loads. I am interested to understand from the Treasurer whether any of those were the reason for them bringing this matter before the House today.

We have heard how the operation of some of our state-owned companies and GBEs is impacting our community, our economy. My colleagues have talked about the operations of Metro Tasmania and the minister's 'hands off' approach to dealing with the provision of public transport in our city and urban centres. At a time where people are grappling with cost of living challenges and services are cancelled because of a lack of support for drivers, the Government's response is to change the way services are structured so that there are fewer buses operating in Tasmania.

I have never heard of anything as ridiculous as dealing with a problem by pretending it did not exist in the first place. That is what this Government does time and again. If a bus does not come, you cannot be criticised for cancelling a service. This is typical of this Government. It pretends that things like ambulance ramping no longer exist because we now call it 'patient off load delays', or some other name.

The Government hides the reality from Tasmanians, just like it has hidden the true state of the Budget from Tasmanians by pretending that when it talks about the way the Government is going, it is talking about the economy, which is not the Government. That is the effort and endeavor of Tasmanians in small business, in medium and large businesses who are working incredibly hard, driving our economy. It is the efforts of mums and dads who are making investments to support small businesses that keep our communities vibrant and thriving. It is the efforts of companies like Hudson Civil Products, which stood with the Labor Party to speak about the fact that it would like to expand its operation but cannot access power.

Tasmania is a state that is well regarded for its ability to provide clean, renewable energy, but we are energy constrained under this Liberal Government. We are dealing with the climate challenge, which requires greater investment in renewable energy generation and a faster transition for our economy away from fossil fuels to help decarbonise our economy and our community. This Government cannot provide renewable energy to Tasmanian companies so they can grow and expand and provide jobs here.

That is happening on the watch of this Government. Tas Networks has told Hudson Civil Products, the Rodman Group, another example in your electorate of Bass, Mr Deputy Speaker, that it cannot provide them with access to either the transformers they need or the power they require so they can grow their businesses and employ more Tasmanians. How could it get to this point? The Government has failed to take an active interest in understanding how our economy works, an economy that they like to take credit for, in order to make sure that we have enough energy to grow jobs and to support industries in our state.

I have stood with a number of different businesses that are struggling under the policy settings of this Government, whether it is the lack of access to energy, which is a major handbrake on economic development in our state, or the inability to get support from this Government for the things they committed to, like Avebury Mine on the west coast. It was promised payroll tax relief by this Government, to support them to support 200 workers on the west coast. The Government has made promise after promise to the west coast.

We have seen major industries in our state, like the salmon industry, challenged by the policy settings of this Government. This Government does not support the salmon industry. This Government does not work with an industry that has a huge footprint in our regional communities, employing people directly in those communities, providing enormous economic benefit to those communities and to our overall state GSP. Instead, the Government has put the hand brake on them and their opportunity to continue to maintain their business viably and sustainably in our state.

This Government has walked away from the salmon industry. It has walked away from small and medium businesses that are looking to grow but cannot access power. It has walked away from the mining industry because the promises it made turn out to be hollow. It has left Tasmanians wondering what this Government actually stands for.

Tasmanians thought the Liberal Party supported business. Look at the key drivers of our economy and look at the way this Government has treated those industries and it paints a very different picture. Look at the uncertainty this Government has created for windfarm developments in this state. In the next week Robbins Island is having to defend its ability to operate and the Government is nowhere to be seen. The Government talks a big game when it comes to energy projects in this state. We have heard more of that today, whether it is Marinus, the north west transmission lines or Battery of the Nation. None of these things make any sense unless you install more generation on our island. This Government has not made it easy to do that.

We should be the clean, green renewable state that is proud of our sustainable industries and proud of our investment in renewable energy. Under this Government over the past 10 years we have a really poor track record of delivering. That is symptomatic of their lack of interest in doing something with the responsibility and the power they have as Government to take our state forward and to set us up for the future. They have sat on their hands for 10 years. They have been able to get away with their incompetent budget management because the federal government saved them with higher GST receipts than they ever expected to see. That is proven year after year in the budget documents. What do Tasmanians have to show for that?

The Government is now talking about imposing an efficiency dividend - \$300 million - which will come out of where? We do not know because the Government did not have the guts to tell Tasmanians how it was going to cut \$300 million out of the Tasmanian Budget. It told agencies to go away and come up with solutions. The Government has been in power for 10 years but still cannot manage to work collaboratively with agencies to understand how it can improve outcomes for Tasmanians and manage the budget at the same time.

Efficiency dividends are lazy tools to use. They do not improve productivity or outcomes for Tasmanians and do not boost morale in the workforce. The Government still has to explain how it is going to cut \$300 million out of the Tasmanian Budget when we are already seeing significant pressure in health, in housing, education, infrastructure projects promised but not delivered. We also have other challenges across our community.

The federal Treasurer recently launched the intergenerational report which tells us that Tasmania is ageing faster than any other state in the country. We have an ageing demographic, we have an ageing workforce, we have a Government that does not seem to be connecting the dots. It has a range of different strategies that do not talk to one another; whether it is the population strategy or the housing strategy, they are not aligning the different elements across different agencies to take a whole-of-government approach to drive outcomes for our state.

The Government is quite happy to leave it to somebody else. Half the time it hopes the federal government will save its skin. We saw that again over the last week with the federal government coming in to bail them out when it comes to the major energy projects this Government has talked about for 10 years. The state of this Budget is incredibly bad and it is difficult for us to understand how cutting the budget further is going to help Tasmania deal with some of those serious structural problems we see across our economy.

Mr Deputy Speaker, the Greens have proposed an amendment the minister has not had a chance to respond to yet. We will be moving into the Committee stage to deal with that amendment. We are interested to hear from the Treasurer about the Government's response to that. I am very keen to hear from the Treasurer about the reason for this bill in the first place:

whether there were any concerns the state-owned companies, GBEs or other Government entities with the current power to borrow were at risk of becoming insolvent or finding themselves with inability to repay their debt, that the Government felt was necessary to formalise the arrangements in this way. That is very serious and there should be transparency with the community about that, because each of these entities provides services to the Tasmanian community, the community relies upon them. If there is concern the Government may have about their ability to fulfil their obligations then they should be up-front with Tasmanians about that.

Before I finish I will touch on one more thing which is the way this amendment bill also deals with the Stadiums Tasmania Act. Obviously, the Stadiums Tasmania Act currently deals with two assets in the state, the Entertainment Centre in the south and the Silverdome in the north, with the ability to roll in future stadiums such as York Park and Bellerive as negotiated.

Of course, Macquarie Point is that elephant in the room for this Government when it comes to debt problems that they may yet have to explain to the community. There is not a single person in Tasmania who believes that project can be delivered for \$715 million at a time when we have seen expenses balloon with the rising inflation rates, the general cost of construction materials and labour increased such that a number of different infrastructure projects have outlined costs that have ballooned so greatly they can no longer afford to proceed with them.

The New Town hospital doubled in costs in just two years. That is a very recent example. It is in the same area where the Government is planning to build a stadium: a \$715 million stadium on a site of reclaimed land that is very unlikely to fit, given the requirements for the size of that stadium to be a roofed stadium situated next to Cenotaph and the RSL remains fiercely opposed to its location there. The Government is unable to explain, not only how they are going to pay for that infrastructure, but the associated infrastructure, the upgrades to transport, the upgrades to pedestrian access, the upgrades to the housing, the port infrastructure that were all promised as a part of the precinct upgrade, the Antarctic Division, the Truth and Reconciliation Park. The elements this Government has spoken about to be incorporated at that site comes within a neat budget of \$715 million we are told to believe, which is conveniently similar to the price that was estimated for the floating stadium just around the corner.

There is not a single person in our state who believes that project can be built for \$715 million. The Government needs to be able to explain how they are going to fund a project of that nature, how they are going to manage the inevitable cost blow-outs, because I note that Stadiums Tasmania is listed here. There will be a massive debt burden for either Stadiums Tasmania to manage or for the Government to manage on its books. The associated liability and repayments of interest on that debt, as well as the principle on that debt will be a burden for Tasmania and Tasmanian taxpayers for a very long time. It is not investing in productive infrastructure, like ports that are key for a state like ours where we are an island and we need to be able to access other places to trade. Its return on investment is appalling if you consider the business case for that particular project. There are so many other ways that we could be spending good public money to provide a greater return on investment to Tasmanian taxpayers, like the Launceston General Hospital redevelopment project that my colleague, the health spokesperson Anita Dow spoke about.

These have far higher merit when you consider the benefit they would offer to so many more thousands of people in our state. This is a Government that has got itself in a terrible mess, not just when it comes to this project but generally speaking, when it comes to a number of key infrastructure projects that it has not been able to explain how it will fund or how it will finance the repayments on debt. They are only the projects that we have talked about recently. There are a number of different projects that sit on the books of these companies, that our Government is now trying to amend legislation to make sure that if they find themselves in strife and unable to pay their debts, that there is a backup there from the state, which we presumed was always the case but this intends to codify that.

I understand we will be moving into Committee. I am not sure if there any further speakers on this bill but I will leave my contribution there. Given the very poor legislative agenda for this Government, it is always worth interrogating the matters they bring before the House because they have so few bills between them that you usually sniff a bit of a rat when something does get put on the blue for debate.

[5.22 p.m.]

Ms BUTLER (Lyons) - Mr Deputy Speaker, it is my pleasure to make some contributions towards the Tasmanian Public Finance Corporation Amendment Bill 2023. Just to reaffirm, my colleagues have stated that we support this bill but there are quite a number of questions that need to be answered by the Treasurer.

The underlying theme for me in wanting to understand more about the reasoning for this bill is also a little bit of trepidation. I know that when federal Treasurer, Dr Chalmers, came into government and sat down with the then new Prime Minister Anthony Albanese and looked at the mess that the Liberal Government had left behind them, they found one trillion dollars in debt. It was a government that had tried to blame everything on COVID-19 but it was an absolute mess before COVID-19.

I am concerned with the debt that has been forecast in your last Budget, that our new Treasurer - that could be within the next 18 months - will be left with the same style of debt as Treasurer Chalmers stated very publicly that he was left with. Having to come out as sensible Labor money managers because it is not Liberals that are good money managers, that is an absolute fallacy. It has been an absolute fallacy that the Australian public, for some reason, associated with the Liberal Party for decades. We know now that is absolute rubbish.

If you look at what your Government has contributed to Tasmania over the last 10 years, you have been extremely lucky with GST. You have been extremely lucky, especially with the last distribution of GST and one-off payments for the Bridgewater bridge, et cetera. You have been extremely lucky, but you have not been able to manage this economy properly. I cannot think of one point or one reform that this Government has implemented over the last 10 years. I cannot think of one reform. You can claim irrigation was yours but it is not. Irrigation was a Labor scheme and it was introduced by David Llewellyn. You know very well that was not you. There is nothing you have done to reform this economy. There is this amazing opportunity sitting here with our natural resources but what we have learned is that this Government is driving us into a phenomenal level of debt.

Once we come into Government we are going to be the people like Treasurer Chalmers who will have to mop up that mess. We will have to make the tough decisions you have not been able to make. When you come out with your weak efficiency dividends and cutting of

services and you are not honest about them at all and you lack complete transparency, I have a deep-seated fear, as do a lot of Tasmanians, that this Government is going to leave us in a huge amount of debt and it is debt that generations of Tasmanians will be paying off because when you came into government we had left you debt-free. That was a Labor government that had left you debt-free. That is a fact and the problem is 10 years later, we are looking potentially at a debt that is going to take us generations to pay off.

The other issue is this Government is hell-bent on putting us into even more debt. We do not mind debt if we know that debt is a good investment for our state, but not when you are talking about projects such as a stadium for \$715 million which you know will blow out astronomically. We have even had the Victorian Government cancel the Commonwealth Games because of the perceived infrastructure blowout. They know it is going to be too expensive to run the Commonwealth Games and they would prefer to put the people of Victoria ahead of their infrastructure program with the Commonwealth Games. That is what it boiled down to. If they can foresee cost blowouts, why does this Government insist on continuing on with works on this stadium and the Macquarie Point debacle as well? What an absolute mess.

We also know that the land that you want to build this stadium on is rectified land. We know the amount of money it is going to cost to do the remedial work on that land to be able to put that form of concrete structure, a 50-metre high concrete structure on ground that is really not going to be strong enough for it. Some of the experts are coming out and saying that it is not going to even fit. How much money have you wasted already and you have jeopardised Tasmania having an AFL football team because of this silly pipeline dream?

I do not know what your obsession with debt is but I do know it has been extremely disrespectful to the RSL and many veterans across Tasmania because it is not going to fit. You are going to dig into the escarpment. You are going to ruin our Cenotaph and that Cenotaph is a completely different argument. I respect the fact that the RSL has stated it does not have an opinion on whether or not you should have a stadium. It does not have an opinion on whether or not it should go there or whether or not a stadium should cost that amount of money. That is not their argument. Their argument is they do not want a stadium to impede their Cenotaph and you knew that. You knew that the whole way and you have not been consulting with them appropriately, we know that.

It is very important and one of the reasons why we are all talking today is because we are very concerned about what debt you are going to leave us when we come into Government to manage. We do have the skills to clean up your mess and we know that you have been racing around using public money for your own public relations, trying to get yourself re-elected by spending thousands of dollars on Font PR which is just ridiculous. Did you not have enough people in your media team? What is there? More than 50 people in your media team but let us outsource it to Font PR, shall we. Is that true? Quite a lot of people sitting in your media team.

Ms Archer - Try five.

Ms BUTLER - You have five. Is that for yourself?

Ms Archer - No. I do not have a media adviser.

Ms BUTLER - My point is if you are outsourcing, you are using taxpayer money to prop up your Government with your PR messaging. You cannot even follow orders of the House in providing costing information, so no wonder we are all getting nervous about what kind of debt you are going to leave generation after generation of Tasmanians. We do not have a massive population and we are around 65 per cent reliant on GST revenue, so it is important that we ask these questions today.

I was in St Marys last week. I went to the St Marys Hospital and was dismayed that you have chosen to outsource GP services in a public hospital to a private contractor. Is that the best solution you could come up with, to privatise a public hospital? You had 18 months between the Premier, who had that time as Minister for Health, and the new Minister for Health, Guy Barnett, who stood up in front of the people of St Marys and said, 'I have only been the Health minister for four weeks, do not blame me'. What a crock. I was so embarrassed for the people of St Marys.

I am pleased that there is going to be private contractor GPs who will work in that public hospital. The whole situation could have been avoided; it could have been managed. This Government knew about this issue for 18 months prior. You had Dr Cyril Latt, a highly esteemed doctor, with over 1600 patients for St Marys and surrounds, the Fingal Valley, going to the Department of Health, talking to the Liberal Party about how he was burning out. He was doing 80 hours a week and still is doing 80 hours a week, and not able to cope but feeling like he needed to stick around to do the right thing by the people of St Marys and surrounds. There were 18 months.

When the gentleman from Ochre Health stood to speak the other day he said he was only contacted a week-and-a-half prior to that meeting. You have had a doctor screaming out for assistance and nothing happened - there is no management of that at all. How much is that going to cost as well? What kind of debt is that going to incur privatising a public hospital to Ochre Health? I know that is a solution but it is a bandaid solution; it is not a long-term solution. It is a solution to get you over the next 18 months. It is all throw money at it, make sure the public relations looks okay then we will just keep pretending that everything is okay. That is all they are really worried about.

We are worried about what debt, what mess like federal Treasurer Jim Chalmers had, we will have to clean up. I do not want to be personal about this but I do not think the skill is on your side of the room to manage the economy well in Tasmania, otherwise you would have seen innovation in the last 10 years. We have the people with the credentials and the skill on this side of the room. You know that and that is why you are so threatened, and you should be threatened. Your net debt will balloon by 46 per cent and borrowings by 68 per cent over the next four years. That is the fact of what is being forecast. We have a small population and we know that without investment in innovation, we are not going to be able to pay off the kind of debt this Government is racking up because you are irresponsible, you are not good money managers and you do not have the skill to manage the economy. That is what it comes down to. As I said, we do have the skills to manage an economy, even though we are concerned about the huge levels of debt you are going to leave for us to clean up.

Many people on the other side of the room do not understand what it looks like out there in the real world of Tasmania. When was the last time you went doorknocking in a disadvantaged area in Tasmania? I can tell you there are many private rental properties in Tasmania that are not up to the minimum standards. You have black mould, you have damp,

you have heaters that do not work, you have homes that basically need to be knocked down yet you have landlords charging \$500 to \$600 a fortnight and tenants who are too scared to say anything to anyone. They do not want me to do anything, they do not want to go to the Tenants' Union, they do not want to make a fuss with their property agents. They have told the owner and nothing has been done about it but they are too concerned that they are going to be thrown out of that property because there is nowhere else to go.

These are the kinds of investments that a good government would make. They would make sure those minimum standards are continuously audited. They would make sure that when new properties are turned over there is some form of responsibility that would make sure that, yes, the place is tidy, that the place should not be condemned. That is what good governments do. That is what the Victorian and New South Wales governments have done but not the Tasmanian Government.

A member - Everything is going really well in Victoria. How are those Commonwealth Games going?

Ms BUTLER - The Victorian Government has a lot more idea around investment than you lot. I have never seen such a bad bunch of money managers in my life and I am sure that is how you are going to be remembered. I cannot think of one reform that this Government has achieved in 10 years, one reform that is an investment in our state. You cannot even manage a bus service. We do not have trains or trams - we do not have any backup. The bus service is the only public transport you offer. Public transport is not something you make money out of. It is a service to your community, it is what people pay taxes for. You cannot even manage a public transport system. 'Oh, it is Metro's fault, it is Metro's fault.' You guys are in charge of Metro. It is your responsibility. Why have you cut so many services?

I was talking to a legal secretary in Old Beach last weekend and she is looking at selling her home in Old Beach and trying to rent something closer to town because she is late for work all the time or cannot get in there because her express was cancelled. Then she has other times where the bus just does not turn up. She and her partner worked their butts off to save for that house. A bus does not turn up - that is what happens when you do not do your job properly. There is no other place in Australia where the people would stand it for a second if their public transport system was not working properly. You do not understand how offensive it is to the Tasmanian people. I know many of them have given up on you. They say, 'Oh well, it is just the Government, they are hopeless, of course', but you really need to be able to manage a public transport system. It is a basic 101 of governing. I hope you can get that organised.

I also hope that when we come into government that you have at least left some truthful documentation for us to be able to work from to be able to fix up this mess you have made. There is a way you can invest and that is what you are meant to do. You are meant to invest in innovation and turn this place into what it should be, instead of siphoning off the top and making sure you get elected every three or four years. It is not good enough.

I look forward to the reasoning that the Treasurer will provide for why we need to create more avenues for more debt. I hope you are not pulling an ATM on some of these GBEs and that is what this is all about. Maybe it is not. Call me cynical but the experiences over the last 10 years is that we are seeing disaster after disaster.

[5.39 p.m.]

Mr FERGUSON (Bass - Treasurer) - Mr Deputy Speaker, I appreciate the extraordinary and wholesale support for this legislation and for three hours of quality and stirring debate. I appreciate the thoughts that have been shared. I exclude the Greens from this but it surprises me that the Labor Party, having been clear on numerous occasions that they are supporting this bill, on the other hand are saying 'but we need to know why the Government is doing it'. Why would you support it if you do not understand what the merits of the bill are?

I had hoped that without being so partisan and so juvenile with the personal politics that have been brought on in here by members of the Opposition that you might have been able to recognise two things.

First of all, this is about contemporising and modernising an arrangement for guarantees provided by the Crown for government-owned businesses towards the government-owned lender, TASCORP, to get away from case-by-case bespoke arrangements and to transparently provide those on the public record. Not just for the couple of entities that are currently in the Treasurer's Annual Financial Report that are subject to a guarantee but all entities that are receiving borrowings from TASCORP, not just being guaranteed, but will now be documented.

If I may be so blunt with the Labor Party, it occurs to me that they wanted to have a really long debate today. I do not mind that at all because I love this House and I love what it stands for and I love that we are here to do a job. I will stay all night if we need to.

Mr Winter - The same as us.

Mr FERGUSON - I will be there all night with you, Mr Winter. I am all for it. It occurs to me that you really did not have many arguments to make when I heard the repeated message, 'tell us why you are doing it now?'. Perhaps Dr Broad is aware of what I am about to say and I could appreciate that others may not be as aware if they are not carrying the shadow portfolio. I foreshadowed this at budget Estimates in June and we discussed it over the table while the bill had been presented to the House. It is not a surprise and it should not be. It is not a radical new departure.

Yes, I will call you a cynic, Ms Butler; you said, 'Call me a cynic', well I will. When you said, incorrectly, it is more avenues for more debt, that is wrong. That is not what this bill is about and I will go through the themes that were raised during the debate and address those. It is not at all about that: it is about transparency of borrowing. It is about sending a clear message to the business community that we are standing behind the businesses that we own on behalf of Tasmanians.

One thing that perhaps has been a little missed in the debate is that it also demonstrates that we are standing by the Tasmanian Public Finance Corporation, also known as TASCORP, as the lender. I will go through the range of issues. I have generally been able to group them, not by the person in the order that they raised them but by the theme or the nature of the question. I will do my best to answer those questions.

Eighty per cent of what has been spoken about by members opposite was not related to this bill and clearly shows that they came in with a strategy to take up as much time as they could. We have extended the House so that we get the bill passed. I hope it was not because

the Labor Party was trying to stop the bill passing today. Call me a cynic. I suspect that there is some strange desire to slow the House down.

I will address those and we will not be deterred. It is important legislation. It is not urgent legislation but it is important legislation. I want the legislation passed in time so that the next Treasurer's Annual Financial Report can provide this additional information that I am seeking to do. By the way, on the matter of transparency, I hope I do not have to boast about this but since I have been Treasurer I have been very specific and very deliberate in providing a level of information that previously has not been brought to the House. For example, your supplementary appropriation bills. When I brought them forward, I have gone through them in all of the detail because it occurred to me, looking at past debates on supplementary appropriation bills, that while the information was inevitably sought and provided during the debate, why not just provide it up front? I have been doing that.

The Treasurer's Annual Financial Report: I felt the same way about our borrowings and in response, I might just cut to the chase in respect of why now? Let me address that. I could have said this earlier in the debate, I would have loved to have done so - it might have saved a few people being made to come in here and talk for 30 minutes.

In 2022, prompted by evolving guarantee of borrowing requirements to deliver government policy initiatives, Treasury undertook a review. There you go - I was asked if there was a review. There was a review, and it was done last year, so I hope that that addresses that question. Treasury did a review into the bespoke case-by-case guarantee arrangements; the review of the arrangements as they applied to government businesses and other government entities with the power to borrow. As part of this review, a number of options were considered, including the use of individual deeds of guarantee, individual letters of comfort or guarantee, broad-based letters of comfort, and guarantees in legislation - all, arguably, legitimate options.

The Government has decided that we will pursue the guarantee in legislation, and I do that on good advice. I do my best to follow advice, to take advice. I do not always have to agree with advice, but you should always take advice.

The review found that an enduring, automatic legislative guarantee of borrowings from TASCORP by government businesses and other government entities with the power to borrow would be the most effective, consistent, and efficient way to provide government support for TASCORP's lending to relevant organisations. So, for the host of people who asked that question and who now are not here to hear the answer: that is the answer. I hope that is helpful.

How will the process be more streamlined? A couple of people, including Dr Broad, raised this question. I have a bit of information here that I hope will assist. Current deeds of guarantee require a detailed process involving the development of a bespoke deed of guarantee for each individual entity. We know this; it is a time-consuming and complex process, and is required to ensure the deed is legally sound. Through legislation, we can achieve the same outcome where borrowings can be guaranteed, but also appropriately limited.

In terms of process, it is proposed that borrowing limits to be determined by the Treasurer will be established by the following process: first, initial limits at the commencement of the legislation on 1 July 2023 will be based on the limits that are currently in place, including those reflected in existing guarantees and letters of comfort. That would be the starting position. Relevant organisations will write to the Treasurer, seeking a change to their approved

borrowing limit, providing supporting information and documentation, including project-specific information as is relevant. Some, of course, may well not be seeking any change.

Treasury will consult with TASCORP on the proposed limit change, leveraging TASCORP's established processes and policies, with TASCORP to then provide advice on its assessment of the entity's credit worthiness and borrowing capacity to the Treasurer.

Just a quick departure: the comment was made earlier that the secretary of the department is also the Chair of TASCORP. That has been the case in the past. In paying tribute to the now departed secretary, Mr Tony Ferrall, I am sure we all agree, has been an exceptional public servant to our state; he has been a wonderful support to me in the year-and-a-half I have been Treasurer, and a wonderful support to our state. He was the Chair of TASCORP and members may be curious to know that he is still the Chair of TASCORP today because I saw fit to invite him to stay on in that role until his term concludes.

Mr Winter - I think Don Challen might have done the same thing when he finished up.

Mr FERGUSON - I did not know that. Thank you. So, it is not currently the case that the acting Secretary of Treasury serves as the Chair of TASCORP. We will review and consider those things at the appropriate juncture but I felt no cause at all to discontinue Mr Ferrall's term as Chair of TASCORP.

In the next step in the process, Treasury will provide advice to the Treasurer on the limit, taking into account advice received from TASCORP and other information, including consideration of the whole-of-state debt position and government infrastructure priorities.

Treasury will engage with TASCORP in relation to an annual review of individual entity limits. Following the passage of the bill, further consideration will be given to the use of a Treasurer's Instruction or other governance documentation to support the required processes. That was not in my second reading speech, but I hope that that is helpful, particularly for the shadow treasurer.

I was asked, what does it mean that the guarantee will only be called on as a last resort? Will a GBE be sold if a guarantee is called upon?

Dr Broad - That is not exactly what I asked. You talked about other steps. What are those other steps before the debt is called in?

Mr FERGUSON - Under the terms of its lending to its clients, TASCORP may hold security against those borrowings in the form of assets of the client - that is a may, not a must. There are other options that TASCORP can consider including restructuring lending agreements. That will be potentially a step. Remember in my second reading speech I talked about it as a last resort option for the guarantee to be called upon. These and other options would be exhausted before a guarantee would be called up.

To conclude, yes, there is no intention, nor is this an intended path with this legislation. It is not what it is here for a government business to be sold even in the event that the guarantee is called upon.

Dr Broad - Assets of the entity - what about something like that?

Mr FERGUSON - That would be a hypothetical question. It would not change the current arrangements either. If a business would put up a form of asset as a form of security on a borrowing, that may also currently be in play, if in the hypothetical scenario that business was having difficulty meeting its borrowing repayments.

Also, in respective credit ratings, the Government's new Fiscal Strategy, which by the way was recently praised by Moody's in its recent credit opinion with regards to Tasmania.

Ms Finlay - It is only good if you take notice of it.

Dr BROAD - Thank you, Ms Finlay, you criticise the Fiscal Strategy.

Ms Finlay - No, I did not.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER - Order.

Mr FERGUSON - Moody's have praised it in their recent credit opinion.

Ms Finlay - Do not put into *Hansard* things that are not true, Treasurer. I ask that he withdraw that, Mr Deputy Speaker.

Mr FERGUSON - I certainly will not be withdrawing that. You can challenge me all you like. It would be wise if you did not interject all the time.

Ms Finlay - He is putting in *Hansard* things that are not true.

Mr FERGUSON - If we did not lead with our chins so often, we would not have these problems. The Fiscal Strategy released in the 2023-24 Budget outlines the Government would consider the establishment of a minimum credit rating requirement for certain government businesses. Treasury is currently working with TASCORP to develop a process in relation to this proposal, including how this will be reported annually in the budget. Where such credit ratings are established in the future, this will form part of the information to be considered by the Treasurer in determining borrowing limits.

Any payment made under the guarantee is reserved by law. Members will have noted that in the legislation, in the bill itself, and it is automatically appropriated from the Public Account. However, the Treasurer will have the discretion to determine that any payment made under the legislation is repayable by the borrower to the Public Account, subject to terms and conditions determined by the Treasurer. I do regard that as a hypothetical, but it is one we must recognise in the legislation and is part of the reason it is there.

I forget who it was, but somebody asked me if I have any concerns or if Treasury has any particular concerns about any existing borrowings by GBEs. No, we do not. We want to speak well of our businesses and make sure we promote confidence in government-owned businesses in the community, so I am very hasty in making that point in respect of whoever asked that question.

On the issue raised by Mr Bayley regarding the proposed amendment, I note that is outlined in the second reading speech. The maximum guaranteed borrowing amount for each relevant organisation will be disclosed in the Treasurer's annual financial report. That is

something we have made clear as a decision of government, as a commitment and as a consequence of this legislation. I hope you took the time, Mr Bayley, to take a look at last year's TAFR. I do not know if you had that opportunity. On page 101, you will see that only TasPorts is currently listed there. They are the only organisation as at that day that had had - and there is 'other' with a much smaller amount, which does not have any entities named, but 'other' is listed - TasPorts is the only GBE that was listed; the only state-owned company was TasPorts.

In future, your TAFR will see all of the government entities, all of them, whether they have received a bespoke, one-off deed of guarantee or not because they will all be guaranteed, and the intention here is that you will see a full list of all entities. The power behind that is not the amendment that you have espoused the need for. The power behind that is the Australian Accounting Standards because as a result, this legislation seeks to automatically deem that all of those borrowings to their maximum amount approved by the Treasurer will be deemed guaranteed; therefore, they will all flow into TAFR.

Mr Bayley - So there is no harm embedding it in statute.

Mr FERGUSON - I see no harm in your amendment. That is why it will be difficult for me to argue against it, but it is totally unnecessary. You could equally argue, Mr Bayley, a whole range of things that are not specified in the FMA but which are part of the Accounting Standards and which do appear in the Treasurer's annual report. You could move an amendment for all of them, but they would all be redundant. I cannot argue against something we are already doing and which we will continue to do, but we will get to that perhaps during the clauses. I hope that is useful.

Specifically, the maximum guaranteed borrowing amount for each relevant organisation will be reported annually as a quantifiable contingent liability of the General Government Sector in the notes to the financial statements in the TAFR. This would be consistent with the disclosure of the existing deeds of guarantees currently in place for some government businesses. The dollar amounts will be disclosed as well, in a note to the financial statements in the - as I referred to, actually in the 2021-22 TAFR, TasPorts' guarantee has been disclosed in note 8.2(a), which is referred to on page 101.

These disclosures and these reports are reviewed by the Auditor-General, an independent statutory officer who checks Treasury's work in this respect. The level of the guarantee as at 30 June will also be reported in the respective financial statements of each entity. So, double booked, reported in TAFR and reported in their individual financial statements. This approach will ensure that there is complete transparency in relation to the maximum borrowing limits that exist as at 30 June in each financial year. Again, this will be subject to review by the Auditor-General. Can I again remind the House that currently TAFR only lists guaranteed borrowings that have received a special letter or deed of guarantee, and so it is very limited and as a result of these changes, you will get a complete list indicating not just for GBEs but for state-owned companies and other listed entities. They will all be demonstrated in there.

I think it was Mr Bayley who asked about TasWater. TasWater is not part of the state sector. That is the simple answer. The intention of the bill is to support the borrowings from entities that do form part of the state sector. While the government holds a very small equity share or stake in TasWater, the majority is owned by local government authorities and so the

guarantee provision in section 26 of the Water and Sewerage Corporation Act reflects this ownership.

Mr Bayley - Is there another mechanism that you can provide a guarantee for TasWater?

Mr FERGUSON - No, we will not be - the view is not that we would stand by the borrowings of a business that we do not own on behalf of the Tasmanian community.

I also bring to the notice of members that the guarantee - and I am sorry, I do not recall who raised it - only relates to borrowings from TASCORP. There was a question: what about borrowings that a government-owned entity might take from a non-TASCORP lender? They are forbidden from doing so. They are not allowed to. That is by order of Michael Aird, former treasurer. He made an order under the Tasmanian Public Finance Corporation Act 1985 in 2009. That order takes effect today. Borrowing is required only to be made from TASCORP. There are some very minor exceptions to that: short-term overdraft accounts, for example, from commercial retail banks, but that is an order that applies right now. That was gazetted in July 2009 and continues to this day. It would not be the Government's intention to change that.

I have canvassed the questions by theme. This really is about transparency. Mr O'Byrne asked how it is more transparent. I hope my answer does canvass that because at the moment members would have to search through multiple reports to get a complete view of borrowings and guaranteed borrowings.

I appreciate the free advice that has been freely shared from members across the Chamber in respect of broader economic and financial matters. I do not feel that this is the debate for me to respond to those, but I am tempted. You cannot sustain an argument that on the one hand the Government is spending too much money while on the other hand, and in the same breath, say 'but you need to spend more money'. I have heard that today and it surprises me. It makes me wonder if people remember what they said only 30 seconds earlier. That was said by more than one member of the Opposition. Mr Bayley, your hands are clean on this one, but you cannot argue the converse principles against each other in the same debate and in the same breath. You just cannot do it.

We will continue to very carefully manage not just our financial position as a government, we will work so closely with the Tasmanian community, including and especially the business community, which I specifically thanked in my Budget speech for the fantastic work it has done to work with the Government to build the economic strength that we enjoy today.

Yes, there are challenges, particularly inflation. It has been the number one drag on the national and international economies. We are not immune from that. I have made the point many times in the delivery of the recent Budget that we have charted a course through those difficult economic headwinds. We will have to maintain a close focus on prudence and discipline, and making decisions that leverage good economic outcomes. For example, our energy projects, where we have that ambition not just to release energy potential but also to release potential in our economy, right around our state and for generations to come.

This House can expect me as Treasurer to return to this House again and again in response to the commission of inquiry's recommendations to protect children. You will not find me apologising for that when those days come. It will put further pressure on the Budget. It will

cost money, but this side of the House will endeavour to carefully and sensibly respond to the recommendations of the commission of inquiry. This can only mean more resources in needful areas to protect Tasmanian children. They will be decisions that this House has to make, and they will be decisions that we will work through. As 25 MPs we will work through that together. We all have that shared commitment. There will be a price to be paid for that. When those opportunities come forward for us to have those debates, I know that they will be all held in complete good will as we have that shared commitment to Tasmania's children.

I return to where I started. I appreciate the support for the legislation from the Greens and from the Opposition. I commend the bill to the House. I have more to say on the amendment; if the member is satisfied, we might not need to get there, but I appreciate the support around the Chamber. Thank you.

Bill read the second time.

Bill read the third time.

ADJOURNMENT

[6.05 p.m.]

Mr FERGUSON (Bass - Deputy Premier) - Mr Deputy Speaker, I move -

That the House do now adjourn.

Bruny Island - Emergency Services

Racing Integrity

[6.05 p.m.]

Mr WINTER (Franklin) - Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise tonight to talk about a couple of issues in my community.

Bruny Island has always had issues in making sure we have the right services over there, particularly health and education. Obviously there are a number of other services that are also critical to them. The president of the Bruny Island Community Association, Tammy Price, wrote to the Premier and then Health minister on Monday, 22 May at 12.08 p.m. and copied in fellow members for Franklin, Nic Street and Dean Young, about medical responses on Bruny Island. In that email she raised two distinct and important issues. The first was asking for the reinstatement of an all-terrain vehicle for Bruny Island. She talked about an all-terrain four-wheel-drive ambulance on Bruny Island. The previous four-wheel-drive ambulance had been removed due to it being considered not fit-for-purpose. It was not replaced. Her email says the provision of an all-terrain, four-wheel-drive ambulance to Bruny is crucial, and due to the unavailability of this service the risk to patient lives is unacceptable.

She said:

Recently there were incidents at Cloudy Bay Beach and Jetty Beach, for example, that required access via an all-terrain vehicle.

I understand there have been significant medical issues that have not been properly dealt with because there has not been an all-terrain vehicle on Bruny Island. She also said a second on-call nurse was required.

She says in her email:

We also raised the concern of a second on-call nurse being removed from Bruny Island. As has been the experience in the past, when an incident occurs on Bruny, mainland support can be some time away and it has been left to on-island resources to respond.

Having a second on-call nurse available should multiple calls come in at once is necessary and should not be removed as a cost-saving factor. The second nurse provides back-up to the paramedic and on-call nurse and provides reassurance to patients that they are not being left without critical support.

Our population is ageing and the second on-call nurse can, and does provide critical support in times of need. It is not easy to seek medical support on Bruny and the nursing staff provide a first-class service in consultation with doctor's advice via telephone.

By doing so this allows the lower risk cases to be dealt with on-island, rather than being taken off in the ambulance and increasing the ramping effects at the Royal Hobart Hospital, taking the pressure off our hospitals.

Whilst it has been mentioned at a recent Bruny Island Community Health advisory meeting that the removal of the second nurse was not a financial decision, it could not be confirmed that the cost was not incorporated into the 2023-24 Budget.

On behalf of the Bruny Island Community Association we request that these two critical life-saving issues be addressed and confirmed without further delay.

That email was sent 106 days ago. There has been no response from the Government. No response from the Premier. No response from the then Health minister and no response from the new Health minister. It is extremely disappointing that matters like this, some three months later, remain outstanding and without a response from the Government.

I cannot say how critical it is that we have the right services on Bruny Island. We have seen examples of people not being able to get the right medical services. We have seen examples only at the end of 2018 where the right fire service equipment could not get onto Bruny Island because there were not the facilities and there was not the right equipment on the island.

It is one thing to have these issues but it is another to have them raised with you and then just not respond. It is simply not good enough. It is embarrassing for the Government that it has not. I urge the Government, the new Minister for Health, the Premier, to respond to a constituent and the members for Franklin, particularly those from the Government side to ensure that a proper response is finally given.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I also want to raise the issue of the minister for Racing still having not released the Murrphy Review, which we have been waiting months for. This is a response from the most serious allegations of race fixing and animal welfare breaches that could be raised in Tasmanian racing or racing anywhere. The industry has been desperately waiting for a response to this. We have already had one delay, then we had a further delay and an interim report has been provided to this minister and yet he has still not released it. This minister needs to release that information as soon as possible. The industry needs to deal with these matters quickly and responsibly but the delay in releasing it continues to add to the uncertainty within the harness racing industry.

We have had the outstanding success on the track of Magician on Saturday night coming fourth. It does not sound like much maybe to people around here but it was a fantastic result for the Rattray family - a fantastic result for them financially. It is \$100 000 to come fourth, and nothing to be sneezed at. A great result on the track. Things are going well for our racing fraternity on the track but we need to make sure we get these issues within the Office of Racing Integrity in particular sorted out off the track so that we can continue to have a strong Tasmanian racing industry. The continued hold up in this so-called independent review that has taken place while the Director of Racing stays in his place is causing harm and distress to racing participants. It is causing harm and distress to the workforce within the racing industry and this simply cannot continue.

We have the Murrphy Review which is still not completed. We have the Monteith Review which has not been implemented. We have an investigation into the leading trainer of greyhounds. We had an announcement today that the leading thoroughbred trainer has lost his licence. There are a lot of things off the track that this Government needs to sort out. I am calling on this minister to finally release this report, the interim report at least, so that we can start to rebuild the trust in the Office of Racing Integrity, the trust in the racing authorities and trust in this Liberal Government that it has the back of the racing industry.

There is a big question mark about whether this Liberal Government has got the back of the racing industry, particularly on the north west and whether the Government is going to honour its commitment to that north west track and whether it is going to build a track for the harness racing fraternity up there who desperately need it, and who had it taken away by the Liberal Government only a couple of years ago.

Echoview - Southern Ocean Research

Book Week - Waverly Primary School

Fish Farming - Macquarie Harbour

[6.13 p.m.]

Ms FINLAY (Bass) - Mr Speaker, I rise this evening on adjournment to raise a number of matters.

In the last couple of weeks, I had the opportunity to meet with board members of the Blue Economy CRC - an incredible entity that is working across the world, leading research, much of which has originated in Tasmania, and showing that from Tasmania you can do anything and have a tremendous impact globally. At this event, I had the opportunity to meet people

I had not met before and learn about a company in Tasmania that has been here for 30 years that I had not heard of.

I had the pleasure of meeting with representatives from Echoview and I have since followed up from that first meeting with an onsite meeting just this week with Tim and Brett from Echoview - an incredible organisation in Tasmania. They are self-funded, working in fisheries all around the world and use audio echo sound to understand the sustainability of fisheries and they do that right here from Tasmania. With some growth coming shortly they are likely to have 30 employees, most here in Tasmania. They have opened an office in London and are looking to invest in onsite resources in the United States.

Tasmania is globally known and regarded as the gateway to the southern oceans and the gateway to Antarctic research. They are keeping Tasmania on the map and doing an extraordinary amount of work across the world - I am sure they will not mind me revealing that 95 per cent of their work is done outside Australia and that says something about the expertise and the quality here of the software development that they offer to fisheries governance, whether it be government or whether it be organisations all around the world so I just wanted to shout out the team at Echoview to the founders, to the current managers and the people working in that organisation. There is nothing more magic than meeting people in Tasmania who are at the top of their field, best in their game, doing it from right here and continuing to demonstrate that anything is possible from Tasmania, that the global replication can be shared and understood and great work that happens here and it is nothing less than inspiring.

I had the opportunity to participate in Book Week last week. I visited Waverley Primary School and was invited to share a story, which I did. I had the opportunity to read to the younger classes a book called *There's No Such Book*. I do not know if anyone in this Chamber is aware of this book but there would be many in this Chamber aware of the challenges that can present around the expectations and pressures of participating in some of the school activities where maybe you might not be confident to dress up, maybe you might not be confident in your reading abilities and therefore not have a book that you can take to school. Back in the day everyone used to make and make do and papier mache their costumes and then there was sort of a chapter in life where people were buying things.

This is an incredible book and I share it because there may be families who would like to use this book in the future. The story goes through a parent and a child preparing for Book Week the next day and trying to decide what they will wear and what book they will take. Aware that there were not a lot of resources for the costume and not a lot of books that might match the passion of the child, the mother created stories to share with their child and suggest that maybe they could dress up as someone to do with space, or a dinosaur or different creative ideas, but the young person was like, 'Well, that is not a book.' Anyway they decided to sleep on it and overnight the parent made a book. The parent put a title and illustrations and created a story that matched the resources of the household where a costume could be made that the child would be comfortable with, they would have a book to take to school and they could confidently and comfortably go to school and participate in Book Week.

I loved the book and it was a new book to me. I loved the experience of being on site at Waverley Primary School and sharing that with the children and hearing their ideas about what they were going to do and how they were going to prepare for Book Week. I loved completely independently and unbeknownst to that, hearing a story of a young boy in a family who in fact made his own book to match his passion and what he wanted to do to present to Book Week at

his school. I loved that in that short moment it created a reality just in our local community in Launceston. So a shout out to the benefits of Book Week and the schools and the communities and the families that participate. It is something special.

Finally I want to reflect on an incredible opportunity Mr Winter and I had last week when we visited the beautiful west coast of Tasmania. In fact there are a number of Labor members who were on the north, north-west and the west coast of Tasmania last week with a number of industry visits. Mr Winter and I were able, at the invitation of Tassal, to travel across to Strahan and to go on water at Macquarie Harbour to see firsthand the fish farms that grow salmon in Macquarie Harbour.

It is a bit like going out on Storm Bay out of Hobart, going out from the hub where companies share resources on site in Strahan, going out on the water which I might add was a spectacular still day. There had been horrendous weather arriving and I was not quite sure if we would get through with the terrible weather. In fact there were trees over the road that had to be cut down for access to be provided to the west coast. When we arrived in Strahan the sky opened up and the sun shone down for almost the three hours that we were on the water and it was a beautiful way to experience the vastness of Macquarie Harbour.

One of the reasons we were there is there has been a lot of commentary recently around the Maugean skate in the Macquarie Harbour and we wanted to go see firsthand how the salmon companies operate. I want to shout out to the team that took us out on the water and say thank you. It was wonderful to see the different companies and where they are staged and situated in the harbour, how they interact, how they work together and what an extraordinary industry it is.

Child Sex Abuse - Speech by Keelie McMahon

[6.20 p.m.]

Ms O'BYRNE (Bass) - Mr Speaker, I rise to talk about an event that took place in Launceston last week, where Laurel House and some members of parliament, including Independent member, Lara Alexander, Bridget Archer and I were part of supporting an event that was very well attended across the parliamentary divide. I am going to read one of the speeches into the *Hansard*. I flag that for anyone for whom these kinds of conversations are difficult and if anyone is distressed by it, to seek support.

This was the speech given by Keelie McMahon. The speeches were incredibly brave and moving overall but Keelie has given permission for this speech to be read in parliament:

I am speaking today as a voice for myself and those who cannot speak. I want to bring awareness to institutional child sex abuse in Tasmania and what needs to be done to put an end to it. I was seven when my perpetrator first went to my mum and said, 'She's beautiful, you raised a beautiful daughter'. I was eight when I started playing netball, where he was the first aid man, a sport that I loved so dearly. I was 11 when he started introducing me as his special girl and told people he had a special place in his heart for me. I was 12 when I started going on four-wheel drive trips with him, a passion I still have to this day. I was 14 when my innocence was taken by a man who swore to do no harm and protect me. My childhood was taken from me and replaced

with a lifetime of unimaginable trauma. I am only one of many Tasmanians who have had their childhoods replaced with trauma at the hands of those who swore to protect us.

Azra was 12 months old when she became a ward of the state. She was sent to live with a foster family, like many children who enter the system, but she was never checked on and that would end up being detrimental to her. The physical and sexual abuse she suffered from the age of five at the hands of her foster family is something that she will never recover from. Her abusers knew exactly how to speak to her, they groomed her into believing they loved her. It altered the trajectory of her life forever. Her innocence was taken from her by those who swore to protect her.

Zoe Duncan was 11 when she went to hospital to receive treatment for a medical condition she had received care for multiple times in her life. While receiving treatment, she was raped by a doctor. Her trauma from this event engulfed her life. Zoe fought until going to the hospital was no longer an option for her, as the trauma and triggers were too much to bear. We lost a beautiful woman who was loved so deeply by everyone who knew her to a trauma that she should not have had. Her innocence was taken from her by a man who swore to do no harm and protect her.

But these stories are not rare or isolated. Abuse continues to happen in most institutions in Tasmania - Ashley Youth Detention Centre, the Education Department, the Health Department, and out-of-home care, also known as foster care. These institutions responsible for helping raise and protect the next generation are inflicting a lifetime of trauma onto children who do not deserve it. Right now, Ashley Youth Detention Centre still holds children who are at high risk of abuse. Why? Why is a centre that has been found to be physically, mentally and sexually abusing children allowed to stay open? 'Oh, but the naughty children need to be punished', I hear people say. Wrong. These children need help. They do not need to be punished for their trauma, they need support for their trauma, and this also protects them from further abuse.

A lot of children from AYDC, actually over 95 per cent, come from foster care, a system that has had 439 confessions from children about sexual abuse in the last eight years. That is one a week for the last eight years, and that is only the ones who have reported, because who will believe a child, right? Children are being removed from their birth parents who are deemed to be dangerous and being given to just as dangerous foster parents because in Tasmania there were no standards that foster parents had to go by to look after our state's most vulnerable until recently. But even then, the standards are not enforced and there is so much more that could be done to protect children.

The commission of inquiry has come to an end. It has been four years since I made my first statement to police about the abuse I suffered at the hands of a Tasmanian nurse. I never imagined the path this journey would take. I strongly believed my abuse was isolated to myself and a couple of others.

Little did I know that through the release of *The Nurse* podcast, a massive web of lies, corruption and abuse would be revealed, hidden in plain sight in my home state, a web that would be thoroughly investigated by a commission of inquiry.

The commissioners have looked deeply and thoroughly into all the stories of those who came forward. I strongly believe that the commissioners have done their absolute best to investigate and help put an end to the horrid abuse children all around the state have suffered. What is important now is the action that our Government takes in relation to the recommendations from the final report. The report is just the beginning. We need urgent and substantive commitment from our Government if we are going to address this issue in our state. We have already seen the establishment of the Arch centres in Tasmania to respond to victim/survivors of sexual violence and we need so much more.

Some things I feel strongly about that need to change include: foster carers need to undergo specialised training and have strong standards to abide by; Ashley Youth Detention Centre needs to be shut now, not in a few years; child safety needs to be made a priority in all institutions in Tasmania. Professional health staff need the same training that is offered to nurses in primary health, including body boundary consent to private and public parts education. Mandatory annual grooming training in every industry that has any sort of overlap with children. All those responsible for allowing this to happen and protecting those who abuse children must be held to account by the full force of the law. Reports of any magnitude that relate to children must result in termination of employment and thorough investigation. Children a priority always. Until these actions are underway we will still see more victims of child sexual abuse in institutions.

The responsibility rests with our governments to be the drivers of change to protect this current generation of children and young people, and more generations to come. As a community, we need to work together to ensure our Government is accountable. We owe it to our children.

This is the voice of a victim/survivor, Keelie. We owe it to all of those who we have vowed to listen but also to act.

Another thing occurred on that day for members who were there - and I note that Dr Woodruff, Ms Finlay, Mrs Alexander, Mr Barnett and Ms Ogilvie were all there. All Stitched Up is a group of the northern suburbs community who meet up at the Northern Suburbs Community Centre, the Mowbray site. They have a little mandate where they sew to donate. The last few months they have been making hearts for the event, for the release of the commission of inquiry. Lara and I were able to hand those out to members of parliament today. They want all of us to hold children in our hearts and this is a comforting thing and a very kind thing that they did. If anyone is interested, they are not stopping their work. Their next project is Santa hats for the Salvation Army Christmas Appeal. They are a marvellous group.

It was an important event and it was conducted with great dignity and kindness. I commend all the staff at Laurel House, in particular, the board members who worked so hard

to put it on and all the people who attended and showed such respect and kindness to people who were going through a horrific time, for many of them for much of their lives but certainly during the commission of inquiry process. I commend everyone who has had such bravery.

My thoughts are with those who were unable to speak and those for whom speech is no longer an option.

Dr Woodruff - Hear, hear.

Renison Mine - Waste Treatment Project
Avebury Mine - Financial Vulnerability
Book Week - Nixon Street Primary School

[6.27 p.m.]

Dr BROAD (Braddon) - Mr Speaker, last Monday, 28 August, I was pleased to attend Bluestone Mines Joint Venture's Renison mine for the official opening of the paste fill and contaminated water treatment project. This is an amazing investment of \$35 million. Bluestone is a joint venture between Metals X and Yunnan Tin. They employ roughly 340 employees and well over 200 contractors also rely on the mine.

The paste fill operation was amazing. It included two bore holes at a kilometre underground. About 20 per cent of the tailings are processed then mixed with concrete and pumped over a kilometre underground, where the operation strengthens the stopes that have been mined. I point out to those people who are arguing that a paste fill is appropriate for MNG's operation that it is a \$39 million investment but they are only using approximately 20 per cent of the tailings, so they still have other tailings.

The contaminated water part of the project was very important because the pH is very acidic: the water that is pumped out of the bottom of the mine, and there is a lot of water that comes into the mine. That water is dosed and, instead of being a pH of 2, it comes out as a pH close to 7. That is a very good environmental benefit. You are not putting acid water into a tailings dam; you are putting something that is almost neutral.

The minister, Felix Ellis, was also there and talked about the Government's support for the mining industry. We have Mr Ellis and the Premier talking about their support for the mining industry. They do that on numerous occasions, which is why I am astounded that they are not providing any support to the Avebury mine and the 200-plus workers who rely on the Avebury mine remaining open. There is an imminent risk of administration. This could happen at any moment. It is imminent, yet there is no action from this Government, putting those jobs at risk. The Government promised at least \$3.5 million of payroll tax relief. It has delivered zero. That is not supporting the mining industry. That is sitting on your hands waiting for the administrators to take over. That is a disgrace. It puts the jobs at risk. It is shameful that this Government is doing absolutely nothing.

If this mine goes into administration and closes, it would be a massive loss for the west coast, for the north-west economy and for Tasmania. The Government cannot let this happen.

On a lighter note, I would like to mention that I also attended a primary school. I went to Nixon Street Primary School, as part of Book Week. I read a story to a prep one class. The story was *Where the Lyrebird Lives*. This was a beautifully illustrated book by Vikki Conley and illustrated by Max Hamilton. The by-line says:

High in the mountains through the sleepy clouds. Deep in the forest past the chiming birds. Will we see the lyrebird? I don't know. Tip-toe, tip-toe. The beauty of the Australian rainforest and the magic of family-time come together in this lyrical and delightful story of intergenerational connection, habitat and adventure.

It was great fun reading a story to a prep one class. The story was quite good because the lyrebird is hidden in some of the pages. It highlighted sounds associated with certain birds but their mouths were shut and the lyrebird's mouth was open. It highlighted how lyrebirds mimic other birds. Not only did the students learn about the rainforest and the various sounds that birds make, they also learned about the word 'mimic' and what mimic means and that the lyrebird is a very good mimic. The students found it a good story. Hopefully, I did it justice. It was lots of fun. It is good for people like us to go into a primary school and talk about the importance of Book Week and of reading.

We know that literacy is a skill that is life-long. It will be only good for people to be able to read and to be able to read early. Helping a little bit is a positive thing and I really enjoyed my time at Nixon Street Primary. I hope to do it again next year.

Ecotourism - Big Tree State Report

[6.32 p.m.]

Mr BAYLEY (Clark) - Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise tonight to talk about trees and tourism. Before I do that, I want to start by talking about awe. I do not know whether anyone else saw the ABC's *Compass* episode earlier, I think on the weekend, hosted by Julia Baird. She showcased awe hunters. It was largely focused on Tasmania. It showcased Tasmania and it was promotion that money cannot buy. Dr Lisa Gershwin was there, highlighting phosphorescence and the auroras. Steve Pearce was there highlighting giant trees. It was quite a show. This grab out of it is what struck me:

For awe hunters, the everyday is often the extraordinary and the smallest wonders can be transformative, at the personal level that is.

So can the big ones. I want to focus tonight on the work of Steve and The Tree Projects. Recently The Trees Projects, together with the Wilderness Society, an organisation that is close to my heart that I worked with for many years, published a report called *Big Tree State: The Tourism Potential of Tasmania's Forests*. It is a great piece of analysis that highlights what could be done with very modest investment in specific sites around the south of the state, in regional Tasmania, and tries to quantify the benefits of those attractions.

On the numbers, there are eight sites across the Huon and the Derwent Valley. Investment of less than \$1 million, visitors increased by 139 000 and an estimated 163 jobs or \$20 million to the Tasmanian economy. This is focused on some of those giant trees that are in Tasmania's forest estate. Some of them are reserved and listed as World Heritage, giant trees

being one of the values for which the World Heritage Area is listed. Some of them are in production forests. There are three in the Huon area and another five in the Derwent.

The Government and Sustainable Timber Tasmania, previously known as Forestry Tasmania, already know the value of giant trees from a tourism perspective. Back in the 2000s there were millions of dollars spent on tourism initiatives such as the Airwalk, Dismal Swamp, Hollybank and the Eagles Eyrie. They were built at great expense with mixed success and then some of them sold to private operators.

The Airwalk, for example, built for \$4 million at public expense, sold for less than \$1 million. Eagles Eyrie, in the Maydena Range above the Styx, is now in the World Heritage Area. It was built for \$6.5 million, then sold and is now the top station of the Maydena bike park.

The Big Tree State project is trying to compare and contrast those kinds of developments and logging in our state forests with modest investment of less than \$1 million across those eight sites to promote eight outstanding areas that people can visit on any one day of the week. Some of them are protected and some of them are threatened with logging.

One of the benefits of this is to give people things to do for the day. There is a tourism strategy at the moment which is to fly people into remote places and give them an experience. The Greens support giving people self-motivated, self-funded and self-driven experiences in the forests around regional Tasmania, so that those people then go on to stay in regional Tasmania, spending their dollars in regional Tasmania.

The tourism industry has recently developed the Visitor Economy Strategy 2030. It reads very well, it has some great motherhood statements in it and we look forward to seeing how this is implemented and whether this is a change of strategy from a tourism perspective. It contains lofty statements, some of which we fully support. One is:

We are champions of our natural environment. The beauty of our landscape underpins the Tasmanian way of life. Our natural environment is finite, precious, core to our reputation and integral to our brand.

One of the other values, we are creative, another value is that we share Tasmanian culture and heritage. Here is a unique opportunity to invest a very moderate amount of money into developing these sites and giving people the opportunity to find them for themselves, to stand under these trees in absolute awe, awestruck by the size, the girth and the integrity of these trees and the forests that they sit in.

It gives me great pleasure to talk about this tonight, not least because for me it is somewhat full circle. Maybe 15 or 20 years ago, I was the one walking in those forests putting up pink tags and trying to find these trees. We were the ones who were writing self-drive leaflets encouraging people to visit these trees. Hundreds and thousands of people did that, whether it was on open days that we hosted in the Styx Valley, or self-guided leaflets that were published and distributed around cafes all around the state. We were the ones who were stimulating this big tree tourism 20 years ago, as a mechanism to try to build appreciation of these areas, create champions for the environment and deliver regional benefits for Tasmania.

I encourage everybody to get a copy of the report and read it. It demonstrates that there is real value in promoting our big trees, in protecting them and in demonstrating that there is an alternative economic model, an alternative vision to logging them. Contrast the big tree tourism state to the big log on the back of a single rider log truck a couple of weeks ago that attracted scorn for Tasmania from all around the world.

Coming back to awe, let me just finish with Professor Dacher Keltner from this *Compass* episode which resonated with me. He is a professor who studies awe. He said:

It makes yourself seem small, your concerns seem small, your stresses seem less significant. Today a lot of young people and a lot of people in general are focusing too much on the self and awe takes us out of that focus, gets us to open our eyes to the world outside of us.

These trees and the big trees date could be awe-inspiring, Mr Speaker.

Police Graduation Magician - Eureka Harness Race

[6.40 p.m.]

Mr ELLIS (Braddon - Minister for Police, Fire and Emergency Management) - Mr Speaker, last week I was pleased to attend, with the Premier and the Deputy Premier, the graduation of 74 police constables at the Tasmanian Police Academy. It is our largest ever recruit course. It was a fantastic celebration with family and friends in attendance. There was not as much marching as usual with the bigger class but still an outstanding effort from the world-famous Tasmania Police Pipe Band.

The constables undertook an extensive 30-week training course and as of this week they are stationed around the state: 16 in Burnie, 16 in Launceston, 13 in Hobart, 12 in Glenorchy, 10 in beautiful Devonport, four in Bellerive and three in Bridgewater. Our communities are now safer and these new police officers are working hard around our state to keep Tasmanians safe.

In terms of the outstanding members of the class for a whole range of different reasons, we had a number of award recipients:

dux of the course, Imogen Bobrowski; runners-up dux of the course, Janita Boud and Benjamin Strong;

the Commander's Award, which incorporates the Order of the British Empire Tasmania Association Book Award, Ivan Simmons;

the Police Association of Tasmania A.R. Henley Memorial Award for personal achievement, Zoey Wright;

the Commissioner Darren Hine Award for commitment to physical fitness, health and wellbeing: Janita Boud and Aiden Marshall;

the Sean Pullen Memorial Award for team spirit, which we all know is important for our police and first responders: Luke Bacon, James Cuthbert, Harry Lancaster and Martin Sward;

the Retired Police Association of Tasmania Communications Award - and thank you to all our retired police officers for your service - went to Jeremiah Tejeano;
Rod Warrington APM Operational Skills Award, again, Janita Boud and David Finow;

the University of Tasmania Problem-Oriented Policing Citation: Fletcher Spencer and Alice Williams;

the University of Tasmania Police-Oriented Policing Merit Certificate: Rebecca Grace, Travis Malrea, Jeremiah Tejeano and Madison Witherington.

There are truly some outstanding Tasmanians hitting the beat around our state to keep our state safe.

Over the last 12 months, Tasmania Police have been exploring different recruitment and training strategies to encourage people from all walks of life to consider policing as a career course. This includes one quite close to my heart, offering northern-based training for recruits so that they can train close to home and be stationed in the northern part of the state, which is particularly important for young parents.

This graduation brings current police numbers to 1431, showing that we are well on our way to our July 2026 target number of 1454 officers. This investment in extra police officers means we have been able to establish the Crime and Intelligence Command, the Road Policing Service, a full-time Special Operations Group coming online and, importantly, given this week and the important events around the commission of inquiry, the new Family and Sexual Violence Command.

I congratulate the 74 new police officers on choosing the noble profession of policing. These officers will regularly make sacrifices for individuals they do not know, all to ensure that Tasmania continues to remain one of the safest places to live, work and raise a family in the world.

Mr Speaker, briefly, I would like to acknowledge the outstanding efforts of the Todd Rattray-trained Magician in last Saturday's \$2.1 million Eureka, the world's richest harness race, qualifying to take TasRacing's slot in the race after its thrilling win in the Beautide last month at which I had the great pleasure of being there at Elwick.

Magician was dismissed by mainland punters as, 'Simply making up the numbers,' but speaking to Todd's father, Barry, earlier in the week, he told me that the mainland trainers perhaps tongue-in-cheek suggested that the horse might get overtaken in the final lap. We know as Tasmanians we have been written off before and come home to perform strongly. Magician, having just his 20th start and first trip away from Tasmania, beat home some of the biggest names in the sport at the moment including Miracle Mile winner Catch A Wave to finish just 15.4 metres behind in the winner Cypher in fourth spot, netting \$100 000 in prize

money. Congratulations to the Rattray family and Magician for representing team Tassie so well on the national stage.

Minerals Exploration

[6.45 p.m.]

Dr WOODRUFF (Franklin - Leader of the Greens) - Mr Speaker, last night, the ABC TV 7 p.m. news viewed an investigation into exploration lease approval data that the Greens obtained through a question on notice to the resources minister, Mr Ellis. In just two and a half years, the area covered by non-petroleum-related mineral exploration in Tasmania has nearly doubled.

At 1 January 2021, there was 5176 square kilometres under exploration licences. By 13 June this year, it was at 9842 square kilometres - almost double. Almost all of that growth has been related to Category 1 Minerals, Metallic and Atomic Substances. Licences in this category have increased by 25 across the same period. As well as that massive and rapid increase, there is another 5322 square kilometres of exploration licences currently under assessment by Minerals Resources Tasmania and these have already gone to the minister, recommending he approve many of these applications, we understand. That is 37 applications for these category 1 licences and seven for others. If the minister does approve them all, it would be a near tripling in land area under exploration since January just two years ago from 5176 up to 15 164 square kilometres. In the last month, another licence application has been made for a company to explore an area of 2179 square kilometres near Epping Forest in the north-east, stretching south to Oatlands. That is in addition to the 15 000 more square kilometres.

The speed and size of this growth is enormous. Our concerns relate to the local effects of exploration activity on sensitive habitat and farm productivity and, in particular, the cumulative effect of this widespread exploration across the landscape and the fact that we know there are no proper checks and balances on local impacts of exploration activity. One individual bore hole may be non-significant but hundreds and thousands of these drill holes across what is effectively the whole of the north-west of Tasmania, the majority of the west and far down to Oatlands, with the clearing required for drilling vehicles access to will have an additive impact on sensitive vegetation, threatened species and productive farm land.

What we see from the exploration map of sites is significant overlap between exploration licence areas and future reserve forests, whereas the Government calls them 'future potential production forests'. It is almost a total Venn diagram match. The future reserve forest was set aside under the Tasmanian Forest Agreement for protection because of their independently verified high conservation values. They were scientifically assessed to be unique, important and deserving of protection.

In 2014, the Liberals legislated to change the status of these forests from future reserves to be protected into a new tenure - FPPF (Future Potential Production Forest) zones. That does not change the intrinsic globe and nationally significant conservation values they were protected for in the first place. They are a treasured and biodiverse 565 000 hectares and they were also selected for their natural and cultural heritage, genetic diversity, eco-system services like carbon storage and water catchments.

They include areas of macro fungi in wet forests that are amongst the highest recorded diversity in the world. They have threatened species like the grey goshawk, forty-spotted pardalote, swift parrot, masked owl, Tasmanian devil, spotted tail quoll, eastern quoll, blind velvet worm, a number of stag beetles, and the Scottsdale burrowing crayfish and a number of other burrowing crayfish that are all extremely significant. We know that the loss of habitat is a major threat for those species and, at the same time, they are under intense pressure from climate change.

These areas were to be protected from logging as well as from 'other human disturbances, such as roads and drilling bores, for example'. To give our species the best chance of surviving and migrating between areas that they cannot adapt to, we need to remove all the habitat threats that we can control and ensure large-scale landscape connections remain intact. Helping these species and habitats survive also protects the ecosystems that give us clean water, functioning soils and crop pollination species. We are very suspicious and disturbed to see the strong correlation between exploration licence areas and future forest reserves.

The planned exploration areas now include, as I said, the majority of the north-east, most of the north-west and a substantial part of the Midlands of Tasmania, and the north. We have heard from farmers who are worried about the impact of exploration on their properties and operations. The ABC showed a community meeting to discuss a licence proposed for Selbourne that the Director of Mines has recommended the minister approve. The areas under exploration licence include the food bowl of central and northern Tasmania. That is why we are calling for a review of the legislation. The legislation at the moment clearly fails to give opportunity to assess the cumulative impacts. It does not give an opportunity for community-wide consultation or to properly assess local impacts on habitat and, obviously, on farmland productivity.

We are concerned at the minister's reflex response that everything is okay and there is nothing to see here. We do not buy it. We believe the majority of Tasmanians who understand the speed and rapid increase in exploration licences are not convinced either.

Community Gardens - Young Advocate's Call for Legislation

[6.52 p.m.]

Ms WHITE (Lyons - Leader of the Opposition) - Mr Speaker, I was recently contacted by a young lady named Ingrid Mills. Ingrid is 12 years old and she is very passionate about community gardening. Ingrid emailed me and provided a copy of the speech that she had given at school that she would like to become reality. She offered it to me in the hope that it would help inform our policy thinking and I share it with the parliament tonight. Ingrid has written about the important role of community gardens and I will read her speech for everyone to hear:

Through the centuries community gardens have served not only as places to grow plants but a space for people to relax, to focus and to connect with others. For the overall wellbeing of our society, I propose to introduce a new bill to become a law in parliament: all Tasmanian towns with a school must have a community garden. This law will have many benefits, including benefiting a strong mental health, better social skills and take that extra step in helping our beloved environment. It will help those young and old, those

new and familiar with gardening, chatterboxes and those who prefer to keep to themselves.

With new advancements coming and going, we are here one moment and somewhere else the next. The unspoken question of how to change this is commonly featured in our lives. To fix this, I will return to my first point of discussion - how to bring people together through the art of community gardening. Community gardens are essential for growth, support and relaxation. Being in a green environment lowers tension and regulates levels of the stress hormone, cortisol. Gardening also fuels positive mental health, putting a stop to depression, anxiety and dementia. It can help us grow a better memory, all while having a great time outside.

Studies from the state government of Victoria on the Better Health channel show that gardening and simply being out and about increases the ability to focus and cooperate. There are other advantages too such as getting the microbe-rich soil from gardening on your skin as it helps strengthen the immunity in your gut. Activities in the garden such as weeding, ploughing, digging and cultivating increases heart rate and helps maintain cardiovascular health, according to *The Science of Gardening* by Dr Stuart Farrimond, who states that caring for plants helps the mind recover from trauma and creates a better overall quality of life.

Plants give us breath that fills our lungs, make their food out of thin air and are the original source for everything we eat. And how do we respond? By pulling out harmless weeds, chopping down age-old trees and expanding our agricultural land. Yes, I will begin to explain the complex issue of plants and climate change. As temperatures inch higher and higher, gardening is more crucial now than ever. According to the World Health Organisation, nine out of ten of us live our lives polluted and without clean air. Again, this comes down to our humble community gardens. They are not just beautiful but helpful too. Without plants and their much-needed photosynthesising abilities, life as we know it would be a distant memory as greenery converts CO₂ into the oxygen we breathe. Every plant helps but especially those in nutrient-rich soils as they produce more oxygen.

Community gardening, especially for the elderly and children, encourages socialisation. Loneliness is on the rise and as I mentioned earlier a multi-generational and multicultural areas are the perfect therapy. Neighbours, friends, family and others in the community can find a common ground, forming long-lasting relationships. Many can learn from the benefits of community gardening as they teach each other how to care for the earth and save our precious resources.

Community gardens will play a crucial role in defining Tasmania. They will be a necessary tool for socialising with friends, family and meeting with people. They will be a necessary tool for maintaining a strong mental health and wellbeing. Community gardens will provide a gentle exercise as well as a socialisation tool. They will help give people a sense of belonging in a loving, supporting community. More plants will help break up the stressful

urban vibe and help us achieve Australia's net zero emission goal by 2050. Having gardens and green spaces will be vital for our ever-growing and changing world. Tasmania's heritage will be sustained and its natural beauty will flourish through the greenery of flora.

Mr Speaker, I am pleased to share Ingrid's speech with the parliament tonight. I know that Ingrid would be very pleased if members would listen to her words of encouragement, to see the benefits of community gardens and her words of advice about how we can support one another and act with kindness towards each other. I think that is a very nice way for us to end the evening.

Huonville Rotary Club - Golden Jubilee Rotary Youth Driver Awareness Training

[6.56 p.m.]

Mr YOUNG (Franklin) - Mr Speaker, I rise tonight to talk about Huonville Rotary Club. It was an immense pleasure and an honour to attend and celebrate Huonville Rotary's golden jubilee, 50 years of invaluable service to the community.

Rotarians are more than just community members. They are the pillars that hold up the structure of our society, especially in the Huon Valley, through dedication. They all tirelessly volunteer their time and resources, particularly to nurture and guide our youth ensuring they reach their potential.

One sterling example of Rotary's commitment is the Rotary Youth Driver Awareness Training. It is truly commendable how students from not one or two, but four different Huon schools benefited from this program. By targeting young and impressionable drivers, Rotary has shown foresight in ensuring they make wise decisions on the road.

The partnership with Huonville PCYC was a masterstroke, offering a conducive learning atmosphere. Merging real-life accounts of road accident survivors with practical driving demonstrations has presented a vivid canvas of driving responsibility. I must stress the immeasurable impact of such a program in shaping the driving attitudes of our youth.

Rotary's contributions do not stop at road safety. Their heartening efforts towards bolstering the mental wellbeing of the valley's inhabitants is testament to the broader vision of Rotary. In challenging times, when the entire state of Tasmania was grappling with the ramifications of a global pandemic and unpredictability, Rotary has been there offering a chat, a smile and a shoulder. Sometimes it is these simple gestures that make all the difference.

In this journey, Rotary has emerged as a beacon of unity, bringing together individuals from myriad backgrounds. The bonds forged by Rotary have bolstered the community spirit, reinforcing the ethos that Tasmania's strength lies in its people and their interconnected stories. Tasmanian strength lies in community. The sentiment resonates even stronger in the Huon Valley.

The Tasmanian Government deeply acknowledges and supports endeavours like that of Rotary, endeavours that ceaselessly aim to uplift communities. As we mark these glorious 50 years, it is time for both celebration and introspection, appreciating the past and envisaging

the future, reflecting on those services, the ties forged, and the countless lives touched by this esteemed club.

To Rotary Huon Valley I offer my heartfelt congratulations on half a century of unparalleled service. We all look forward to the waves of positive change you will continue to bring. Cheers to the next 50.

The House adjourned at 6.59 p.m.

Appendix 1

QUESTION ON NOTICE

Question No. 78 of 2023 House of Assembly

ASKED BY: Mr David O'Byrne MP

ANSWERED BY: Hon Michael Ferguson MP, Minister for
Infrastructure and Transport

QUESTION:

In relation to the pilot trial of transit officers on public transport:

1. Have any businesses/third parties been engaged to provide transit officers as part of this trial and if so, which ones?
2. What is the duration of each of the contracts with third parties that the Government has for the provision of transit officers?
3. Are any transit officers employed directly by the State Government or by Metro Tasmania, and if so, how many by each?

ANSWER:

1. Yes, Wilson Security Pty Ltd.
2. The trial of the deployment of transit officers is currently managed on a fortnightly shift basis.
3. No.

2

 APPROVED/NOT APPROVED


Michael Ferguson MP
Deputy Premier
Minister for Infrastructure and Transport

Date: 23 August 2023

QUESTION ON NOTICE

Question No. 54 of 2023 House of Assembly

ASKED BY: Ella Haddad MP

ANSWERED BY: Hon Nic Street MP

QUESTION:

- (1) Are there any government managed public housing properties, and if so, how many were there:
 - (a) on 31 March 2014; and
 - (b) on 31 March 2023?
- (2) Are there any Community Housing Provider managed social housing properties, and if so, how many were there on:
 - (a) on 31 March 2014; and
 - (b) on 31 March 2023?

ANSWER:

Comparable data on social housing dwellings is reported in the Report on Government Services (RoGS) annually as at 30 June each year. This data is provided for 2014 and 2022.

RoGS data for June 2023 will be reported in January 2024.

A large number of properties were transferred for management from public housing to community housing between June 2014 and June 2022.

From 2022, ROGS stopped counting crisis and transitional accommodation as part of social housing (please note social housing is referred to as 'public housing' in Table 1 below). This means that these dwellings are counted in 2014 as social housing but are not counted as social housing in 2022.

Table 1 – Government managed dwellings

Program	Jun-14 (RoGS)	Jun-22 (RoGS)
Public housing	8 413	4 999*
Aboriginal housing	283	164
Total	8 696	5 163*

*Does not include crisis and transitional accommodation so not directly comparable with 2014 data.

Table 2 - Community housing provider managed dwellings

Program	Jun-14 (RoGS)	Jun-22 (RoGS)
Community housing	4 720	8 791*
Indigenous community housing	73	96
Total	4 793	8 887*

*Does not include crisis and transitional accommodation so not directly comparable with 2014 data.

APPROVED/NOT APPROVED

Nic Street MP
Housing and Construction

Date: 17/8/23